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Merkel, Germany and Europe's Migrant Crisis – Analyzing Domestic-International Synergies in Chancellor Merkel's Policy Framing Process

Abstract

During 2015, the series of crises Europe has faced during the past years was followed by a migrant crisis. Once again the policy positions of German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel were intensively discussed. However, as the crisis has evolved, Merkel's active role in managing the crisis has met strong opposition both from the other EU Member States and domestically from the CDU/CSU and SPD key political figures. This article views that there is a need for more complex syntheses of international and domestic explanations. It will qualitatively examine Chancellor Merkel's cognitive policy framing process during the migrant crisis. Furthermore, the rationalist two level games approach will be applied to complement the analysis. Hence, all three levels of analysis will be considered. In tackling the crisis, Merkel is trapped between the international and national level: a bigger picture of the migrant problem and longer-term policies are required European-wide and internationally but at the same time states and the public are facing the shorter-term consequences of the migration flows and calling for quick solutions. Thus, the German policy of continuity is again challenged with nuances of change.

Key words: Germany, Europe, migration, framing, leader

1. Introduction; Merkel's Migrant Policy Conduct as Further Indicator of Normalization Development of German Foreign and European Policy?

During 2015, the series of crises Europe has been facing during the past years was followed by a migrant crisis. Once again the policy positions of German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel were intensively discussed as the Chancellor took a visible role in managing the crisis. However, as the crisis evolved, Merkel's policies started to meet opposition both from the other EU Member States and domestically. Although the German government was able to agree on national package of measures regarding the management of the migrant crisis quite early on, there have been disputes between the Chancellor and her own party CDU as well as with the sister party CSU and junior coalition party SPD. Furthermore, in course of the events, the support of the German public has been fluctuating.

Since the reunification of Germany, the scholars have been debating on the future direction of German foreign and European policy. Some scholars view that change is taking place in German foreign policy, emphasize German responsibility or even Germany returning to “normality”, which does not imply unilateralism but rather weighing foreign policy options from cost-benefit perspective. The opposite end of researchers rely on continuity of German foreign policy and view Germany’s role even as “civilian power” (*Zivilmacht*), which e.g. abstain from the use of military force (Rittberger, 2001; Kirste & Maull, 1996). However, there is room for nuanced analysis between these approaches, where continuity and change interact in the concrete policymaking world.

I view that in recent years the role of Chancellor Merkel in guiding German foreign and European policy has grown. During the second term, in the aftermath of the financial and economic crisis, the link between Merkel’s political beliefs and German policy content strengthened and during third period of office this development seems to have continued. However, during the third term, the domestic setting has again altered and Merkel is leading CDU-SPD grand coalition. Furthermore, in its scale the current migrant crisis is an international challenge the European states have not faced in decades.

This article will qualitatively examine Chancellor Merkel’s causal beliefs and cognitive policy framing process during the migrant crisis in 2015. Furthermore, as there is an increasing need for more complex syntheses of international and domestic explanations, a rationalist two level games approach will be applied to complement the analysis. Hence, all three levels of analysis (Waltz, 1959) will be considered. In tackling the crisis, Merkel is “trapped” between the international and national level: a bigger picture of the migrant question and longer-term policies are required European-wide and internationally but at the same time states and the public are facing the shorter-term consequences of the migration flows and calling for quick solutions. Thus, the German policy of continuity is again challenged with nuances of change.

The article will try to cover two questions. Which type of nuances of continuity and change is it possible to observe in Chancellor Merkel’s policy framing during the first year of the migrant crisis? How would it be possible to explain these changes? The qualitative longitudinal content analysis (see Corden & Millar, 2007a; 2007b) will be used to draw inferences based on Merkel’s speeches held both to European and national audiences, European Parliament and German *Bundestag* as well as interviews and speeches held in various press conferences. In addition, further newspaper

material will be used in explaining the domestic-international synergy in Chancellor Merkel's policy conduct.

2. Beliefs, Frames and Two Level Games: Connecting Constructivist Research Approach to Rationalist Theoretical Framework

This article will study Chancellor Merkel's causal beliefs and cognitive policy framing process during Europe's migrant crisis. The causal beliefs can be defined as "cognitive understandings of the world" which "provide guidelines or strategies for individuals on how to achieve their objectives" (Tannenwald, 2005: 14, 16). According to Kelley & Michela (1980:468), the leader approaches problems with beliefs about the causes and effects involved. They view that if there is a certain effect, there are also suppositions about its causes and contrary, if there is a certain cause, there are also expectations about its effects. "As a consequence, explanations can often be given for events without analyzing information in the more complex ways [...]. If the processing of current information does occur, it rarely proceeds without some influence from preexisting suppositions and expectations."

I view that with the dissemination of these causal beliefs the leader aims to influence others both internationally and domestically. This underlines the importance of the cognitive mechanism of framing. Framing is a strategic act of the leader to "fix meanings, organize experience" (Barnett, 1999: 25). Cognitive frames are an important element of the leader's political strategies, because if those frames are successful they "resonate with broader public understandings and are adopted as new ways of talking about and understanding issues" (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 897). Therefore, leaders compete to frame issues and events: they acknowledge that the way the issue or event is understood "will have important consequences for mobilizing action and furthering interest". Barnett (1999:15) views that importance of frames is reinforced at historical moments defined by cultural contradictions or competing visions of the future. However, in constructing frames, the leader might face "firmly embedded alternative norms and frames that create alternative perceptions of both appropriateness and interest" (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998: 897).

As the past months indicate, the migrant question is complex and it has both national and international aspects. Thus, framing the migrant question is utmost important for the leader.

However, the institutional context where the framing takes place both internationally and domestically should also be examined, as it may be crucial in defining whether the framing will be influential. Hence, in addition to ideational, the analysis should also focus on the institutional setting, “the political context in which actors strategize and are potentially organized across a political space and toward a policy outcome” (Barnett, 1999: 16). It can be viewed that through framing, the leader may try to manipulate the institutional setting in order to get more room for maneuver for defining his policies.

Hence, this article will combine cognitive framing to a rationalist two level games approach (Moravcsik, 1993; Putnam, 1988), which places the leader between two levels and argues that statesmen are trying to manipulate the domestic and international politics simultaneously. Moravcsik’s approach acknowledges that domestic policies can be used to influence outcomes of international bargaining and that international action may be only targeted at achieving domestic goals (1993: 15–17).

International outcomes may depend on the strategy a leader chooses to influence his own and other countries’ domestic polities. The leader can exploit control over information, resources and agenda-setting vis-à-vis his own domestic polity and thereby open possibilities internationally. Conversely, the key executive can apply international strategies in order to alter the character of domestic constraints. (Moravcsik, 1993: 15.) I view that in conducting the policy in question, the use of these strategies can be sequential. At one point, a first strategy can be useful whereas later the second strategy might become more valid.

One very important phenomenon of the two-level-games approach is termed by Putnam (1988) as synergy. According to Moravcsik (1993: 26-27), leader uses synergy when “international actions are employed to alter outcomes otherwise expected in the domestic arena”. By using the power in setting the international agenda or linking issues internationally, the leader has the power to shape the way in which issues are approached, framed and decided domestically. I view that managing the domestic constraints is crucial for the leader. Manipulating these constraints gives the leader both the institutional room for maneuver and increases the leader’s influence in framing the policy question both internationally and nationally.

The leader must also take the international constraints into account. According to Moravcsik (1993: 27–28), if both parties want to reach an agreement, “a differential in the relative size of the win-sets shifts the distribution of costs and benefits in the favor of the player with a more constrained win-set”. Thus, the view that internal divisions weaken the state’s bargaining position should also consider the two-level game approach’s perspective, according to which “divisions may under some circumstances strengthen it”. (See also Putnam, 1988.)

Hence, the leader tries to shape the domestic constraints in order to be able to further his policies by either constricting or expanding the win-set. Constricting the domestic win-set is called “tying hands”. By expanding the domestic win-set, the leader is “cutting slack” in order to “accommodate to international agreement that might otherwise be rejected”. Here again, the leader may attempt to exploit the asymmetrical information by “deliberately exaggerating to opposing negotiators the tightness and inflexibility of domestic constraints”. Furthermore, the statesman can “raise the costs of no-agreement to key constituents on the other side” or use different persuasion tactics towards other countries. (Moravcsik, 1993: 28–29.)

Moravcsik’s theoretical approach offers premises also for the individual level. According to Moravcsik, the leader “will employ ‘double-edged’ strategies only if they further his or her own aims”. The preferences may include the leader’s interest in strengthening his domestic position, “an effort to mobilize an optimal response to international imperatives, regardless of domestic factors”, or individual policy preferences about the issues in question, which possibly originate from past political history or personal views. (Moravcsik, 1993: 30.) I view that at the moment Chancellor Merkel is caught between two levels, and therefore, Moravcsik’s theoretical premises are an excellent point of departure for the analysis of “double-edged” strategies available for the Chancellor.

To conclude, I view that the logic of appropriateness works alongside the logic of consequences in the concrete policy-making world. I agree with Finnemore & Sikkink (1998) in that the constructivist and rationalist approaches should be linked theoretically in order to analyze the different nuances of policymaking and to understand how individual, domestic and international levels interact with each other. In the following analysis, the leader is seen as an actor who may exercise instrumental rationality and whose actions are intentional. However, the cognitive and constructivist logic is used

to analyze how the leader (re)constructs meaning, (re)frames policy and shapes interest both internationally and domestically.

3. Analysing Chancellor Merkel's Policy Framing Process and "Double Edged" National and International Strategies during Europe's Migrant Crisis

Merkel's Values Affecting Both National and European Migration Policies and Actions

As the migration question rose onto the agenda of the EU heads of state and government, during spring 2015, Merkel held the view that all Member States had the responsibility to take part in receiving refugees: the solidarity went hand in hand with responsibility:

"[...] the pan-European responsibility does not end at the sea rescue. Also in reference to reception of refugees solidarity between the Member States should be self-evident. It cannot be that three-quarters of all asylum seekers are received from only five Member States of the European Union. All Member States have the responsibility to participate in accepting refugees at an appropriate level. Solidarity and responsibility must go hand in hand . [...]" (Merkel, 18 June 2015.)

She pointed out that all Member States needed to implement a joint European system to deal with asylum seekers. Furthermore, co-operation with the countries of origin and transit states would be necessary. (Merkel, 18 June 2015.)

Merkel viewed that EU level action was needed in order to meet the migration challenge. She discussed the strong role of Germany in Europe by stating that once again it came down to Germany's power and strength in tackling challenges. She considered that in contrast to the past, the world saw Germany as a country of hope and chances. (Merkel, 31 August 2015.)

From early on, Merkel stated her personal commitment and values in regard to the migration and refugee crisis. She considered that there was a clear juridical basis, which was derived from the Basic Law: the Basic Law for political asylum knew no restriction in regard to the number of asylum seekers. (Merkel, 31 August 2015). She reminded of the fundamental right expressed in Article 1 of the Basic Law, according to which "human dignity shall be inviolable" and stressed that "the fundamental right to asylum for the politically persecuted knew no upper limit" (Merkel, 11 September 2015):

"[...] We have to accept large numbers of people and given they have a right to stay, we should integrate them in our countries. We should here remind us of our fundamental values, guided by the Article 1 of our Basic Law: human dignity shall be inviolable." (Merkel, 11 September 2015.)

During the first months of the migrant crisis, Merkel mainly framed the migrant question in terms of a national task based on values (Merkel, 26 August 2015) and maintained to German people "*Wir schaffen das*" – we will manage this:

"I say simply : Germany is a strong country. We should approach things with motif: we have done so much – we will manage this! [...] The federal government will do everything in its power - together with other countries, together with the municipalities [...]." (Merkel, 31 August 2015.)

She considered that the government, *Länder* and municipalities were capable of taking the right and necessary measures, however, things should be accelerated. She pointed out that the government would agree on a comprehensive package of measures on 24 September 2015 and hoped that the package could be carried quickly through parliament. Merkel underlined that also a meeting with the societal groups would be arranged in order to combine the necessary exertion of force. (Merkel, 31 August 2015.)

Because of the historical burden, the migration challenge was not an easy question for Germany. Therefore, Merkel continuously stressed the positive means and actions taken domestically and made the migrant question a national concern with the aim of gathering the support of all societal groups. According to two-level games' logic this could give Merkel some more international room for maneuver for example in the EU negotiation tables.

One of the most important national tasks for Merkel has been how to integrate the migrants. Hence, Merkel's national frame included integration measures from early on. One of the reasons why Merkel paid so much attention to integration was due to German experiences from the 60s when Germany welcomed foreign workers; "*Gastarbeiter*". She admitted that the integration did not succeed well back then. (Merkel, 4 October 2015.)

According to Merkel, the German economy was strong, its labour market robust and even receptive in reference to qualified employees (Merkel, 31 August 2015). She stressed that lessons should be learned from the past and that integration should now be given the highest priority. She also underlined that if Germany was to succeed in the integration task, it would bring more chances than risks (Merkel, 9 September 2015). Hence, if the migrants would be integrated properly, if they would learn the language and get longer-term perspectives for residence and employment (Merkel, 31

August 2015), it would have significant benefits for the economy. Thus, as a demographically declining country, Germany could gain long-term benefit from welcoming migrants.

Domestic and EU-wide Opposition to Merkel's Policies Increases

At the beginning of the crisis, Merkel framed the migrant question in terms of national measures and her own personal views. Also the wider German public supported her policies, which was crucial for Merkel because in international crisis situations the importance of the domestic audience starts to increase. However, as the crisis went on, the day-to-day practices in Germany became increasingly affected by the great number of refugees and the continuous migration flows started to raise intolerant opposing voices and provoked also violent demonstrations. Merkel defended her values against the extremist actions:

"[...] We respect the human dignity of each individual, and we oppose with full force of our constitutional state those who accost other people, who attack other people, who put their houses in fire or want to use violence. We oppose those who invoke demonstrations with their hate songs. There is no tolerance for those who question the dignity of other people. [...]" (Merkel, 31 August 2015.)

She stated that the democratic state would turn against those who attack other people or invoke demonstrations (Merkel, 31 August 2015). Hence, Merkel's policy of continuity based on historical experiences and values started to meet opposition as Germany, the *Länder* and municipalities were reaching the limits of their capacities.

The rising extremist voices were not the only opposition Merkel's migrant policies had to face domestically. Also members of the junior coalition party SPD, such as Vice-Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel and Federal President Joachim Gauck, were critical. Federal President Gauck opposed Merkel's migrant policy by saying that "our heart is wide but our possibilities are limited" and warned against division of the country in the migrant question. (Welt Online, 27 September 2015.) This might have gradually started to limit Merkel's room for maneuver domestically. Furthermore, in contrast to the past, the support of small anti-immigration opposition party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) started to increase somewhat and PEGIDA organization (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*) gained supporters, and they were to balance the Chancellor's powerful position in shaping German policies.

Merkel reflected on the diverse opposition by stating that the task of the Chancellor and the government was to regulate the migration flows in order to decrease the amount of arriving refugees. As the crisis extended, she refused to give any estimation of the number of arriving asylum seekers, because the previous forecasts had led to questionable perceptions: if Germany would have said in the summer that up to 800 000 refugees were to be counted, it would have given the wrong impression to other countries that Germany would also expect those 800 000 refugees. (Merkel, 17 October 2015.)

Thus, if the domestic opposition was increasing, Merkel's migrant policy received criticism also from other European capitals. In the beginning of the crisis, the Chancellor did not inform her EU partners, including France, about the German open-door policy towards refugees (Newsweek, 15 September 2015). However, Merkel quickly found common views with President Hollande. She urged that Europe should act together: the burden should be fairly shared among Member States, and mandatory quotas for refugees across the EU countries should be agreed on. This was supported by the European Commission, which planned to propose a new permanent system of emergency refugee-sharing in the Union. (The Guardian, 24 August 2015.)

The national and EU-level opposition started to become a constraining factor for Merkel's migrant policy. Internal national divisions became evident towards mid-September, and Germany introduced temporary border controls and suspended the Schengen agreement in regard to open borders. According to German Minister of Interior Thomas de Maizière, the aim of the controls was to limit the migration flows and to return to orderly procedures when people enter the country. He also urged other EU Member States to do more. (BBC, 14 September 2015.) Although this procedure may have to some extent limited the inflow of refugees to Germany, it sent a message to the refugees' countries of origin that Germany's capacities were limited and thereby ease the domestic pressure, the main audience may still have been at the EU level. In order to further Germany's interest and reduce the number of refugees sustainably, Chancellor Merkel would need the EU and the other Member States.

In order to reinforce German commitment to Europe, in early October, Merkel gave a speech together with President Hollande in front of the European Parliament:

"The whole European Union is needed in tackling these tasks. We must not fall back into action of national governments in the refugee crisis. On the contrary, right now we need more Europe. We need more than ever the courage and cohesion [...]. Germany and France are ready for this." (Merkel, 7 October 2015.)

She stressed that instead of falling back to acting as separate nation states, 'more Europe' and solidarity would be needed (Merkel, 7 October 2015). Despite this active policy dissemination at the EU level, her migration policy was still increasingly criticized by many East European countries, whose positions became characterized in the person of Hungary's Prime Minister Victor Orban. Merkel defended German policies against the criticism of the Hungarian head of the government:

"[...] Where countries have tried to isolate themselves with fences, as in Hungary, it has only meant that the refugees have taken other routes, not become less. For me, the conclusion is firstly that we protect the European external borders effectively, secondly, that we achieve a fair distribution of refugees within the EU and thirdly, that we tackle the causes of flight." (Merkel, 17 October 2015.)

Merkel pointed out that if the states would respond to the migration flows by building fences, the refugees would only choose other routes - they would not become less. Therefore, she held that there should be a European and international solutions: European external borders should be protected, there should be a fair distribution of refugees within the EU and the causes of flight must be tackled. (Merkel, 17 October 2015.)

Hence, it should be discussed why Merkel faced fierce opposition on many levels. Through different crises, the role of Chancellor Merkel has grown not only nationally but also in international and European politics. So, because of Germany's leading role in many issues over the past years, the domestic expectations on the Chancellor's strong decisive policies may have grown. On the other hand, Germany has been quite strongly led by Merkel's beliefs and values, hence the Chancellor's strong position might lead to opposing voices rising on the domestic level. Furthermore, the expectations might also have increased of the other EU Member States on Merkel to take even stronger positions in managing the European-wide crisis. However, German actions throughout the crisis could be seen as dictating as they have not taken responsibility for Europe but have still been pressuring others to act according to the will of Germany. This may cause opposing reactions. Thus, if Merkel's early decision to "open the doors" was seen in other countries as a unilateral German action, other states would follow according to their own national interests.

Also the President of the European Council Donald Tusk expressed his views on how Germany should fulfil its role in Europe. According to Tusk, Germany should "play a leadership role in ensuring the EU's external borders are properly protected" and viewed that "the EU's security needs may be

different from Germany's". He viewed that it was understandable that for historical reasons it was difficult for Germany to implement a strict regime on its national borders. However, Tusk pointed out that Germany's leadership responsibility within the EU also required it "to protect the external European borders decisively if necessary, in accordance with pan-European unity". (Deutsche Welle, 8 Nov 2015.)

As Merkel stated in the beginning of the crisis, once again all the expectations turned to Germany when it came to solving the crisis. Although a more interest-oriented approach may have gradually started to guide German foreign and European policy, there is a strong tradition of a policy of continuity based on historical experiences and values, which was also noted by Tusk. Thus, German turbulent policymaking was a mix of continuity and change, closely followed by the heads of EU institutions and states, and a pure interest-oriented approach was not among policy choices: Germany is strong only through the EU.

The domestic and EU-wide expectations on Germany and Chancellor Merkel also indicate how the normalization of German foreign and European policy is (re)constructed in day-to-day policy practices. Under Chancellor Merkel, Germany's role has started gradually to increase and more responsibility is already expected both domestically and on the European level. Once these expectations become vocal, as we have seen in the migrant crisis, there is no easy way to return back to the path of pure continuity. Thus, during her 10 years in office, Chancellor Merkel has started the normalization process of German foreign and European policy and this process may be hard to stop, even by the successor: the political beliefs of Chancellor Merkel have gradually become institutionalized in German policy practices and in the national understanding.

Merkel Tying Hands Domestically: International Frame on Migrant Policy Strengthens

Merkel continued to act nationally. She stated that the German government would create the necessary framework conditions and agree on a package of measures by October 2015 (Merkel, 9 September 2015). However, Merkel knew that the quick national solutions would not solve the migrant question longer-term. According to her, smart action was needed, not apparent solutions. (Merkel, 17 October 2015.) Thus, sustainable longer-term policies would be necessary in order to

be able to manage the migrant question in the future. However, these policies would not stop the migration flows entirely - Merkel was “trapped” between the domestic and international level.

The longer-term international frame on the migration question started to become observable as Merkel began to increasingly discuss the international perspective of the migration question. She pointed out that Europeans were tightly connected to global events (Merkel, 7 October 2015) and underlined that the most important cause of the migration flows to Europe was the war in Syria. Merkel pointed out that isolation would not be a smart alternative either for Germany or the EU:

“Isolation in the 21st century given the Internet is also an illusion. It would not be a reasonable alternative for either Germany or the European Union as a whole. Hence, only joint action on all levels is the way to meet the requirements of our globalized and digitalized time and with which we will manage to overcome this historical test. [...]” (Merkel, 15 October 2015.)

She highlighted the importance of joint action on every level in order to manage this historical test. Thus, one should act simultaneously on all levels from the national (*Bund, Länder, municipality*) to the EU and global levels. (Merkel, 15 October 2015.)

The Chancellor’s co-operative beliefs and the international frame on German migrant policy required wider international co-operation. Hence, she considered that a political dialogue was needed in order to stabilize the situation in Syria. The dialogue should include Russia as well as international and regional actors. (Merkel, 7 October 2015, 15 October 2015.) Turkey, according to Merkel, played a key role as a gateway for irregular migration in managing the migration challenge:

“Turkey plays a key role. It is our immediate neighbor and origin of irregular migration. Turkey performs remarkably the maintenance of more than two million refugees from Syria. But it needs our intensified support - in the care and accommodation of refugees, in border security, in the fight against smugglers. The migration policy dialogue, the European Commission has begun with Turkey, is therefore of such a great importance. Germany will support these efforts by the Commission bilaterally. [...]” (Merkel, 7 October 2015.)

Thus, the migrant question was gradually reframed more as an international challenge. By emphasizing the international frame of the question, it was easier for Merkel to continue to shape policies internationally with longer-term outcomes. Furthermore, it would also increase German influence in the migrants’ countries of origin and in the Middle East region as a whole.

In addition to increasing German international power, emphasis on the international frame might gradually alleviate Merkel’s tight domestic situation. Merkel’s hands were tied nationally because of domestic opposition. The international frame might have given her more room for maneuver

internationally for shaping policies, which may have had longer-term EU-wide and national effects e.g. a reduction in the number of refugees. Thus Merkel, by framing the question internationally, is making domestic politics with foreign policy, which allows her also more international room for maneuver; in foreign policy matters the Chancellor has more power for defining policies and for acting.

Framing Leads to Action: New German U-turns, Increased International Co-operation and EU Member States' Pragmatic Co-operation

Domestic turbulence however continued. In early November, Merkel met with one of the loudest critics of the Chancellor, the CSU leader Horst Seehofer, in order to ease the criticism within the party. They were able to produce a position paper, the priorities of which implied that the migrant question be gradually reframed more in international terms also in domestic debate. The central goals were firstly to manage the migrant influx, to combat the causes of migration and reduce the number of refugees and secondly, to secure integration (Positionspapier CDU/CSU, 1 November 2015; EU Observer, 2 November 2015).

However, only a couple of days after the meeting where a compromise was made between the coalition parties CDU and SPD, Germany announced that it would once again apply Dublin rules in regard to asylum for Syrian refugees; this was a U-turn compared to the German decision in August to suspend Dublin rules for Syrians. Merkel's hands continued to be tied domestically as some of the key ministers supported tougher migration policies. However, according to two-level games' logic, domestic divisions may even strengthen a country's bargaining position on the EU level. Furthermore, a gradually hardening German position may raise other Member States' costs of no-agreement with Germany as the pressure of the migrant flows turns towards other Member States.

The Paris terrorist attacks in mid-November were largely condemned in Germany. President Hollande's initiative to activate the mutual defence clause of the Lisbon Treaty as a response to the attacks might however have helped Chancellor Merkel in placing the migrant question in an international frame, as the linkages between the countries of origin, security and migration were increasingly becoming crucial in the gradual solving of the question.

Following the Paris events, in December, German *Bundestag* approved a military mandate in Syria. Merkel explained the importance of this decision. She viewed that the French initiative was a clear appeal for the whole European Union to oppose a common threat. She stressed that it could be carried out successfully with combined strengths of partners in Europe, the United States and in the region:

“With France, for the first time, a Member State has invoked the mutual assistance clause of the Treaty of the European Union. This is a clear appeal to the entire European Union, to oppose this common threat. We can afford that by joining forces - with our partners in Europe, in the United States and in the region.” (Merkel, 16 December 2015.)

Merkel underlined that Germany would meet this international responsibility: the decision allowed the *Bundeswehr* to perform reconnaissance, protection and logistics for the alliance in the fight against the Islamic State in Syria. She pointed out however that Germany would make efforts to achieve a political solution in Syria on top of the *Bundeswehr's* contribution. (Merkel, 16 December 2015.)

Thus, Merkel to some extent relieved the domestic pressure as a consequence of increasingly framing the migrant question in international terms, acting domestically and the decision made to approve a military mandate in Syria: the support of CDU was increasing after three months of decline (19 August 2015: 43 per cent, 17 November 2015: 36 per cent and 22 December 2015: 39 per cent) (Spiegel Online 2015–16). This may indicate that the international frame of the migrant question had started to gradually work domestically.

The Chancellor continued to emphasize the role of both international and European level co-operation (Merkel, 16 December 2015), which was reflected in the EU summits held with the African (initiated by Merkel) and Turkish counterparts. Furthermore, as the measures relating to establishing the Hotspots did not seem to proceed quickly enough, Merkel announced that a core group of eight EU Member States, a “coalition of the willing”, was preparing to resettle refugees from Turkish camps in the upcoming year. According to Merkel, also other Member States could join this coalition in the future. (EU Observer, 30 November 2015.) During the different crises in the past years, Merkel has increasingly emphasized a pragmatic, instrumental, view of co-operation, which aims a goal, but which may include only some states willing to proceed further in the issue in question. The migration crisis seems to be no exception in this respect.

In late December, the German domestic situation took a further turn as the news became public of the harassment of women by migrants at Cologne's central train station on New Year's Eve. As a consequence, CDU's support began to decline and AfD's started to increase. (Spiegel Online 2015–16.) Thus, Merkel's domestic room for maneuver started to tighten again. In the international sphere, the efforts to enhance the cooperation between the EU and Turkey during the spring in 2016, might also affect Chancellor's domestic standing. The future will however show whether the opposition Merkel faces will have more serious domestic consequences.

4. Concluding Remarks; Leader as Agent of Strategic Social Construction

The aim of this article was to examine German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel's causal beliefs and policy framing process during the first months of the Europe's migrant crisis. In the early stages of the crisis, Chancellor Merkel started to frame the migrant question according to her personal beliefs and values, which was supported by the German public. Merkel stressed her personal views: "human dignity shall be inviolable" and "the fundamental right to asylum for the politically persecuted knew no upper limit" and encouraged German public atmosphere with "*wir schaffen das*" – we will manage this. In the background of her policy positions can also be viewed German difficult history and failed integration of the migrants in the 60's.

However, during autumn the day-to-day practice in the Member States started to get overwhelmed by the increasing migration flows and the public began to call for quick solutions. Domestically, the key political figures both from the junior coalition party SPD and the sister party CSU criticized Merkel's open-door migrant policy. Also some leaders of the other EU Member States opposed Merkel and viewed that her policies operate as a pull factor for increasing migration flows.

Merkel defended her policies by stating that it was her duty to contribute so that the migration question could be solved longer-term. She stressed that she was not seeking apparent solutions but rather sustainable ones. Although national measures (incl. laws) were necessary in the beginning of the crisis, a comprehensive understanding of the migration question and long-term policies were required in order to reduce the number of refugees sustainably. Thus, Chancellor Merkel was gradually getting "trapped" between international/EU and national level in conducting German policies.

Hence, in course of the events, Chancellor Merkel started to reframe the migrant question more in international terms. She stressed that Europe was tightly connected to global events. Merkel's belief on the nature of the operational environment seemed to reinforce towards more cooperative direction as she pointed out that isolation would not be a smart alternative either for Germany or the EU. In order to manage the migration challenge in the globalized world, Merkel underlined the importance of joint action on every level and viewed that one should act simultaneously on all levels from national (*Bund, Länder, municipality*) to the EU and global levels. Thus, the Chancellor's cooperative beliefs and the international frame on the German migrant policy required both coherent EU policies and wider international cooperation. Merkel's initiative to organize an EU-Africa summit as well as the EU-Turkey summit both worked to this end.

By emphasizing the international frame on the migrant question, it would be easier for Chancellor Merkel to continue to shape policies internationally with more long-term outcomes and increase German influence and interests in the countries of origins and in the Middle East region as a whole. Here, also the role of development policy is of importance. In addition to increasing German international power, emphasis on the international frame might also alleviate Merkel's tight domestic situation. Because of the domestic situation, Merkel's hands were tied nationally. As stated above, international frame might have given her more room for maneuver internationally for shaping policies, which may have longer-term EU-wide and national effects e.g. of reducing the number of refugees. Thus, Merkel is making domestic politics with foreign policy because in foreign policy matters the Chancellor has more power and room for maneuver for defining policies and to act.

The current domestic political situation in Germany is a definite constraining factor for the Chancellor. Some of the key figures from the junior coalition party SPD e.g. Federal President Gauck have criticized Merkel's open door migrant policy by stressing that German possibilities were limited. Furthermore, CDU's sister party CSU has stood openly against Merkel and would tighten German migrant policy. Also within the CDU some key politician have given opposing statements on Merkel's policies. Moreover, the public has become exhausted amid the migrations flows and there have been extremist attacks on refugees. Thus, Merkel's course is facing a strong domestic opposition.

Thus, it should be reflected why Merkel is currently facing fierce opposition on many levels. During the past years, through different crises, the role of the Chancellor Merkel has grown not only nationally but also internationally and in the European politics, as we have seen e.g. in the Ukraine crisis. Hence, it could be viewed that because of the past years and German leading role in many issues, the domestic expectations on the Chancellor and strong decisive German policies have grown. On the other hand, Germany is quite strongly led by Merkel's beliefs and values, and over time a strong position of the Chancellor might lead opposing voices to rise. Furthermore, the expectations of the other EU Member States on Merkel to take even stronger positions in managing the European-wide crisis might also have increased and the above discussed German actions throughout the crisis could be seen as dictating but not taking responsibility for Europe.

Therefore, it is important to analyze, which type of developments are thus signs of continuity and which could mean a change. As discussed above, the most common argument which has been presented by the opponents of Merkel's policies is that with its open-door policy Germany is attracting refugees. However, although the short-term expectations of other Member States and the public might support closing borders and even building fences at German borders as a quick fix, the consequences are far greater. Firstly, it would mean a change in German policies against the difficult historical background. Secondly, as Merkel has pointed out, it may not reduce the amount of refugees: they would search for other routes and create even more pressure in other EU Member States. And thirdly, and most importantly, by building fences and be solely driven by its own interests Germany could endanger the European project altogether. In this case, Europe would not only be faced with a migration question but also a German question.

This article viewed that "double-edged" strategies may become crucial in handling the situation of diverse expectations and Merkel's own approach. Thus, Merkel might have shifted to more international framing of the migrant question in order to not only have international but also national influence. Furthermore, she may try to shift the domestic win-set. I view that when the leader has both institutional and political power, he has the incentive to "cut slack" (see Moravcsik 1994) domestically in managing international crisis. The domestic situation in Germany is however now different: Merkel is currently in leading a grand coalition of CDU and SPD. In addition to junior coalition party, also the public opinion is opposing Merkel's policies and these factors constrain Merkel's policy conduct. Thus, "tying hands" may be an option for Merkel to deal with the EU

constraints and thereby to reach agreement with other Member States on a more coherent migration policy. The gradual shifting of policies domestically, the sudden U-turns, in the policy, e.g. regarding Dublin/Schengen agreement, may be a way to show other Member States what the costs of no-agreement with Germany are.

Although Merkel is to face domestic opposition, rise of extremist parties and even loss of support in the eyes of the constituents, these are however shorter-term consequences, which the leader must accept in tackling an abrupt and complex international crisis. It should be noted that she has faced opposition also before. The upcoming months will show whether these developments are only temporary fluctuation or whether they have more serious domestic consequences.

Thus, because of the longer-term effects, framing of the migrant question internationally may currently be more crucial than some of the domestic consequences e.g. of shifting public opinion. In international politics, framing is not indifferent, quite the opposite, it is of key importance. It is crucial to strategically frame the question, especially in the early stages of the crisis, because the actor(s) who place a frame first gets strategic advantage. Hence, in order to be able to question the frame, the opponents have to first challenge the existing frame and until then they can start to define the issue in their own terms.

The terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 gave the migrant issue even stronger international perspective. Throughout the crisis, Merkel has increasingly stressed the role of the transit states and countries of origin in managing the problem. The terrorist attacks enhanced this aspect. Thus, the migrant question should increasingly be framed internationally in order to reach agreement on longer-term policies because, as discussed above, migrant policy is also security policy. Here, the role of the development policy, which would discuss the humanitarian situation, development cooperation and aid, should not be neglected. Because of the catastrophic situation, only over time *Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe* as a development model linking development and commercial perspectives can be applied. Furthermore, a national frame, should be developed beside the international one. Although the international frame is aimed to influence also domestic audiences, every country has its own history with immigration. Thus, the effective integration measures and economic linkages may be crucial in creating a tolerant domestic atmosphere towards migrants and in managing nationalistic tendencies.

The migrant crisis shows that a joint and more active approach is needed also from the EU. A disunited and inefficient EU is not strong in managing the migration challenge but more importantly it is not strong enough against external threats or a strong negotiation partner in international conflicts. The more European states start to turn inwards, the easier it is for a third party or asymmetrical threats to influence their domestic politics. Therefore, after the Paris events the initiative of France and the later decision of EU Member States to activate the mutual defence clause of the Lisbon Treaty may gradually lead the Member States to get a joint, more coherent view of the migrant question as well as to start defining their policies in a more sustainable manner. Hence, in addition to wider international cooperation, also developing EU's foreign and security policy including European security and defence policy would be of importance in the future in managing various crises and their different issue linkages.

To conclude, Merkel's migrant policy conduct can be viewed as one indicator of the normalization development of German foreign and European policy. This article agrees with Bulmer (2011, 52-53), who views that German European policy could increasingly be characterized with a 'pragmatic evolution, with integration remaining important but no longer an end in its own right'. This means that Germany has adopted a more calculating approach vis-à-vis to the EU as we have seen in the course of the migration policy formation.

Although an interest-oriented approach may be increasing in German policy conduct both internationally and at the European level, it does not mean that Germany would abandon its European vocation. There is still mutually supportive linkage between the associated sovereignty at the European level and the semisovereignty at the German domestic level (Paterson, 2005: 274). However, Germany, as some other Member States too, might currently be in process of redefining its identity vis-à-vis the EU and because of Germany's central role and economic power, the interaction between continuity and change in German foreign and European policy has consequences for the whole Union.

The future analysis of German foreign and European policy should continue to focus more on the integration of international and domestic explanations which combines all levels of analysis from individual to domestic and international levels in a fruitful manner. A complementary rationalist theoretical framework may be the key in understanding the current nuances of change in German foreign and European policy. Here, the leader should be seen as an agent of strategic social

construction as he frames and defines the policies on different levels. Furthermore, depending on the availability of research material, a detailed analysis of the various domestic factors influencing German policies incl. migration policy could also be of further interest.

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