

Contestation over development policy in the European Parliament

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Abstract

Recent rise of populist parties has brought about more contestation over development policy. There is also increasing diversity within the European Union (EU): some countries allocate more development aid while the contributions of newer member states are on average smaller. But do such national interests surface more often than in other issue areas, and what is the structure of contestation over development policy in the European Parliament (EP)? Examining roll-call votes and the processing of the 2017 European Consensus on Development, this article shows that opposition to development policy is restricted to the more Eurosceptical representatives. EP party groups attain similar levels of cohesion in votes on development aid as in other policy areas, with coalition patterns following the left-right dimension. Development policy is thus 'business as usual' in the Parliament, but the results suggest increasing politicization of aid through stronger horizontal linkages between immigration, security, and development policy.

Introduction

When assessing the politicization or contestation of particular topics, political scientists have three basic options: they can zoom in on specific policy processes, examine developments over time, or compare the chosen policy sector with other issue areas. As several contributions in this Special Issue focus on particular development policy questions, this article adopts a broader, comparative approach by studying the contestation of development policy in the European Parliament over a longer period of time and with the help of a larger data set of plenary votes. The EP is a particularly interesting forum for studying contestation because its composition mirrors the (changing) mix of social forces and political ideologies, including those at the fringes, which have been much less present in the Council and the Commission. For processes of politicization that do not result from

dissent amongst the member states but from contestation by transnational coalitions of like-minded political parties, the Parliament is therefore a much more fine-grained laboratory. In line with previous research on the politicization of European integration, this research design enables us to understand both the *patterns* of contestation over development policy and the level of politicization of development policy vis-à-vis other issue areas (De Wilde et al., 2016; Hutter et al., 2016).

As the introduction to this Special Issue outlined, there are valid reasons to expect increasing politicization of development policy, not least through stronger horizontal linkages between migration and security and development aid (Hackenesch et al., 2020). Our study focuses more on contestation, which – in line with the definition provided in the introductory article of this Special Issue (Hackenesch et al., 2020) – can occur within political institutions while in politicization a topic becomes the object of public discussion. There are good grounds for expecting stronger party-political contestation of development policy. Various populist or nationalist parties have achieved significant electoral victories across the EU since the 1990s, and these parties are highly critical of sending money to developing countries. The political left, not least the greens, in turn tend to be more ‘cosmopolitan’ than the centre-right parties. However, the role of national interests cannot be ignored. Some member states allocate higher levels of development aid, others have made severe cuts to their aid budgets, while the contributions of the newer member states are on average very small. Whether such national interests surface more than in other issue areas is thus one of the key themes explored in this article.

Previous research on the role of the EP in the development policy has treated the Parliament as a unitary actor (Delputte and Verschaeve, 2015; Cardwell and Jančić, 2019). This article goes beyond this unitary actor image and the overarching research problem is to examine the structure of contestation over development policy in the European Parliament. In order to do this, it answers four research questions: has development policy become more divisive inside the party groups or in the whole chamber?; is development policy characterized by higher levels of conflict than other issue areas?; what is the primary cleavage in development policy?; and do EP party groups adopt different positions regarding the main lines of EU’s aid policy?

The theoretical framework in the next section develops arguments both for and against partisan contestation of development policy in the Parliament. Focusing mainly on the 7th and 8th terms

(2004 to 2014), the third section analyses voting behaviour of party groups and national delegations, whilst the fourth section studies whether the European Consensus on Development was in fact adopted in 2017 through party-political consensus. The motivation for using roll-call votes is that through studying how MEPs vote we can explore the broader levels of contestation between and within party groups and also compare development policy with other issue areas. We compare group cohesion and coalition patterns in development policy both with other categories of external relations votes and with overall voting patterns in order to determine whether development policy is 'business as usual' in the Parliament. The case study of the Consensus, in turn enables us to dig deeper into the positions and arguments of the party groups regarding the overall development of the EU's aid policy. The final section discusses the implications of the findings.

Theoretical framework: the parliamentary and party politics of aid

The European Parliament has throughout its existence fought for more powers and has managed to transform itself from a 'talking shop' to an institution vested with significant legislative, control and budgetary powers. Members of the EP (MEP) have also proven inventive in designing new practices that have over time found their way into the Treaties. (Ripoll Servent, 2018) This 'underdog' approach applies also to external relations, an issue area long beyond the reach of MEPs. In development policy competence is shared between member states and the Union. The Maastricht Treaty introduced the co-decision procedure to development policy, but many regard the Lisbon Treaty as the game-changer. Since it entered into force in late 2009, the Parliament enjoys important legislative rights in international trade and international agreements. Laws related to common commercial policy and development policy are adopted by co-decision procedure, and the consent of the EP is required for international agreements concluded in areas where the ordinary legislative procedure applies. The Parliament must also approve the budget and can use budgetary discharge powers for monitoring the implementation of development aid – with the exception of the European Development Fund (EDF) for the group of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, a fund that has remained outside the proper EU budget. Stronger legislative rights have also contributed to more active dialogue with the Commission in development policy. Furthermore, the Parliament continues to issue own-initiative resolutions, not least regarding human rights violations in developing countries, and engages in active interparliamentary networking with regional parliamentary assemblies and individual third countries (Cardwell and Jančić, 2019; Delputte and Verschaeve, 2015).

The Parliament has therefore needed to win friends in Brussels and in member state capitals in order to gain new powers, with institutional unity seen as important in achieving that goal. Inter-institutional considerations have not, however, ruled out policy ambitions. While we have no actual data about MEPs' preferences, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence suggesting that the Committee on Development (DEVE) brings together mainly 'development policy champions', MEPs that are both in favour of increasing aid and of giving the EU a stronger role in development policy. Indeed, the whole Parliament has become known for its support for higher development aid. Yet EU development policy – both its contents and the budget – are the result of complex bargaining between national governments and EU institutions. The seven-year Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) provides the financial context for multilateral aid, and this further limits the freedom of manoeuvre of MEPs that surely consider such constraints when deciding their positions and behavioural strategies in development policy. Institutional unity is probably also advantageous if the Parliament wants its voice to be heard outside the EU's borders. Inter-institutional dynamics should thus facilitate ideological convergence or consensus between political groups.

Turning to party politics, the EP party system has throughout the history of the directly-elected Parliament been effectively dominated by the centre-right European People's Party (EPP) and the centre-left Party of the European Socialists (PES; the official group name has been Socialists & Democrats (S&D) after the 2009 elections). Much of the research on EP party groups is based on roll-call voting data (see Hix et al., 2007; Bressanelli, 2014; Bowler and McElroy, 2015). This research shows that party groups achieve relatively high levels of cohesion, often even above 90 % and generally higher than national delegations. Ideologically more fragile groups often do not even try to form unitary group positions. Importantly, when MEPs receive conflicting voting instructions from national parties and their EP groups, they are more likely to side with their national party, particularly in parties in which the leadership has more or better opportunities to punish and reward its MEPs (such as through more centralized candidate selection or closed lists). This implies that when national interests are at stake, party group unity is likely to suffer.

In terms of coalitions, the party groups are used to building majorities in the committees and the plenary. The left–right dimension is the main cleavage in the Parliament, with the anti/pro-integration dimension constituting the secondary axis of competition, particularly since the start of

the euro crisis (Otjes and van der Veer, 2016; Blumenau and Lauderdale, 2018). Thus any two party groups are more likely to vote the same way, the closer they are to another on the socioeconomic left-right dimension. For many issues, there is an absolute majority requirement (50 % plus one MEP) that incentivizes cooperation between the EPP and S&D, which between them controlled around two-thirds of the seats until the 2014 elections. Cooperation between EPP and S&D is also influenced by inter-institutional considerations, because only moderate amendments are likely to be accepted by the Council and the Commission (Kreppel, 2002). In fact, the clear majority votes are passed with large super majorities, constituting thus “hurrah votes” (Bowler and McElroy, 2015). The radical or nationalist right has often found itself excluded from party-political cooperation in the chamber. This applies particularly to the more anti-immigration political forces.

The introductory article to this Special Issue outlined logical reasons why we should see increasing politicization of European development policy, not least through horizontal linkages between immigration and security and foreign aid (Hackenesch et al., 2020). Yet whether development policy has witnessed more politicization than other policy sectors is not clear, nor how such politicization might manifest itself in MEP voting behaviour. One can plausibly argue that national interests are more likely to surface in votes on internal market legislation, as such votes often have tangible distributive effects between and inside individual countries. The impact of development policy votes is in turn primarily felt far beyond EU’s borders. Another counter-argument to development policy differing from other issue areas is institutional in character. As the research outlined above showed, party groups and committees have developed their own ‘ways of doing things’ over the decades, with new MEPs quickly socialized into existing parliamentary norms. This line of reasoning suggests few if any differences between individual policy sectors.

Returning thus to our first two research questions – has development policy become more divisive inside the party groups or in the whole chamber?; is development policy characterized by higher levels of conflict than other issue areas? – the empirical analysis found in the next two sections is guided by the following exploratory hypothesis:

H1: Votes on development policy in the EP follow the overall pattern of voting behaviour, both in terms of party group cohesion and coalition patterns and level of conflict in the whole chamber.

Moving beyond the context of the EU, existing research provides few straightforward clues regarding cleavages in development policy. According to comparative literature, parties that are leftist and more liberal on the sociocultural dimension tend to put more emphasis on international agreements and multilateralism, and advocate human rights, social and environmental issues and development aid to poorer countries. The differences between parties of the left and right stem from different core values, such as hierarchy and equality, with the left advocating more egalitarian policies both in terms of economy and security that are more effectively reached through stronger international rules and institutions (e.g., Rathbun, 2004, 2007; Noël and Thérien, 2008).

Similar differences in core values extend to development policy. Through their beliefs in equality and solidarity, the same party families that are supportive of more egalitarian and extensive domestic social and education policy programmes are also supportive of allocating more aid to developing countries (Stokke, 1989; Lumsdaine, 1993). Using such ideological differences as their starting point, Thérien and Noël (2000) examined levels of development assistance among OECD countries. They found no support for partisan theory when using the standard indicator of the strength of the left in the cabinet but did establish a strong and statistically significant relation between levels of foreign aid and cumulative leftist power. This measure had been used by scholars of comparative public policy to capture that partisan influence in some issue areas is not instantaneous but builds up over time and works through a country's institutions and practices (Huber et al., 1993). A number of scholars have also explored whether government ideology influences levels and types of aid. These comparative studies show leftist cabinets to be more generous in aid provision and to target more poverty alleviation, whereas right-leaning governments seem more concerned with improving trade relations (Tingley, 2010; Brech and Potrafke, 2014; Allen and Flynn, 2018; Greene and Licht, 2018). Moreover, various European countries have witnessed the rise of different types of populist or nationalist parties that almost without exception seem to be highly critical of foreign aid (Liang, 2007; Balfour et al., 2016; Verbeek and Zaslove, 2017). These populists are effectively the only parties that are against the basic principles and practical instruments of development aid.

The second hypothesis is linked to our third and fourth research questions – what is the primary cleavage in development policy?; and do EP party groups adopt different positions regarding EU's aid policy? – and is formulated as follows:

H2: The left-right dimension explains differences over development policy, with only the radical right / Eurosceptical groups opposing the main lines of EU development policy.

Voting on development policy

The first part of the empirical analysis examines MEP voting behaviour based on roll-call votes between the first (1979) and eighth (2014) European elections as provided by Simon Hix, Abdul Noury and Gérard Roland (Hix et al., 2007). However, our analysis is limited to the 1999-2004 (EP5), 2004-2009 (EP6), and 2009-2014 (EP7) terms, as only from EP5 onwards the issue area coding for external relations votes has a specific category for development votes. For EP5 the coding scheme distinguishes between votes on 'accession', 'defence', 'development', 'enlargement', 'external / trade', 'foreign affairs' and 'trade'. For EP6 and EP7 the categories of external relations votes were 'development', 'foreign and security policy', and 'international trade'. In EP5 71 votes were on development policy (1.74 per cent of all votes) and in EP6 and EP7 the corresponding figures were 89 and 107 (1.45 % and 1.54 per cent of all votes).

To examine the cohesion of party groups, national delegations or the whole chamber, we use the Agreement Index (AI) as developed by Hix et al. (2007, pp. 91-95). It draws on the Rice (1928) index but differs from it by taking into account abstentions as MEPs have three voting options (Yes, No, Abstain).¹ The AI ranges from 0 to 1. When all party group members vote the same way, the score is 1. If the party group is completely divided, with a third of the members voting 'yes', a third voting 'no' and a third abstaining, the score is 0.

Tables 1-3 show the cohesion of the whole Parliament, the party groups and national delegations in development policy voting when compared with both other categories of external relations votes and all other votes. In EP5 (1999-2004) development policy and trade produced more disagreement than other categories of external relations votes, but the difference between the level of agreement

¹ Incorporating the 'Abstain' option in the index is important, as there is evidence that MEPs choose to vote 'Abstain' when the positions of their national parties and the EP groups diverge (Mühlbock and Yordanova, 2017).

on development policy and on all business was small; moreover, a t-test shows that it is statistically insignificant. Examining party groups, EPP-ED, ELDR, G/EFA, PES, and EUL/NGL reached cohesion levels around 90 per cent or above. As for national delegations, the cohesion levels were much lower, particularly among MEPs from larger member states. In EP6 (2004-2009) development policy saw less contestation at the level of the whole chamber than other categories of external relations votes and all votes combined, but again the differences were very small and statistically insignificant. In terms of party groups, ALDE and PES were highly cohesive, whereas G/EFA and EUL/NGL displayed lower cohesion than in the previous electoral term. This was also reflected in the higher cohesion of national delegations. Largely the same patterns were repeated in EP7 (2009-2014). The AI of the whole Parliament in development policy was 0.7, slightly above that reached in all votes and in votes on foreign and security policy and international trade, but again differences are not statistically significant. Of the party groups, S&D and G-EFA were highly cohesive, but also in ALDE and EPP cohesion was around 90 per cent. Croatia stands out of the national delegations, but the country joined the EU only a year before the 2014 EP elections and the figure results from less than ten votes.

TABLES 1-3

Our findings are thus in line with previous research on external relations votes in the European Parliament (Raunio and Wagner, 2020). The main party groups are considerably more cohesive than national delegations in development policy votes. Smaller party groups, such as the Eurosceptical groups, display much weaker cohesion. Moreover, the AIs are rather similar with the overall cohesion scores regardless of whether we examine the whole chamber, party groups, or national delegations, thus providing further evidence that development policy is ‘business like any other’ in the Parliament. The different coding schemes applied to EP1 to EP4 (covering the years 1979-1999) make it difficult to draw exact conclusions, but there is clearly no sign of development policy votes differing from overall voting patterns in the 1980s and 1990s.

Moving to coalition patterns in EP6 and EP7, we calculate the voting similarity between party groups in a straightforward manner: two party groups were deemed to have voted the same way if the plurality of members in each group voted the same way (Yes, No, or Abstain) (Hix and Høyland, 2013, p. 179). For each pair of party groups, we code whether they occupy ideologically

neighbouring positions on the left-right dimension (1 yes; 0 no).² In development policy votes, all external relations votes, and the totality of votes, ideologically neighbouring party groups had on average a significantly higher voting likeness than groups that are not next to one another. The differences between the two legislative terms were again very small (Tables 4 and 5). The mean voting likeness of ideologically adjacent groups was in fact higher in development policy than in other types of votes in both EP6 and EP7. In EP6 it is noteworthy how often EPP-ED and UEN voted together in development policy, with also PES and ALDE voting the same way in almost 90 per cent of the development policy votes. These figures are much higher than in other categories of votes. In EP7 the Greens and Social Democrats voted together in 93 per cent of the development policy votes, and the Greens also voted the same way with EUL/NGL 89 per cent of the time. The grand coalition of EPP and S&D formed on average slightly less often in development policy than in other categories of votes in EP6 and EP7. Coalition patterns thus show the relevance of the left-right dimension for understanding contestation over development policy. In fact, it appears that the left-right cleavage is more important in development policy than in other categories of external relations votes.

TABLES 4 and 5

So far the empirical analysis has provided support for H1 – votes on development policy follow the overall pattern of voting behaviour, both in terms of cohesion levels and coalition patterns. In line with previous research, the left-right dimension constitutes the main cleavage in development policy, thus offering support for our H2. Nor do we see any real changes over time: enlargements or Treaty changes, including the Lisbon Treaty, did not affect voting behaviour. And according to Hix and Frantescu (2019), voting patterns remained stable in the 2014-2019 Parliament. Comparing

² We follow standard practice and treat the following party groups as ideological neighbours: European United Left/Nordic Green Left (EUL/NGL) and Greens/European Free Alliance (G/EFA); G/EFA and Party of European Socialists (PES, EP6) respectively Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D, EP7); PES/S&D and Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE); ALDE and European People's Party (EPP); EPP and Union for a Europe of Nations (UEN, EP6) respectively European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR, EP7); UEN/ECR and Independence/Democracy (IND/DEM, EP6) respectively Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD, EP7).

policy areas, they show that average group cohesion in development policy votes was 80.6 while it was 80.4 in all votes. The Greens (98.0), S&D (95.5), and EPP (94.6) voted highly cohesively in development policy, with also EUL/NGL (88.7) and ALDE (88.3) reaching high levels of cohesion. On the other hand, the more Eurosceptical or conservative groups, particularly Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD), displayed lower unity. Hix and Fratescu also point out that in development policy a centre-left coalition formed more often than a centre-right coalition. Yet their analysis shows how also in EP8 in almost 70 per cent of the votes were passed with the support of the 'super grand coalition' of EPP, S&D, and ALDE. In development policy the figure was slightly lower, around 60 per cent.

However, we have deliberately focused on the 'big picture', and a close analysis of individual votes – and indeed articles in this Special Issue (Meissner, 2020; Saltnes and Thiel, 2020) – inform us that the differences are often in the details and in specific development policy questions. It can be very difficult beforehand to predict which development policy topics are controversial. Votes on trade with a distant developing country might trigger heated debates because of the legal precedent set by a particular clause in the agreement. For example, MEPs can disagree about whether to support a stronger role for the EU / EP in safeguarding LGBT rights. National delegations can also have different priorities explained by colonial history (e.g., Portuguese and Spanish MEPs interested in Latin America), economic factors (e.g., trade with Pakistan being important for member states with textile industries), or individual MEPs can be highly sensitive towards particular topics, such as Western Sahara, and this may explain the length of debates and the high number of votes.

The new European *Consensus* on Development?

The preceding analysis displayed patterns of group cohesion and coalitions but revealed nothing about the actual contents of the issues on the agenda. Hence we now turn our attention to the new European Consensus on Development from 2017, arguably the most important development policy item handled by the 2014-2019 EP because it addresses the general principles of and guidelines for the EU's aid policy, rather than country- or region-specific decisions. The analysis is based on tracing the process leading to the adoption of the Consensus by the Parliament. The sources consist of relevant committee and plenary documents, including plenary speeches and votes, as well as press releases and other position papers of party groups and stakeholders. The Consensus has received criticism from various non-governmental organisations (NGO) and other stakeholders, not least on

account of being something of a ‘catch-all’ umbrella document. Yet this is exactly why we selected it for closer inspection. As the Consensus itself declares:

The purpose of this Consensus is to provide the framework for a common approach to development policy that will be applied by the EU institutions and the Member States while fully respecting each other’s distinct roles and competences. It will guide the action of EU institutions and Member States in their cooperation with all developing countries. Actions by the EU and its Member States will be mutually reinforcing and coordinated to ensure complementarity and impact.³

Scrutinizing the parliamentary processing of the Consensus thus enables us to examine whether there indeed is party-political *consensus* over the main lines of European development policy in the EP, as several articles in this Special Issue in turn focus on uncovering contestation in specific development policy issues. As outlined in the introductory article of this Special Issue (Hackenesch et al., 2020), a key component of politicization is polarization or at least the presence of competing views over a particular issue. And as argued by Cardwell and Jančić (2019, p. 375), ‘the revision of the European Consensus on Development, carried out in 2017, was an opportunity for the politicisation of the development cooperation policy.’ In particular, the migration crisis from 2015 altered the context in which the debates took place: the relations of the EU with its neighbouring areas and with the broader Global South received more attention as concerns about security and immigration received wide coverage across the Union. Also in 2015 the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted, and the EU needed to update its development policy goals.

³ The New European Consensus on Development ‘Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future’, Joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the member states meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf, *Official Journal of the European Union*, 30.6.2017 (2017/C 210/01).

Before analysing the adoption of the 2017 Consensus, it is worth exploring briefly the level of politicization surrounding the first Consensus approved in 2005.⁴ To be sure, there were inter-institutional tensions and NGO involvement coupled with ambiguities about the exact limits of what the EU can and should do in development policy, but it is nonetheless fair to argue that the first Consensus was adopted rather consensually both by the whole EU and the Parliament (Stocchetti, 2013; Delputte and Verschaeve, 2015, pp. 41-44). The process was guided by the United Kingdom that held the Council Presidency, and the British government managed to produce a coherent draft document that was not really contested by the other member states or EP party groups – or put another way, the draft was sufficiently ‘catch-all’ or harmless not to produce any contestation. The 2005 Consensus did include security considerations, but in a much less pronounced fashion than the subsequent version adopted in 2017. The Parliament and DEVE were interested in strengthening the role of the EP in development policy whilst emphasizing the prioritization of poverty eradication and the Millennium Development Goals and warning against stronger linkages with security issues. On 24 October 2005 DEVE adopted the report of Anders Wijkman (EPP) almost unanimously (29 votes for, 0 against, 2 abstentions), while the plenary adopted it in a single reading on 17 November⁵ and finally the resolution on 15 December 2005.⁶ Whilst the debates revealed differences between

⁴ Joint declaration by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on the development policy of the European Union entitled "The European Consensus" [*Official Journal* C 46 of 24.2.2006].

⁵ Report on the proposal for a Joint Declaration by the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on the European Union Development Policy "The European Consensus" (2004/2261(INI)), Committee on Development, Rapporteur: Anders Wijkman. A6-0319/2005, 27 October 2005. See [https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2004/2261\(INI\)](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2004/2261(INI)).

⁶ European Parliament resolution on a Joint Statement by the Council and the representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on European Union Development Policy: 'The European Consensus on Development', B6-0653/2005, 12 December 2005; <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=B6-2005-0653&language=EN>.

party groups and MEPs, there was thus broad cross-party consensus behind the report and the whole Consensus in the Parliament.

The Parliament adopted the resolution on the new Consensus on 1 June, 2017, with 405 votes for, 70 against, and 159 abstentions (634 of the 751 MEPs cast votes).⁷ The AI was thus 0.46 which is lower than average. Interestingly, the winning coalition brought together EPP (173 votes for, 6 against, 2 abstaining), S&D (152 for, 3 against, 10 abstained), and ECR (61 for, 2 against, 1 abstained). All 42 G-EFA MEPs abstained as did the clear majorities of ALDE (10 for, 0 against, 52 abstained) and EUL/NGL (0 for, 9 against, 37 abstained) representatives. Inside EUL/NGL the 'rebels' were primarily from the Spanish Izquierda Unida and the Portuguese Communist Party. The only group solidly against the resolution was Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) (4 for, 26 against, 1 abstained) while the other Eurosceptical or nationalist group EFDD (2 for, 15 against, 14 abstained) was internally split between those against (mainly United Kingdom Independence Party) and those abstaining (mainly Five Star Movement from Italy). Of the independent MEPs, 3 voted for and 9 against. Observing national delegations, it is noteworthy that all or nearly all Slovak, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian, and Polish MEPs supported the resolution.⁸

The support of MEPs from Central and Eastern European member states is probably explained by the alleged 'anti-immigration' bias of the Consensus. At least this was the view of ALDE, Greens, EUL/NGL, and EFDD groups that tabled a motion for resolution against the draft Consensus. The alternative resolution was rejected with 455 against, 176 for, and 9 abstentions, with the voting

⁷ Motion for resolution, 29.5.2017, B8-0390/2017, to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure on a joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on the new European Consensus on Development – Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future (2017/2586(RSP)), Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Norbert Neuser, Linda McAvan on behalf of the Committee on Development.

⁸ Voting statistics obtained from term8.votewatch.eu, <https://term8.votewatch.eu/en/term8-the-new-european-consensus-on-development-our-world-our-dignity-our-future-motion-for-resolution-vot-2.html#/>.

behaviour of MEPs largely the opposite of the resolution accepted in the plenary.⁹ In particular, their motion

observes that certain recent proposals can be seen as refocusing development policy under the new prism of migration management; believes that there should be no conditionality between development assistance and cooperation from beneficiary countries on migration issues and opposes any attempts to link aid with border control, the management of migratory flows or readmission agreements; underlines the need for close parliamentary scrutiny and monitoring of agreements linked to migration management and of migration-linked use of development funds.¹⁰

Same party groups also tabled unsuccessful amendment proposals to the resolution accepted by the plenary.¹¹ In their press release, EUL/NGL and their shadow rapporteur on the file Lola Sánchez Caldentey did not hide their criticism:

We will no longer pursue policies that would reduce poverty and inequalities. Instead, the EU's strategic interests will take priority. A clear example of this is the establishment of conditionality for development assistance in exchange for collaboration on border and migration controls. So not only is the new Consensus a scam to the taxpayers, it's a perverse use of development funds.

⁹ <https://term8.votewatch.eu/en/term8-the-new-european-consensus-on-development-our-world-our-dignity-our-future-motion-for-resolution-vot.html#/>.

¹⁰ Motion for resolution, 29.5.2017, B8-0387/2017, to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure on a joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on the new European Consensus on Development – Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future (2017/2586(RSP)), Charles Goerens on behalf of the ALDE Group, Lola Sánchez Caldentey, Merja Kyllönen, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Stelios Kouloglou, Kostas Chrysogonos, Kostadinka Kuneva on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group, Maria Heubuch, Heidi Hautala, Judith Sargentini on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group, Ignazio Corrao, Rosa D'Amato on behalf of the EFDD Group.

¹¹ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/B-8-2017-0390-AM-001-004_EN.pdf.

It bribes third countries off in order to externalise our borders whilst we turn a blind eye to our obligations to asylum rights.¹²

Several NGOs echoed these sentiments.¹³ ALDE, in turn, paid more attention to certain member states not taking development aid seriously and to not listening to the views of DEVE.¹⁴ EPP, S&D, and ECR instead placed more emphasis on the coherence of EU's external actions, arguing for synergies between development instruments and security and immigration policies. As stated by Bogdan Brunon Wenta, the EPP rapporteur on the issue: 'we insist that the EU and the Member States need to ensure more coherence in their external action, notably by developing the links between migration and development policies, as well as security and development.'¹⁵ The Consensus nonetheless contains elements that cater for both those that view links between development, security, and immigration more positively and for those that view such linkages as a threat. This can be interpreted as a sign of the different preferences amongst the EP party groups and the national governments in the Council over development policy.

¹² GUE-NGL, Parliament vote on Consensus on Development a regressive step, press release, 1.6.2017, <http://old.guengl.eu/news/article/P445/parliament-vote-on-consensus-on-development-a-regressive-step>.

¹³ See for example J. Abrahams, EU signs new consensus on development amid NGO outcry, Devex, 7.6.2017, <https://www.devex.com/news/eu-signs-new-consensus-on-development-amid-ngo-outcry-90411>; CONCORD, New European Consensus on Development: Double Standards for Sustainable Development, 19.5.2017, <https://concordeurope.org/blog/2017/05/19/eu-adopts-new-consensus-development/>.

¹⁴ ALDE, press release, 1.6.2017, The New European Consensus on Development: EP endorses Council's failure to set clear objectives.

¹⁵ EPP, European Consensus on Development: tackling global challenges and building a better world, press release 16.2.2017, <https://www.eppgroup.eu/newsroom/news/european-consensus-on-development>; see also S & D, S&Ds endorse new European consensus on development, press release, 1.6.2017, <https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom/sds-endorse-new-european-consensus-development>.

The final debates and votes on the Consensus revealed clear differences between party groups, but not so much on the basis of the left-right dimension. The two large groups struck a deal, as is the standard practice in the Parliament, and the ECR joined them, no doubt largely thanks to the 'development-security-migration nexus' evident in the Consensus. However, there had initially been broad party-political consensus behind the DEVE report from February 2017.¹⁶ The report, drawn up by co-rapporteurs Wenta (EPP) and Norbert Neuser (S&D) had indeed focused in a more straightforward manner on development policy, and was approved by DEVE with 21 votes for and 1 against.¹⁷ Here we must note that having two rapporteurs on the same file is not common in DEVE. This indicates the high salience of the issue while co-rapporteurship can also be viewed as a mechanism that facilitates the adoption of the report first in the committee and later by the plenary. The party-political compromise between the centrist groups probably also facilitated the later compromise between the Parliament, the Council, and the Commission. Two weeks later in mid-February the plenary approved a resolution based on the DEVE report with 539 votes for, 71 against, and 83 abstaining (693 out of the 751 MEPs took part in the vote).¹⁸ The AI was thus 0.67, above the average level and much higher than in the subsequent vote held on 1 June. MEPs opposing the resolution were from ENF (33 against, 4 for, 3 abstaining), ECR (7 against, 7 for, 51 abstaining), EFDD (9 against, 16 for, 1 abstaining), and from the ranks of the non-attached (8 against, 7 for, 2

¹⁶ The actual committee report had been preceded by Draft report on the revision of the European Consensus on Development (2016/2094(INI)), 11.11.2016, Committee on Development, Rapporteur: Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Norbert Neuser. MEPs seated in DEVE and representing party groups across the ideological spectrum tabled 333 amendments to the draft report (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/DEVE-AM-595561_EN.pdf). The draft report was much shorter than the final committee report, with the different concerns of the MEPs thus taken into account in the final report.

¹⁷ Report, 1.2.2017, A8-0020/2017, on the revision of the European Consensus on Development (2016/2094(INI)), Committee on Development, Rapporteur: Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Norbert Neuser.

¹⁸ , European Parliament resolution of 14 February 2017 on the revision of the European Consensus on Development (2016/2094(INI)), A8-0020/2017. Voting statistics are available at <https://term8.votewatch.eu/en/term8-revision-of-the-european-consensus-on-development-motion-for-resolution-vote-resolution.html>.

abstaining). In addition, some individual MEPs from EPP, ALDE, and EUL/NGL either voted against or abstained, but all S&D and G-EFA representatives voted in favour.

The final document was nonetheless the subject of intense inter-institutional bargaining between the Commission, the Council, and the Parliament. At least five inter-institutional meetings were held before the Council adopted the Consensus unanimously on 19 May. When it came up again for discussion in DEVE, MEPs from G-EFA and S&D tabled a total of six amendments, with the amendment proposal of Green MEP Maria Heubuch claiming in line with the subsequent rejected plenary resolution that the new Consensus is ‘a clear step back in comparison to the 2005 Consensus.’¹⁹ The DEVE passed the resolution with 15 votes for and 9 against. Opposing MEPs came from ALDE (3), G-EFA (2), EUL/NGL (2), EFDD, and S&D.²⁰

Whether the rival resolutions represent genuine differences over development policy is open for debate, but it is nonetheless clear that – in line with the thesis about development policy becoming more politicized on account of horizontal linkages between policy sectors (Hackenesch et al., 2020) – the coupling of development policy with security and immigration brought about contestation in the chamber. At the same time, we must underline two further findings. First, as the plenary debates indicated, especially the two large groups EPP and S&D are not exactly cohesive in development policy, with MEPs emphasizing different dimensions of development policy. Second, MEPs almost across the board nonetheless seemed to agree on certain key pillars of aid such as the importance of tackling poverty, assisting least-developed countries, and allocating more funds to development policy and meeting the 0.7 per cent ODA/GNI target.²¹ The Eurosceptical or radical right groups EFDD and ENF were the only ones deviating from this broader consensus, arguing basically that

¹⁹ Amendment 2, Maria Heubuch. See Committee on Development, Amendments 1-6, 26.4.2017, Draft motion for a resolution, Norbert Neuser, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, The new European Consensus on Development - our world, our dignity, our future (2017/2586(RSP)).

²⁰ Committee on Development, Result of roll-call votes of 29 and 30 May 2017.

²¹ See the plenary debates held on 13 February, 2017, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-02-13-ITM-012_EN.html; and on 31 May, 2017: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2017-05-31-ITM-013_EN.html.

money should be spent at home instead of sending it to Africa – but there were also differences of opinion within these groups. H2 therefore receives at least conditional support from the case study of the Consensus: despite tabling rival resolutions the main party groups were in broad agreement about the main lines of development policy, with only the nationalist right questioning the basic operating principles of development aid. Also in this sense development policy is not really different, as the Eurosceptical groups tend to oppose the centrist pro-EU groups in most other policy sectors as well.

Concluding discussion

This article has deliberately focused on detecting broader patterns of party-political contestation over development policy. The inevitable conclusion is that development policy is no different from other issue areas in the European Parliament: levels of party group cohesion and coalition patterns are essentially similar with those found in other categories of external relations votes and in all votes. A plausible explanation is found in established institutional codes of conduct: EP committees and party groups have developed over the decades their own decision-making mechanisms and behavioural norms, with new MEPs quickly socialized into such existing parliamentary practices. Many of the articles in this Special Issue show how specific European development policy questions have become politicized, but again this applies probably to any policy sector: individual decision processes trigger heated debates and cause severe turbulence, but the *relative* politicization of development policy can only be captured through comparative and longitudinal research designs. Future research could thus explore in more detail subsets of more contested or salient development policy questions to determine whether debates and votes on those issues differ from the voting patterns reported in this article (Cicchi, 2016).

Yet our findings also suggest that development policy might become increasingly contested. Influenced by the 2015 refugee crisis, the adoption of the New European Consensus on Development saw tensions between EP party groups on account of the document containing stronger horizontal links between development policy, immigration, and security. It is plausible to argue that this trend will continue in the future. Populist and nationalist parties have become more widespread across the EU, and while development policy is not at the top of their agendas immigration is, and therefore development policy and EU's relations with the Global South are likely to become more intertwined with security and 'closing borders'. And as has been the case with the

politicization of immigration, the impact of populists is often felt more indirectly through particularly centre-right parties adopting more conservative policies (Grande et al., 2019; but see Bergmann et al., 2020 in this Special Issue). The New European Consensus on Development is another illustration of this phenomenon.

Our analysis also showed how the main European party groups are nonetheless in broad agreement about the main lines of development policy. As decision-making within and between the Commission, the Parliament, and the Council is based on compromises between these main European party families, this suggests that the core of EU's aid is unlikely to change. Applying the findings of Thérien and Noël (2000) about the cumulative impact of political parties to the EU context, for party-political colour to have stronger impact on European development policy there would need to be a concentration of power in either the political left or right over a longer period of time. Hence European development policy will continue to be a compromise between various political ideologies, and also in that sense development aid does not differ from other EU policies.

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Table 1: Cohesion (Agreement Index) in EP 5 (1999-2004).

	Defence	Development	Enlargement	Foreign affairs	Trade	Total²²	ALL
Votes	24	71	58	172	40	496	5745
Whole Parliament	0,629	0,576	0,717	0,614	0,575	0,622	0,585
EDD	0,529	0,511	0,429	0,519	0,539	0,505	0,516
EPP-ED	0,875	0,904	0,907	0,898	0,945	0,899	0,859
UEN	0,627	0,765	0,793	0,691	0,763	0,738	0,759
ELDR	0,932	0,911	0,939	0,872	0,903	0,898	0,882
EUL/NGL	0,893	0,897	0,641	0,771	0,839	0,771	0,780
PES	0,885	0,895	0,945	0,898	0,856	0,901	0,902
G/EFA	0,914	0,966	0,947	0,927	0,979	0,922	0,927
member states (average)	0,642	0,647	0,749	0,666	0,623	0,665	0,641

²² The total number of external relations votes includes the five main categories in the table as well as some additional categories with few entries.

Table 2: Cohesion (Agreement Index) in EP 6 (2004-2009).

	Foreign & Security policy	Development	International trade	All external relations	All votes
Votes	768	89	252	1109	6149
Whole Parliament	0,65	0,68	0,64	0,65	0,63
ALDE	0,88	0,96	0,95	0,90	0,89
EPP-ED	0,88	0,84	0,96	0,89	0,88
EUL/NGL	0,73	0,84	0,87	0,77	0,76
G/EFA	0,79	0,85	0,82	0,80	0,79
IND/DEM	0,48	0,43	0,39	0,45	0,46
SOC	0,92	0,99	0,92	0,92	0,91
UEN	0,70	0,77	0,84	0,74	0,73
National delegations (average)	0,73	0,76	0,71	0,73	0,72

Table 3: Cohesion (Agreement Index) in EP 7 (2009-2014).

	Foreign & Security policy	Development	International trade	Dev+F&S.Pol+Int.trade	All votes
Votes	754	107	397	1258	6961
Whole Parliament	0,67	0,69	0,64	0,66	0,65
EUL/NGL	0,84	0,83	0,87	0,85	0,79
EFD	0,48	0,45	0,48	0,48	0,48
ECR	0,89	0,78	0,92	0,89	0,86
ALDE	0,93	0,90	0,88	0,91	0,89
EPP	0,95	0,89	0,93	0,94	0,93
G/EFA	0,95	0,98	0,96	0,95	0,95
S & D (PES)	0,92	0,97	0,92	0,93	0,91
National delegations (average)	0,72	0,75	0,69	0,71	0,71

Table 4: Coalition Patterns: Voting likeness between party groups in EP 6 (2004-2009)

	Development	Foreign and security	International trade	All external relations	All votes
ideological neighbors					
EUL/NGL - G/EFA	79.8%	50.5%	70.8%	58.9%	64.0%
G/EFA - PES	80.9%	58.5%	44.8%	58.3%	61.3%
PES - ALDE	88.8%	78.0%	76.0%	78.9%	75.4%
ALDE - EPP-ED	70.8%	80.7%	85.7%	80.6%	77.2%
EPP-ED - UEN	89.9%	78.9%	90.9%	83.1%	81.1%
UEN - IND/DEM	47.2%	50.0%	64.3%	52.9%	49.3%
mean voting likeness	76.2%	66.1%	71.0%	68.6%	68.0%
others					
ALDE - EUL/NGL	71.9%	35.1%	34.4%	39.8%	47.5%
ALDE - G/EFA	82.0%	56.7%	39.0%	56.0%	55.3%
ALDE - IND/DEM	19.1%	32.8%	53.2%	35.6%	40.8%
ALDE - UEN	60.7%	69.0%	83.1%	71.1%	70.8%
EPP-ED - EUL/NGL	55.1%	31.4%	24.0%	32.8%	40.4%
EPP-ED - G/EFA	62.9%	46.6%	27.9%	44.5%	46.6%
EPP-ED - IND/DEM	40.4%	39.9%	59.7%	44.5%	46.1%
EPP-ED - PES	64.0%	72.5%	72.1%	71.3%	69.7%
EUL/NGL - IND/DEM	19.1%	39.2%	28.6%	34.2%	33.8%
EUL/NGL - PES	78.7%	42.4%	40.9%	46.8%	55.4%

EUL/NGL - UEN	46.1%	37.4%	27.3%	36.2%	43.2%
G/EFA - IND/DEM	19.1%	25.2%	29.2%	25.3%	31.4%
G/EFA - UEN	53.9%	39.0%	31.2%	39.2%	45.8%
IND/DEM - PES	20.2%	28.7%	51.9%	32.8%	35.3%
PES - UEN	53.9%	59.9%	74.7%	62.4%	63.0%
mean voting likeness	49.8%	46.9%	45.2%	44.8%	48.3%
P(T<t) two-tail t-test	0.0152	0.0040	0.0068	0.0027	0.0034

Table 5: Coalition Patterns: Voting likeness between party groups in EP 7 (2009-2014)

	Development	Foreign and security	International trade	All external relations	All votes
ideological neighbors					
EFD / ECR	64%	59%	67%	62%	67%
ECR / EPP	71%	60%	83%	68%	59%
ALDE / EPP	80%	83%	83%	83%	78%
ALDE / S&D	83%	83%	79%	82%	78%
G/EFA / S&D	93%	68%	60%	68%	75%
EUL/NGL / G/EFA	89%	59%	81%	69%	70%
mean voting likeness	80%	69%	76%	72%	71%

Others					
EUL/NGL / EFD	32%	32%	36%	33%	38%
EUL/NGL / ECR	47%	36%	24%	33%	34%
EUL/NGL / ALDE	76%	36%	36%	40%	50%
EUL/NGL / EPP	59%	29%	29%	31%	44%
EUL/NGL / S&D	83%	41%	53%	49%	60%
EFD / ALDE	51%	52%	65%	56%	49%
EFD / EPP	62%	59%	71%	63%	58%
EFD / G/EFA	38%	38%	39%	38%	38%
EFD / S&D	42%	50%	61%	53%	45%
ECR / ALDE	64%	54%	78%	62%	55%
ECR / G/EFA	50%	45%	26%	40%	36%
ECR / S&D	54%	48%	59%	52%	43%
ALDE / G/EFA	83%	64%	45%	60%	67%
EPP / G/EFA	66%	53%	37%	49%	57%
EPP / S&D	71%	78%	71%	75%	74%
mean voting likeness	59%	48%	49%	49%	50%
P(T≤t) two-tail t-test	0.0063	0.0030	0.0026	0.0008	0.0006