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Assessing the Influence of Angela Merkel on European Integration:

A Case Study Analysis of the Euro Crisis and the Migration Crisis

Bachelor's project in European Studies

Supervisor: Tobias Etzold

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Abstract

In the last decade, the leaders of the European Union (EU) have faced two major crises which have put European co-operation, mutual solidarity and institutional framework under severe pressure. Since Angela Merkel was elected Chancellor of Germany in 2005, her time in office has been largely characterized by the Euro crisis and the migration crisis, in which she, as the de facto leader of the EU, has played a decisive role. The management and outcome of the crises are important analysis objects in the European integration process in the 21st century. This paper aims to analyse to what extent Merkel has been able to maintain European integration in light of the considerable power she possesses as a respected leader of Europe's strongest member state. To highlight the difficulties of policy-making and co-operation in times of crisis, I employ the theoretical framework of liberal intergovernmentalism, which emphasizes that European integration is driven forward by the interaction between the elected leaders of the member states, intergovernmental bargaining and the pursuing of national interests. The theoretical framework offers good explanations of the diversity of actions and positions taken in the political processes that established the burden sharing, willingness of co-operation and thus the different outcomes of the crisis management. This management resulted in unevenness in the European integration at the different policy areas.

Sammendrag

Den europeiske union har i det siste tiåret stått ovenfor to alvorlige kriser som har satt europeisk samarbeid, gjensidig solidaritet og det institusjonelle rammeverket på prøve. Siden Angela Merkel ble valgt til forbundskansler i Tyskland i 2005 har hennes regjeringstid i stor grad vært preget av eurokrisen og migrasjonskrisen, og som de facto leder av EU har hun spilt en avgjørende rolle i krisehåndteringsprosessene. Håndteringen og utfallet av krisene er viktige analyseobjekter av europeisk integrasjon i det 21. århundre. Denne oppgaven har som formål å gjennomføre en analyse av i hvilken grad det for Merkel har vært mulig å opprettholde europeisk integrasjon i lys av den betydelige makten hun besitter som en respektert leder av EUs mektigste medlemsland. For å belyse utfordringene vedrørende politikktutforming og samarbeid i et kriserammet EU, anvendes et liberal-intergovernmentalistisk teoretisk rammeverk, som vektlegger at europeisk integrasjon drives fram av samspillet mellom de folkevalgte lederne av medlemslandene, mellomstatlige forhandlinger og nasjonale interesser. Det teoretiske rammeverket bidrar med gode forklaringer på de forskjellige reaksjonene og posisjonene som ble inntatt i de politiske prosessene som avgjorde byrdefordelingen og samarbeidsviljen, og dermed de forskjellige utfallene av krisehåndteringene, noe som resulterte i svært ulik grad av integrasjon på de forskjellige politikkområdene.

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List of abbreviations

CDU	Christian Democratic Union
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CSU	Christian Social Union
DDR	German Democratic Republic
ECB	European Central Bank
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
EU	European Union
FDP	Free Democratic Party
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany

1. Introduction

Since 2005 Angela Merkel as Federal Chancellor has held the highest executive office in Germany, and thus possesses the perhaps strongest position in European policy making, although her role does not include direct official power in the day to day policy making of the European Union (EU). Being ranked as the second most powerful person in the Western World, due to Germany's undisputed role as the "locomotive of the EU", Chancellor Merkel has played a role of major importance of the union's policy making during her four terms as leader of the German government, and one can argue that she has undertaken the difficult task of continuing the work on European integration in a time characterized by severe crises that have threatened the European project to its core (Forbes, 2018). Merkel, as the second longest serving chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, who is also the first woman to hold this office, has in many ways made it her main project to uphold the foundations on which the European project was built. This task has proven itself to be very difficult, especially when the interests of Germany's domestic affairs have been on collision course with the measures expected by other EU member states. Due to this, Angela Merkel has, in her long time in office seen member states join and leave, she has experienced some of the most difficult crises of the EU and she has had to endure being extremely unpopular among those whose everyday lives were turned upside down by the austerity measures posed upon them as a result of Merkel's absolute determination to keep the union together. At the same time as Merkel left her position as leader of the Cristian Democratic Union party (CDU) in 2018, she announced that she would no longer proceed as Chancellor after the 2021 election. Resigning within the next year, Merkel will be written into European history books as one of the most remarkable political figures of Europe in the 21st century, having been forced to devote much of her attention towards Europe.

The thesis' main theme is Angela Merkel's role in keeping the EU together during her time as Chancellor of Germany. My focus will be on the Euro crisis in the years after the global finance crisis of 2008/9, and on the migrant crisis which had its starting point in 2015 and which has not entirely been resolved, due to the many difficulties of reaching consensus in the decision making processes of the EU. These two events will lay the foundations of my analysis of her impact on the European integration process in the 21st century, on which she without doubt, has had a huge influence. My theses will focus on intergovernmental aspects of the influence Merkel has had on the EU as the leader of a member state Government and thus aims to answer

this research question: *To what extent has Angela Merkel exercised influence on the European integration process during her time as Chancellor of Germany and can this be explained from a liberal intergovernmentalist perspective?*

The paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter two will give an insight on the methodology used in the study, concerning how the data was collected and analysed, as well as the portraying of the theoretical framework on which the paper draws, which is the European integration theory of liberal intergovernmentalism. This chapter also gives a short review of the literature, which is also incorporated in the different parts throughout the thesis. Chapter three gives a biographical overview of Angela Merkel's life, her rise to power and political career. This lays the theoretical foundations for the following chapter, which consists of case studies of the European crises of the 21st century. The case study chapter will be presented in three parts, where I begin with a brief descriptive explanation of the background for the crises, followed by the crisis management, in which I will focus on Merkel's role. This is where the theoretical framework plays an important role, because the theory provides a framework for understanding and lays the foundation of the guideline for the relevant observations that have to be made to analyse the studied topic in order to collect and interpret empirical knowledge in accordance with the given assumptions. The case studies will be completed with debating the outcomes of the crises and their solutional managements, regarding the theoretical framework and how this can be used as an explanatory tool. Finally, in my fifth and last chapter, I will give a summary of the paper, followed by concluding remarks and answer to the research question on Chancellor Merkel's impact on European Integration in the 21st century, based on the outcomes of the conclusions the paper makes along the way.

2. Methodology and theory

2.1 Theory

The theory on which this paper draws its perspectives is developed from one of the most known theories on European integration: liberal intergovernmentalism. The liberal intergovernmentalism theory is a relatively new integration theory, constructed by the American professor of politics and international affairs, Andrew Moravcsik (Schimmelfennig, 2004, p. 75). The liberal intergovernmentalism theory builds on the rational institutionalism theory, which mainly can be explained by the states as "central actors in international politics

and that they act in a context of anarchy, that is, in the absence of a centralized authority making and enforcing political decisions” (Schimmelfennig, 2004, p. 76). One can therefore say, that the member states of the EU are the “masters of the treaty”, thus main actors of the policy making, and that the making of international institutions is the result of the fact, that sovereign states have decided to realize their national goals through co-operating as parts of international organizations (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, pp. 65-67). The core element of liberal intergovernmentalism theory is the intergovernmental bargaining and its emphasis on the importance of the interaction between the member states’ elected leaders: European integration is driven forward by individual actors on the political stage (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, pp. 65-67). This element points out how Angela Merkel, which I argue can be seen as the de facto leader of the EU, plays a decisive role in the European integration process and crisis management. This statement, together with the core theoretical liberal intergovernmentalism element builds the basis for the paper’s hypothesis: Angela Merkel has played an important role in European integration due to her strong position in the interaction between the EU member states because of the power she possesses due to Germany’s strong bargaining power, which has driven European integration forward. The hypothesis is a theory highlighting instrument in which the theory is used when looking into the empirical knowledge to test the hypothesis validity as a tool to answer the research question.

2.2. Methodology

The methodology chosen for this paper is a qualitative case study where I analyse Angela Merkel’s role in dealing with two of the most severe crises of the recent history of the EU, the Euro crisis and the migration crisis. The analysis object is the crisis management of the two crises and it builds on empirical sources on the background, management and outcome of the crises, contextualized with the aspects of the liberal intergovernmentalism European integration theory. The relevance of these events in terms of analysing Merkel’s influence on European integration in the 21st century, is the clear evidence of liberal intergovernmental aspects in the handling of the situations, which makes it interesting to put the empirical elements in the theoretical contextualization. The purpose is to find out to what extend Merkel has influenced European Integration during her time in office and if the chosen theory is a relevant explanatory tool for the research question of the paper. Can Merkel’s influence on European integration through the cases studied be explained from a liberal intergovernmental perspective?

The analysis is based on relevant primary sources which gives an insight in the policy making after the crises struck and during the time the crises were managed as number one priorities on the European policy agenda, such as treaties, reports and other EU policy publications. The paper draws on secondary literature, such as news articles, whereas the overweight consists of journal articles that contribute with relatively recent research and views on European integration seen in the context of the two crises, in which the recognized professor of European politics Frank Schimmelfennig's contributions are heavily emphasized. Contextualization has been made in that the literature has been read and analysed with the theoretical framework assumptions as the basis in the uncovering of patterns that can be linked to, and used in the underlining of the importance of Merkel's role in the management of the crises and liberal intergovernmentalism.

3. Angela Merkel: Political career

Angela Merkel was born in Hamburg in 1954 and raised in the East-German town Templin where her father worked as a pastor (Reutter, 2005/6, p. 216). She studied physics in Leipzig, where she received her doctoral degree in 1986. She was not very political active during her studies in Leipzig, apart from joining the Free German Youth while working on her doctoral thesis at the Academy of Science, because of the advantages it gave her as a student in the DDR at the time (Reutter, 2005/6, p. 217). It was not until shortly before the German reunification in 1989 that Merkel became politically active, as she joined the centre-right Democratic Awakening party, which was dissolved within the next year. This led to her having to choose between going back to academia, or pursuing a political career, of which she chose the latter and joined the unified CDU in October 1990 (Petrikowski, 2021). Already the year after, she won a Parliament seat in the Bundestag and was appointed Secretary of women and youth in the Helmut Kohl government, which marked the beginning of an extraordinary political career. After having climbed the latter as CDU deputy chairwomen, Minister for environment, conservation and reactor safety and party secretary general during the 1990s, Merkel was elected leader of party in April 2000 after Kohl's resignation due to several party crises, becoming leader of the opposition after the election was lost in 2002 (Petrikowski, 2021).

After the 2002 electoral defeat with the leader of the conservative Bavarian CDU sister party, Christian Social Union (CSU), Edmund Stoiber as 'Spitzenkandidat', it became clear that

Merkel was the CDU chancellorship candidate prior to the 2005 election. (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung). The election was held in September and resulted in considerable loss of Bundestag mandates for both CDU/CSU and the Social Democrats (SPD), each losing 22 and 29 representatives (The Federal Returning Officer, 2021). The low turnouts resulted in a non-majority for both blocks, forcing the CDU/CSU and SPD to consider working together across the political dividing lines, which resulted in the inauguration of the Federal Republic's first grand coalition on the 22nd of November, after 2 months of negotiations, with Angela Merkel as Federal Chancellor. Besides being the first woman to hold this office, she was also the first former East-German citizen and the youngest Chancellor of Germany of all time (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2021).

As Merkel entered the Federal Chancellery in 2005, it was not with the parliamentary support that she had hoped for, displayed in the election day debate, where she clearly stated, that she would prefer to form a government with the Free Democrats (FDP), if the result had been in favour of this constellation (Phoenix, 2017). Merkel governed the four first years in a grand coalition with the SPD, before the FDP gained 32 more Bundestag seats in the 2009 election, making it possible to form a black-yellow government without the SPD. After the total collapse of the FDP in the 2013 election, where the party was left without parliament representation due to not passing the 5% threshold, Merkel once again had to turn to the SPD for support, which was also the case in the negotiations in the aftermath of the 2017 election. Merkel's decision to enter into the grand coalition is a great example of her pragmatism and ability to find solutions with the purpose of upholding stability, which I argue is also very much descriptive for the role she has played in the EU crises, from which she has been criticized for having a cold and mathematic approach, in accordance with her original profession (Von Hammerstein & Pfister, 2012).

4.1 Case study 1: Euro Crisis

4.1.1 Background

The Euro crisis emerged as a result of the worst global finance crisis the world has ever experiences since the Wall Street Crash in 1929, followed by the great depression in the 1930s (Drezner & McNamara, 2013, p. 155). The 2008 finance crisis also had its origin at Wall Street, more specifically in the collapse of the Lehman Brothers Investment Bank (Altman, 2009, p. 7). Just like the 1929 crisis, the 2008 collapse of the US Lehman Brothers Investment Bank led

to the breakdown of European national economies from which many of the countries have not yet fully recovered. One can argue that the finance crisis struck Europe due to the 1999 shift in European integration with the finishing of stage three of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the introduction of the common European currency was launched (European Central Bank, 2020). Some of the first countries to adopt the Euro were the southern European states, who's economies were less developed and the ability to healthy fiscal policies not yet fully institutionalized. These factors had, during the first decade of the Eurozone, led to a build-up of asset bubbles which was now on the brink of bursting. Additionally, the first years of the Eurozone naturally consisted of economic optimism, leading to the southern states (especially Greece), taking up huge loans in order to increase their public spending and thus increasing general living standards, making them unable to manage large sovereign debts (Van Apeldoorn & Horn, 2019, pp. 208-209).

The establishing of the EMU contained specific aspects which were incorporated to prevent cases like the one of Greece, but this did not work in practice. The Maastricht Treaty, also known as the Treaty on the European Union, which entered into force on the 1st of November 1993 contained specific demands for the countries wishing to be part of the future Monetary Area: the Eurozone, known as the Convergence Criteria. (European Union, 1992). The Maastricht Convergence Criteria consisted of four main measurement criteria that had to be fulfilled for admission to the single currency. Although Maastricht succeeded in formatting the guideline for the establishing of a healthy monetary union, one can argue that the lack of judicial framework and thus supervisory fiscal control mechanisms to the plan would prove to be the most critical aspect, as countries like Greece, that had failed to meet the requirements in silence, was now facing default. In other words, the need for reform in the EMU was severe, which was a task Angela Merkel saw as her opportunity to form the new monetary union in a manner that adopted core elements of the politics she had pursued on the domestic agenda, which indeed had proven successful. This was the base from which Merkel gained her credibility when taking the role as the main figure of the crisis management.

The reason why EU leaders turned to Merkel in the handling of the Euro crisis can be explained by the credibility she had due to her domestic policies in her first term as Chancellor. She took over a country with a post-war record high unemployment and economic growth lower than the EU average (Crawford & Czuczka, 2013, ch. 1, par. 8). When taking on her second term in 2013, she was leading the undisputed strongest EU economy, having managed to lower the

unemployment rate at a two-decade low level. Accordingly, she was succeeding at delivering a balanced budget and thus leading Germany away from the breaching of EU budget deficit limits (Crawford & Czuczka, 2013, ch. 1, par. 10). As a result of Merkel's success in the rapid recovery of the German economy, state leaders of the EU now saw her as the natural de facto leader of the EU, now turning to her for steady leadership in the crisis management. This also explains, according to liberal intergovernmentalism assumptions, how the integration process is not only driven forward by the interaction on the state leader level, but also how it is maintained through the fact that leaders elect unofficial leaders among themselves, based on respect, abilities, but more importantly trustworthiness and credibility.

4.1.2 Crisis management

There was no doubt that fixing the Euro debt crisis was closely related to finding a solution to the Greek problem, as Greece was unable to pay its sovereign debt. A quick solution would be to secure a bail-out, which would simply mean paying the sovereign debt, that the Greece authorities had been building up due to what can be described as "moral hazard" during the countries' first decade in the Eurozone. Although Angela Merkel was in strong opposition to this option, the following years' events showed that it was necessary that Germany played a key role in finding the solutions that would eventually save the Eurozone, because of the importance of the participation of the largest EU economy in paving the way towards financial order. David Art claims in his article "The German Rescue of the Eurozone: How Germany Is Getting the Europe It always Wanted", that Angela Merkel has "turned her management of the sovereign debt issue in particular into a source of political strength (Art, 2015, p. 183):

There can be little debate that Germany has played an outsized role. The rise in Germany's relative economic power in relation to most other member states in the Eurozone, France in particular, has given Chancellor Angela Merkel of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU-CSU, Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union of Bavaria) an unprecedented amount of leverage in redesigning the institutional underpinnings of monetary union.

Merkel's scepticism towards a bail-out solution had its foundations in the psychological narrative, based on the fact that more moral hazards would be carried out if bankrupt states received a signal, saying that their economic recklessness would be handled by the rich Eurozone members. Thus, the bail-out dilemma was based on the fear that market actors would behave less careful and that states that are on the brink of, or find themselves in, financial difficulties would not feel pressured enough to adopt reforms and introducing the austerity

measures needed to avoid crisis (Art, 2015, p. 203). Nevertheless, in relatively short time it became clear that a rescue package in the form of a bail-out was unavoidable, the first bail-out by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and EU was agreed upon on the 2nd of May 2010, providing Greece with 110 billion euros, from which 22 billion were paid by Germany, in exchange for committing to adopting austerity measures (Council on Foreign Affairs, 2021).

The main problem of the idea of bail-outs was institutional. The Treaty of the European Union, better referred to as the Maastricht Treaty, states in its article 104b the following:

Member states shall not be liable for or assume the commitments of central government, regional, local or other public authorities, other bodies governed by public law, or public undertakings of any Member State, without prejudice to mutual financial guarantees for the joint execution of a specific project.

In other words, no EMU countries were to expect bail-outs from other Eurozone countries, a necessity which would never be needed if the provisions of the treaty as a whole had been followed, especially concerning article 104c, which states that “Member States shall avoid excessive government deficits” (Council of the European Communities & Commission of the European Communities, p. 27). The fact that the national government in Greece had tampered with its financial numbers even prior to the accession into the Eurozone and that the Commission in January 2010 stated that the country had falsified its public finance data in addition to pursuing an economic policy with large overspending and “overoptimistic tax projections” did not make the case any easier for Merkel and the other European leaders, who concluded that the debt crisis was a crisis entirely brought upon the Greek state by itself (Zahariadis, 2012, p. 105).

Despite the “no bail-out clauses” in the Maastricht Treaty and the clear evidences for financial carelessness by the Greek government, it became clear that the Greek debt crisis was not just a national one, and that the possibility for a collapse of the Greek economy was most likely posing a threat to the whole Eurozone (Art, 2015, p. 186). Merkel knew that she was in a position to define the content of the crisis, where she chose a wording fit for bypassing the no bail-out principles in the Maastricht Treaty, making her decision to involve the IMF legally anchored (Art, 2012, p. 186). IMF, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the Commission came together in what was known as the “Troika”, managing the intergovernmental work on figuring out how to solve the development of the Euro debt crisis, which not long after the outbreak of the Greek

crisis, spread to Spain, Portugal, Italy and even the northern, considered highly developed, Republic of Ireland (Van Apeldoorn & Horn, 2019, p. 209).

The Troika was responsible for the first steps taken to solve the acute debt crisis with its money packages to the crisis-struck European countries, but the contributions of the Troika were not even close to enough to solve the Eurozone crisis as a whole, in which structural reforms would have to be carried out in order to establish a Eurozone which was stable and economical sustainable. The need to strengthen the mechanisms from the Maastricht Treaty, mainly through ensuring that a repetition of the causes for the Euro crisis was made impossible, became institutionalized in December 2011 at the signing of the Treaty of Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union, more commonly known as the Fiscal Pact (Art, 2015, p. 207). The most important aspect of this treaty was the requirements posed upon the EU members regarding national debt, which prohibited the exceeding of national deficits by more than 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and a public debt of more than 60 percent of GDP (EUR-lex, 2014). The Treaty also secured closer co-operation of national economic policies through a legislation ensuring the institutionalization of a Euro summit, meaning that the leaders of the Eurozone states were to hold co-operational summits at least twice a year. Additionally, the judicial aspect of the treaty was also strengthened, in which was determined that the countries bound by the treaty that failed to meet the treaty requirements could be brought before the European Union's Court of Justice (ECJ) (EUR-lex, 2014).

4.1.3 Outcome

By 2013, the Greek economy had shrunk by 18 percent, which made it the longest and deepest recession for an established Western democracy of all time (Ellinas, 2013, p. 544). The fact that this could happen to a EU country can be described as worthy of criticism. Still, the Eurozone managed to survive during its worst crisis, despite the many predictions of the so called "Grexit", the Greek withdrawal from the Eurozone, or even a total collapse of the EMU. There is no doubt that the Euro crisis has led to a more integrated Europe, due to the mechanisms that were used in the saving of the southern indebted economies and in the institutional frames that have been built in the preventing of such a crisis to strike again. Schimmelfennig suggests that the outcomes of a crisis automatically become a result of intergovernmentalism:

In a crisis triggered by a shock to and failure of the existing integration regime, member state governments revert to intergovernmental conflict about distributing the burdens of the crisis

and hard bargaining, in which asymmetries of interdependence and bargaining power determine the integration outcome. (Schimmelfennig, 2018, p. 972).

Moravcsik also claims that integration crises promote interdependence and policy co-ordination and that “[...]states negotiate to achieve the integration outcome that maximizes their national interest” (Schimmelfennig, 2018, p. 973). This explanation fits Merkel’s management of the Euro crisis perfectly, as Art claims that the [...]German rescue of the Eurozone has come under German terms”, and how Angela Merkel largely has “[...]gotten her way” in the remaking of the EMU (Art, 2015, pp. 186-187). Liberal intergovernmentalism also suggests that governments sought the delegating of competences to supranational institutions to maximize the benefits of integration, which was exactly what Merkel decided to do as she involved the IMF in the crisis management (Schimmelfennig, 2018, p. 973) (Council on Foreign Affairs, 2021).

A long list of legislative acts prove how the fiscal regulation and supervision in EMU have been strengthened as a result of the crisis management of the Euro crisis, for instance the “Six-Pack” and “Two-Pack” legislations and fiscal surveillance that ensures that the member states national budgets are balanced (Schimmelfennig, 2018, p. 980). Most notable is the Fiscal Compact, which by Art is characterized as a remaking of the EMU in Germany’s image (Art, 2015, p. 197):

Yet the current version of the Fiscal Stability Treaty contains very little in the way of concessions to other states because Germany’s relative power has increased, particularly in relation to France.

This comparison is an interesting aspect, as Germany and France had taken different positions in their views on how to solve the Euro crisis, as unofficial leaders of each coalition, the northern coalition of Austria, Finland and the Netherlands, led by Germany, and the southern coalition consisting primarily of the countries in need of financial aid. The northern coalition’s position based on balance of payment policies and austerity measures was a path that mainly was chosen in the remaking of the EMU, opposed to the southern position, which called for solidarity and bail-outs, rather than hard policies (Schimmelfennig, 2018, p. 977). In other words, as Germany eventually came around and accepted the rescue packages, the northern position sounded “We lend - you economize”, whereas the southern position was “fund us - unreservedly”.

Although the Euro crisis has never been fully resolved, stability and fiscal order has been restored thanks to intergovernmental rescue processes and a sense of duty among the EU member states. The EU passed an important milestone on 20 August 2018 as Greece's final bail-out loan was paid out and the Greek government was no longer dependent on the Troika (Walker, 2018). Nevertheless, Greece was still suffering from the highest unemployment rate in the EU in 2019 at 16,6 percent and the government is still indebted, albeit not in the uncontrolled manner like before the Euro crisis, but as a part of the permanent rescue fund which was established at the peak of the crisis, together with the banking union (Schimmelfennig, 2018, p. 970). The Greek debt is estimated to be fully repaid in 2060 and the economic growth is still slow. Nevertheless, Greece, along with the other southern states face challenges in a Eurozone which has gone through remarkable reforms, having laid the foundations for stability, due to fiscal policy co-ordination, which leaves the states capable of rebuilding their economies.

The fact that the outcome of the Euro crisis can be described as resulting in the crisis-struck states being able to rebuild their economies can easily be explained by liberal intergovernmentalism, as the rebuilding of economies in the already economically integrated Europe will undoubtedly be favourable for the largest export-oriented states, such as Germany, who's position in the crisis management was crucial to the shape of the outcome. Merkel knew that saving the Eurozone was the same as taking care of Germany's economic interests, which points back to core elements of liberal intergovernmentalism (Schimmelfennig, 2015, p. 182). She also realized that being dedicated to the saving of Greece would have positive economic ripple effects. The markets calmed as a result of Germany's willingness to interfere, showing how the actions taken by government leaders can make a difference both directly, but also indirectly, by being in a position of influencing psychologically due to the heavy weight of ones country in the intergovernmental bargaining. I thus argue, that the analysis of the Euro crisis proposes a confirmation of the hypothesis of the paper, due to the clear correlations that can be drawn between Merkel's influence as a result of her strong bargaining position, and the outcome of the crisis, which manifestly consisted of institutional strengthening, being a process that deepened European integration on the perhaps most important policy area.

4.2 Case study 2: Migration Crisis

4.2.1 Background

As Europe was still struggling and trying to heal from the Euro crisis, another international crisis struck the union in a way that called for strong European leaders and international bargaining in the work of maintaining the European integration process. In a union where solidarity, trust and institutional framework already was deeply challenged during the debt crisis, yet another challenge emerged, this time also mainly in the southern parts of the continent. This was due to the Mediterranean countries border lines to Africa and the Middle East, areas in which already long lasting conflicts now began to have a serious impact on the European migration situation. This part of the paper, focuses on how the refugee migration turned into a political crisis and jet another challenge to European integration, again forcing Merkel to take action to keep the union together.

As over 1,3 million refugees applied for asylum in Europe in 2015, the first problem for the EU was the breakdown of the arrival systems in the southern flank countries, in particular Greece and Italy (Biermann, Guérin, Jagdhuber, Rittberger & Weiss, 2019, p.253). EU had to take common measures in order to solve the arrivals of thousands of refugees, which was also Angela Merkel's view of the matter (Tassinari & Tetzlaff, 2016). At the same time, Merkel also stated that "everything must be done to preserve Schengen" (Biermann, Guérin, Jagdhuber, Rittberger & Weiss, 2019, p. 254). Mixed together with her famous "welcome-policy" on the national policy stage, a very difficult base was built for the managing of the European migrant crisis in terms of finding a solution, at least as a united Schengen Area.

The perhaps most prominent reason why the migration crisis was so difficult to handle can be described through the uneven impact on the EU countries, which was opposed to the Euro crisis which in the end could have led to the collapse of the EMU (Biermann, Guérin, Jagdhuber, Rittberger & Weiss, 2019, p. 248). One can without doubt argue that this was a result of the fact, that integration on this area was not as deep as at the economic area, leaving the EU as a whole less vulnerable to spill-backs in times of crisis if the climate for solidarity and willingness to common effort was less present. The migration crisis was not felt as a threat to all EU countries, especially not to the northern and Eastern member states, but primarily to the southern arrival states, that already suffered financially in addition to being the countries that now also felt abounded with the arriving migrants. Schimmelfennig (2018) argues that "Exit costs from Schengen pale in comparison with exit costs from the Eurozone", which explains

why the countries not directly affected by the immigrants acted less interested in finding a common solution compared to the Euro crisis (p. 970).

4.2.2 Crisis management

During 2015, Angela Merkel's speech on the 31st of August became the symbol of the German role and leadership in the crisis with her famous words "wir schaffen das!", we can manage this!. It marked a significant moment, where Germany's welcome-policy was manifested, a policy which she later realized was not sustainable, firstly in terms of balancing domestic policy affairs, secondly in terms of keeping the EU together. Merkel's position was in contrast to the response of especially Hungary, which found itself in the middle of the migrant corridor for the migrants who came from Greece on their way to the northern European states, such as Germany and Austria, which also exhibited a welcoming tone by opening its borders to the migrants as Hungary closed its, albeit due to the deal they struck with Merkel, who opened the German borders, leading to the arrival of 20.000 migrants in Munich in a day (Najimdeen, 2016, (p. 79). Hungary has been perhaps the most challenging country during the crisis, taking position as the leading anti-refugee EU state, heading the campaign of voting against the ECJ refugee quota system as a part of the movements in especially Eastern EU states concerning a diversity of unrest due to crises on the economic, identity and anti-EU field (Najimdeen, 2016, p. 80). Hungary was clearly not acting in accordance with the EU expectations on how to handle migration within the union.

The guideline for the handling of refugees and asylum applicants in the EU was established in 1999, as the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) was introduced, in which the Dublin Regulation plays an important part (Jones, Teytelboym & Rohac, 2017, p. 6). The Dublin Regulation stipulated that asylum seekers must apply for asylum in the EU country in which they arrive. Most importantly, the CEAS states the following:

EU countries have a shared responsibility to welcome asylum seekers in a dignified manner, ensuring that they are treated fairly and their case is examined following uniform standards. This ensures that, no matter where an applicant applies, the outcome will be similar. Procedures must be fair, effective throughout the EU, and impervious to abuse (European Commission, 2021a).

The different reactions to the migration flows in 2015/16 did on the other hand portray a far less unified EU on the asylum matter, than what was established in 1999, where the lack of pursuing the policies agreed upon clearly stated the need for more co-operation, policy-making

and thus deeper integration on the policy area. I argue that the need for stronger institutionalization will become stronger in the years to come, due to ever increasing international migration which definitely will create the need for better systems to prevent the outline border countries from collapsing and thus question the advantages of their EU membership, or at least of being part of the Schengen Area. Thus, this, I argue, has not been the case in the aftermath of the migration crisis.

The crisis management of the Migration crisis was largely a task for the national leaders of the EU member states, which meant that solutions had to be found working in the European Council, an institution consisting of the European state leaders, where unanimity is the rule of policy making. This made the solution of obligatory migrant quotas, proposed by Merkel and the French president Francois Hollande with the support of the Commission leader Jean Claude Juncker, impossible due to the hostile positions of especially the Eastern member states (Jones, Teytelboym & Rohac, 2017, p. 9). This made Merkel and Juncker have to play their last card. They instructed the presidency of the Council, which at the time was held by Luxembourg, to call for a majority vote, which indeed can be argued to be a bold game to play in terms of keeping the union together under the roof of solidarity and equality (Percy, 2019). The vote resulted in the overruling of the Eastern member states, which now had to accept being part of the European migrant quota system of relocation of 120 000 immigrants already on European soil, whereby for instance Hungary was also expected to take its share (Council of the European Union, 2015, Annex I & Annex II).

Even though the decision of the Justice and Home Affairs Council in September 2015 marked a breakthrough in, what for the past months had seemed to be a totally locked negotiation, it quickly became clear that the situation was not sustainable, especially for the countries that until now had been most willing to take the immigrants, like Germany and France. Now another crisis proved possible on the political scale as the far right actors were starting to gain considerable foothold, with the rise of nationalist populist party Alternative für Deutschland in Germany and the predictions of a good turnout in the upcoming election for the already well known Front National in France. In order to prevent far-right backlashes, it became clear that a deal had to be struck with the “bridge towards Europe”: Turkey (Percy, 2019). During the winter of 2016, both the president of the European Council, the President of the Council, which at the time was the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Angela Merkel met with the Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu to hatch out a deal which he later characterized as a “win-

win solution” (Percy, 2019). In the deal, which Merkel in particular pushed for due to her realizing it was the only way to calm her now more migration sceptical domestic affairs, and was agreed upon on the 18th of March 2016, Turkey agreed to the returning of all migrants who had crossed to Greece from Turkey who was defined as refugees not in need of international protection. For every migrant that was returned to Turkey, the EU would resettle another Syrian who meet the criteria for asylum, also known as the 1:1 scheme (Yilmaz-Elmas, p. 169). In return, Turkey gained visa liberalization for its citizens, in addition to a financial support of 3 billion euros to ensure the stopping of the migration flows to Europe (Najimdeen, 2016, p. 76). In addition, Turkey demanded a revitalization of Turkey-EU relations, having wanted to join the union for a long time (Percy, 2019).

4.2.3 Outcome

Since 2016, the deal between the EU and Turkey has been upheld, succeeding in preventing migrants from the Middle East to entering Europe through the Balkan corridor. Although the deal has proven to be fragile, due to Erdogan’s frequent threats of breaking the pact, which would lead to the arrival of new migrant flows arriving on Greek shores, the COVID-19 situation forced the Turkish president to keep the border closed and thus the migration into the EU under control (Kirişci, 2021). During 2015 885,000 migrants travelled through Greece on their way to central and northern Europe, while in the following year of the EU/Turkey deal, only 42,000 illegal migrants crossed the Aegean Sea in 2017, and the number has stayed significantly lower ever since compared to the year of 2015 (Kirişci, 2021). The number of illegal entries between border-crossing points in the EU as a whole went from over 1,8 million in 2015 to 511,000 in 2016, and has seen a steady and marked decline to 205,000 in 2017, 150,000 in 2018 and 142,000 in 2019 (Statista, 2020). In 2020 the decrease was even more excessive, at only 114,300, a decrease by 10% of the already relatively low 2019 numbers (European Commission, 2021b).

According to Schimmelfennig (2018), liberal intergovernmentalism suggests that “[...]the states that are hardest hit by the crisis and stand to gain most from (more) integration, or lose most from disintegration, find themselves in a weak bargaining position and most willing to compromise” (p. 973). This explains Angela Merkel’s reaction to the migrant crisis in 2015 in a good way, as her opening of the borders and thus taking the by far largest responsibility in settling the migrants can be seen as a huge compromise in the European context. On the other hand, Merkel’s reaction can also be seen as little forward-looking, because her decision clearly

made the words of Germany's welcome-policy spread in the Middle East, potentially making the migrant flows even bigger, and the pressure on the external Schengen borders even higher and the migrant corridors through the co-operation sceptical member states even more crowded. One can thus argue, that her actions triggered the other intergovernmental suggestion, that the least affected states by the crisis seek to uphold the status quo and thus are best able to achieve their preferred policy (Schimmelfennig, 2018, p. 973). This is, I argue, because Merkel's idea of compromising in the heat of the moment was meant to create a room for co-operation and crisis management discussion, which in the end backfired on her, because it did not lead to the co-operation and policy making to deal with the crisis that she obviously hoped for.

On the contrary, liberal intergovernmentalism predictions were confirmed, in accordance with the assumption that outcomes are reflected in the national preferences, relative bargaining power and interstate collective action problems (Moravcsik & Schimmelfennig, 2019, p. 74). In the Eastern European context, with the states finding themselves in the middle of, or neighbouring the migrant corridors, this proved to be correct as leaders of Eastern European countries met at a summit in Prague on the 15th of February 2016, hatching out a plan on closing the Albanian, Macedonian, Bulgarian and Serbian borders to Greece and thus blocking the route towards Western Europe (Percy, 2019). The sudden Eastern European partnership of migrant hostile states is a perfect intergovernmentalist picture on how states seek to co-operate when the terms of the co-operation fits the current national interests, which now concerned keeping the electorate in the Eastern states satisfied, or at least reassured, that their leaders did not bend for the Germany-led pro migration policy, which would mean letting the migrants pass through, in addition to agreeing on allocation of migrants from the border outline countries. They knew, that pursuing a common agenda as a group would prove difficult to overrule and that the imposing of sanctions against them would not be possible due to the already weak integration on the policy field and thus the lacking of institutional framework to enforce the EU majority will.

Merkel's leadership role in the migration crisis rooted, just like in the Euro crisis, in the control she possessed on the domestic level, mixed with her personal experiences as a youth of the DDR. One can without doubt argue that her humanitarian impulses was a result of her own experiences, having grown up in an authoritarian state from which thousands of citizens fled, or died in the attempt of reaching the Federal Republic. As news of thousands of boat refugees in the Mediterranean drowning, 71 asphyxiated refugees in a human trafficking truck in Austria

and the picture of the body of third-year-old Aylan, who had been washed up on the Turkish beach, circulated in the media, Merkel acted from a humanitarian perspective (Mushaben, 2017, p. 97). Additionally, Merkel's time in office prior to the migration crisis had been characterized by reforms on the migration policy area and thanks to her ability of calculations due to her physicist profession, Merkel's awareness of the demographic deficit in Germany that would pose a threat to the economy in the near future had played a key role in the proactive National Integration Plan of 2007, already leaving Germany very well equipped for the arrival of migrants in 2015 (Mushaben, 2017, p. 95).

One can without doubt argue that Merkel's role on European integration has been far more limited in the migrant crisis in comparison to the Euro crisis. The welcome-policy turned back on her, both EU-politically and within her own ranks, and the only solution at the time, which was to struck a deal with Turkey, was without doubt not intended to be the long-lasting solution it has now proven to be, as the deal still prevents the migrants from arriving on EU shores in such high numbers as those of 2015. With this in mind, the paper's hypothesis can be answered partly rejective and partly confirmative from the migrant crisis perspective. On one hand, one can argue that Merkel has played an important role in the migrant crisis because of her decision to take responsibility by opening the borders in the summer of 2015 as an act to release the pressure of the Balkan route. When realizing that bargaining within the EU would not lead to sufficient solutions, she again took responsibility by using her bargaining power when making a deal with Turkey without the president of the Council of the European Union, Donald Tusk, being involved in the process (Percey, 2019). On the other hand, her ability to policy-making within the EU proved itself to be restricted, a limit which I argue can be explained using liberal intergovernmental assumptions regarding the national interests of the Eastern EU member states. With this said, I argue that Merkel to some extent has kept EU integration at status quo on the field of migration policy, which after all can be said to be an achievement, taking the circumstances of a crisis never before experienced by the EU into account.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to explain to what extend the German Chancellor Angela Merkel has exercised influence on the European integration process during her time in office, which has been strongly characterized by the Euro crisis and the migration crisis. There is no doubt, that the influence she exerted to a large extend was dependent on the interest of the other EU

member states, regarding how much of her policies she gained support for, and thus was able to implement. The paper clearly portrays how Merkel has played an important role in the current outcome of the migration crisis, mostly due to her willingness in compromising when realizing that the policy-making within the EU member states failed on finding sustainable solutions due to the uneven affectation, leaving integration at a status quo. Her role thus consisted of using her bargaining power in the outcome which after all, has led to the Schengen Area not breaking apart due to what can be seen as a result of what largely can be used to define her political career as a whole: pragmatism and Realpolitik in the policy-making processes on seeking the best outcome possible under the given circumstances, balancing national interests and the interests of the EU, towards which her passion on a personal level can be described as limited.

The situation in the Euro crisis was different, primarily due to the member states' wish for Merkel to interfere and thus bringing the strongest EU economy actively into the crisis management. The analysis points out how this is in sync with liberal intergovernmentalism's expectations, which I have argued was due to the much stronger integration on the monetary field, than what was the case on the migration policy field. In light of this, national interests among the member states were in accordance with the interests of the EU as a whole, although the strategies on how to save the indebted states, and thus the Euro, were diverse. Due to Merkel's strong bargaining power, she was able to reform the EMU largely in her own preferences, although parts of the rescue packages also contained the wishes of the southern coalition, like for instance the establishing of the permanent rescue fund. This shows how her sense of pragmatism and compromise also had an impact on the crisis outcome, because it would mean that the indebted states were more likely to accept the terms of austerity measures, which Merkel saw as an absolute necessity for the ability of the rebuilding of the economies of the southern states.

I argue that Merkel's influence on European integration can be characterized as a constant aim for stability, a core term of Merkel's role in EU policy-making and what she has wanted to achieve when interfering on the EU political stage. The Euro crisis outcome resulted in strengthening of the EMU framework, aiming for a more stable and predictable European fiscal policy and more importantly, the upholding of the institutions through deeper integration. Additionally, I argue that the need for deeper integration on the migration policy field has been very clearly portrayed and that liberal intergovernmentalism also offers good explanations on how deeper integration seems impossible on the policy areas struck by a crisis when integration

finds itself on an already low level. Thus, I have argued that the key point is to push for deeper integration in times of stability and high institutional trust in order to be sufficiently equipped for the handling of future crises.

Never before has a European leader possessed more power in European policy-making, as Angela Merkel as the de facto leader of the EU. Her role as a crisis manager has largely characterized her political career and the outcomes, which largely decided the current shape of European Integration, and this paper portrays how these outcomes and thus European integration to a great extent have been formed under her heavy influence of the pragmatic, nevertheless steady hand of the German Chancellor. Although the paper concludes on different outcomes of the crises in terms of having driven European integration forward on two important policy areas, it clearly confirms the core element consisting of the importance of the dynamics of integration which rests on the importance of interaction between the individuals on the political stage. As Merkel in short time resigns, it will be interesting to follow the developments in the EU policy-making in the years to come. Will the new German Chancellor take on the role in the same way, thus becoming the figure other EU member state leaders look to in the crises to come?

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