

Evaluation Master Thesis

Name student	Eliška Mičková	
Title of Thesis	An analysis of German-French Relations from the Perspective of Angela Merkel's Policy Towards the EU	
Supervisor	MMag. Dr. Doris Wydra, Mönchsberg 2, 5020 Salzburg, Tel. +43 662 8044 76076, doris.wydra@sbg.ac.at	
Date	28.5.2021	
Evaluation		
Statement of problem/ research question	Good (2)	
Outline and Structure	Very Good (1)	
Explanation of Concepts and Terminology	Satisfactory (3)	
Coverage of literature (relevance and extent) and Citation	Good (2)	
Critical analysis and application of theoretic approaches/ Methodology	Satisfactory (3)	
Language (Grammar, Orthography, linguistic expression)	Very Good (1)	
Comments		
<p>Angela Merkel has served as German chancellor since 2005 and as her term will come to an end with the elections in September 2021, it is a good time to analyse the impact she had on the European integration as well. As it seems to be common wisdom in research, that the European Union only moves forward if the "German-French tandem" is able to set common goals, it is only natural to have a closer look at the leadership provided by this tandem during the past 16 years.</p> <p>This is the aim of the master thesis and this research question is also clearly stated. Ms Mičková wants to address the changes the tandem managed to achieve, but also to analyse the disagreements. Interestingly already the research question disconnects the analysis from the broader topic of "leadership" and this problem persists throughout the work.</p> <p>While the research design is ambitious, the focus is not clear and the analysis itself has several shortcomings, probably the main problem being that it remains quite descriptive as the thesis does not make use of the analytical tools provided by the leadership literature.</p> <p>The title of the thesis would propose that the possibility for European leadership is analysed from the perspective of Angela Merkel's position: as German chancellor, as head of the CDU, faced not only with European, but also inner-German competition, she has a European agenda. Whether or not she is successful in pushing through this agenda depends in large parts on the prospects of cooperation with France. Taking Merkel's perspective (as the title promises) would have meant showing clearly her EU agenda, analysing how this relates to French positions, interests and aims as represented by different French presidents and then look at the dynamics within the tandem. Is Merkel able (because of her specific leaderships style) to push through German interests, when is compromise possible (and what does "compromise" mean – who has to give up what and how much in order to reach a solution? What are the institutional settings, in which this compromise takes place? Unanimity? Possible alliances with other states? Etc.)</p> <p>The thesis takes another approach, it choses mainly four sources from the leadership literature (Bass and Nye for political leaderships as such; Young and Koopmann for "EU</p>		

leadership"). The presentation of the leadership literature does not really represent a description of the state of the art. It summarizes the four sources, does not related them to each other, does not address them critically and neither Bass, nor Nye or Young are further applied in the analysis. The description of the cooperation between France and Germany is then presented according to the dimensions of Koopmann. There is a lot of literature on leadership and a nice analytical frame could have been developed from this: what kind of leader is Merkel? Is she a transactional or a transformational leader? Is it about structural, entrepreneurial or intellectual leadership? What difference for the German-French tandem does it make whether the French president has a leadership-style similar or different to Merkel? Or more basic: does it make a difference, whether he has a similar or a different ideological background (so can we expect that naturally it is more difficult to find compromises with France under a socialist president than under a president supporting a more free-market/less state policy?). No hypotheses or assumptions are developed and there is also no explanation provided for how the concepts are applied.

This is particularly problematic when it comes to "context". For all four periods contexts are chosen, but according to which criteria? Why is the rejection of the Constitutional treaty by France chosen as "context" for Merkel/ Chirac (as the referendum was before Merkel was even elected?) Why not focusing on the issues debated at the meetings of the European Council (e.g. in 2006 the initiative for "communicating Europe", the creation of the Visa-Information-System, the new mechanisms for migration?) Context is of course important for leadership, but it is multidimensional and the criteria for choosing specific contexts for analysis should be clarified. There is of course an "EU-context" – the different decisions, problems and challenges arising during a particular time period at the European level. But leadership is influenced by many more "contexts": a) on the domestic level: what are the competences of national "leaders" (and here we see a number of differences between the French president and the German chancellor); in which party system do they have to act? Does their party hold a parliamentary majority? For Germany: are there elections at the level of the federal states? How disputed is the national leader and his decisions internally? b) on the EU level: does enlargement change existing alliances? Which cleavages do we see in the EU between Member States (e.g. during the financial crisis France and Germany were "leaders" of opposite camps: France was siding with the "debtor" countries and aligned with Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece; Germany led the "austerity camp" together with Netherlands, Finland, Austria etc.) c) on the international level: unipolar or multipolar order? Role of the United States? Relations with Russia? Arab Spring? All of these factors provide a context for leadership-decisions, for possibilities of cooperation or conflict and there should be an explanation provided, why specific contexts are chosen for analysis.

It also remains unclear how specific outcomes are ascribed to a particular leadership of either Merkel, the French president, or the dynamics between them. No differentiation is made between French or German interests (deriving from a specific economic model – the French variety of capitalism with a particular institutional set-up; historic alignments etc.), party or coalition pressures (not everything in the CDU is Merkel) and the particular role of the French or German "leader". Further conclusions are drawn without providing any further explanations on the basis for these conclusions: e.g. "Merkel and Chirac were not very much on the same wavelength" (what are the reasons for this? The failure of the French referendum? Was this Chirac's fault?). "Germany did not consider leaving the document on the agenda. She agreed with her French counterpart on an interim solution" (from which documents is this taken? What is the interim solution? How was this agreed?).

While it is not fully clear, how the sub-chapter on Austria contributes to the argument, it also seems that the German-French tandem act in a vacuum when it comes to other member states, as they do not play a role (at least as context).

Overall, the thesis remains descriptive and presents an overview over French-German cooperation during Merkel's presidency. Nevertheless, it is an ambitious research question, it is well written and structured and covers different aspects of the literature.

Questions	Did the leadership style of Angela Merkel change since 2005? If yes, what induced the change, according to your opinion? If no, did this persistence contribute to getting her agenda implemented? Which factors supported or constrained French-German compromises during the financial crisis?
Overall Grade	Gut (2)

Thesis report: reviewer 2

For: Mgr. Eliška Mičková

Title: An Analysis of German-French Relations From the Perspective of Angela Merkel's Policy Towards the EU

The Master's Thesis examines German-French relations in the EU during the Merkel era. It builds on the premise that "good Franco-German partnership has proved to be crucial to European integration" and tests this claim using Koopman's 4-dimensional concept of political leadership. I appreciate the currency of the topic and also the choice of the theoretical framework.

The thesis asks three fundamental questions regarding the Franco-German EU leadership: What changes did they manage to achieve? How did their (dis)agreement affect the direction of the EU? With which of the French presidents did Chancellor Angela Merkel's interests and values converge the most? The author argues that her analysis proved that the German-French partnership plays an important role for Europe.

While I appreciate the topic, the extensive use of resources and the obvious work of the author, the thesis suffers of some substantial weaknesses. The theoretical framework is not well developed and would require a more thorough introduction and application. The choice of topics in each "tandem" is understandable but the analysis is too vague and shallow. I understand that the scope of the thesis limits the analysis, but in consequence, the stages are described briefly and do not allow for a deeper analysis. What I consider a strong limitation for the author's conclusions as they stand is that the author ignores completely other factors that have influenced the outcomes of the crises and does not address these limitations at all (did she control these intervening variables in any way?). The final comparison and the answers to the questions are also too general, descriptive, and even intuitive.

The structure and the language are comprehensible, the formal requirements are met.

The thesis complies with the Master thesis requirements but due to the aforementioned weaknesses, I recommend it the defence committee grade C.

Olomouc, 3 June 2021

Mgr. Lucie Tungul, Ph.D., M.A.