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# Maintaining the Permissive Consensus in Times of Crises: The Europeanness of Germany's Political Elites, 2007–2014

Lars Vogel\*

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**Abstract:** »*Elitenkonsens in Krisenzeiten. Europäizität der deutschen politischen Eliten 2007–2014*«. Germany's political elites have shared a 'permissive consensus' (Hooghe and Marks 2008) in support of European integration both before and during the global financial and economic crisis, as well as the subsequent Eurocrisis. Their Europeanness encompasses five independent dimensions: general support, trust in EU institutions, ideological aims and cultural boundaries of European integration, and the means of integration (intergovernmental or federal conceptions and policy delegation to the European level). This permissive consensus has not dissolved in the course of the crises and is strongest in terms of general support and trust, while some minor party differences exist regarding the socioeconomic aims, cultural boundaries and means of European integration. This stability is explained by Germany's dominant economic position in Europe and the marked absence of strong Eurosceptic parties in domestic politics during the period of investigation. Nevertheless, some adjustments with regard to the means of European integration occurred as a result of the empowerment of Germany's political elites during the crises.

**Keywords:** Political elites, European integration, permissive consensus, Germany, Eurocrisis, EU, Euroscepticism, Europeanness, Intergovernmentalism.

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## 1. Introduction

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This chapter is a case study on German political elites, charting the evolution of their attitudes towards European integration (Europeanness) between 2007 and 2014 and linking them to developments that took place in the long aftermath of the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy in 2008. Those developments are understood as one prolonged crisis comprising multiple stages, evolving from a global financial and economic crisis to a sovereign debt and ultimately a political crisis of the Eurozone and the entire EU (Eurocrisis). It utilizes a unique longitudinal research design, integrating three surveys conducted among Germany's

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national parliamentarians with partially identical questionnaires in 2007, 2009 (both IntUne) and 2014 (ENEC), thereby spanning various stages of the crisis.<sup>1</sup>

Three underlying research questions guide the chapter. Firstly, how is the Europeanness of Germany's political elites structured, given that research repeatedly confirms the Europeanness of national elites as a multidimensional set of attitudes (see below)? Furthermore, does Germany's political elite share a 'permissive consensus' (Hooghe and Marks 2008) concerning European integration, i.e. do they unanimously support its status quo and even its deepening, or are they rather characterized by a 'constraining dissensus' (ibid.), that is to say, European integration is politicized and MPs from competing parties differ significantly in their Europeanness? Finally, to what extent has elites' Europeanness changed in the course of the subsequent stages of the crisis?

The chapter proceeds from two assumptions. Firstly, that Germany's political elites are 'consensually unified' (Higley and Burton 2006) in the sense that they almost unanimously support European integration, and secondly, that this consensus has not dissolved since 2008. However, given the multidimensionality of Europeanness, some adjustments may have occurred due to experiences gathered in the course of the crises. These assumptions are based on the particular impact of the crisis on Germany's position within the multilevel system of the EU. Germany was exposed to the global financial and economic crisis in the same way that other Member States of the EU were, but faced neither a long-lasting economic recession nor a sovereign debt crisis afterwards. In fact, quite the opposite occurred: its rapid economic recovery post-2009 strengthened Germany's economic weight in Europe and made it the most important contributor to the rescue packages and institutional rescue mechanisms established during the Eurocrisis. Those measures are based on the principle of 'bailout-against-austerity', which extended Germany's domestic austerity policy to the European level. Thus, in contrast to most of the other countries investigated in this volume, Germany neither suffered a long-lasting economic recession nor was it forced by external actors to implement austerity policies and accompanying neoliberal reforms to prevent national insolvency. Finally, despite some domestic resistance to these policies and to Germany's financial obligations, no relevant Eurosceptic party entered the national parliament in the investigated period. Taken together, these developments give no reason to presume a decrease in Europeanness.

However, the rise of the Eurosceptic AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland*) to national prominence had already begun by 2013, and the party gained momentum immediately afterwards, making the politicization of European integration more likely. Furthermore, the rescue mechanisms established in the context of

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<sup>1</sup> In Germany, the ENEC survey was conducted in 2014 at the Friedrich-Schiller-University of Jena under the supervision of Prof. Heinrich Best for whose support I am particularly indebted.

the Eurocrisis strengthened the intergovernmental elements of European integration and the stratification of the EU based on economic asymmetries between Member States. As these developments entail an empowering of Germany's political elites, they may favor intergovernmentalism and a strengthened role of the Member States more than before the outbreak of the crises.

**Table 1:** Parties in the German Bundestag (Seats and Weighted Sample Distribution); Percentages

	2007/2009			2014	
	Seats 2007/9	Sample 2007	Sample 2009	Seats	Sample
Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU)	36.8	36.4 (29.9)	36.3 (32.9)	49.1	50.0 (34.4)
Social Democrats (SPD)	36.2	36.4 (45.5)	36.3 (34.2)	30.8	30.0 (40.4)
Liberals (FDP)	9.9	10.4 (9.1)	10.0 (13.9)	0.0	0.0
Post Communists (LINKE)	8.8	9.1 (3.9)	8.8 (8.9)	10.1	10.0 (20.0)
Greens (Grüne)	8.3	7.8 (11.7)	8.8 (10.1)	10.0	10.0 (5.7)
N	614	77	80	633	70

<sup>1</sup> Figures in brackets refer to the unweighted sample distribution. The bias in 2007 and 2014 towards left parties in 2007 and 2014 required weighting for all analyses of the entire political elite.

To investigate these assumptions in the context of a case study, the different potential causes of change in MPs' Europeanness must be considered. The surveys in 2007 and 2009 were conducted in the same legislative period of the German Bundestag and, accordingly, the target population did not differ. Thus, changes between these two waves are due to MPs or parties changing their stances and cannot be traced back to electorally-induced shifts in party strength in parliament or turn-over of MPs. In contrast, the MPs interviewed in 2014 were elected in 2013, implying that changes in Europeanness between 2009 and 2014 may be due to either changed stances or altered party composition of the parliament. In this respect, the dropout of the Liberals, the shrinking of the Social Democrats and the related strengthening of the Christian Democrats from 36.8 percent to 49.1 percent of seats mark the three pivotal re-arrangements (Table 1). Attitudinal change among MPs may be caused by altered party composition of the national parliament or by MPs or parties shifting their party stances. In order to disentangle these two sources of change, the analysis is conducted for the entire elite, and separately for the main parties Christian Democrats (CDU)<sup>2</sup> and

<sup>2</sup> By "Christian Democrats" we mean the joint parliamentary party group of the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) and its "sister party", the CSU (Christian Social Union). Both parties do not compete with each other but have divided their regions of interest. The CSU is limited to Bavaria and the CDU to the rest of Germany.

Social Democrats (SPD). A separate analysis of the remaining small parties is impeded by the number of cases available for study.

The chapter proceeds as follows. Section two outlines the European and domestic political context of German politics in the subsequent stages of the crisis, while section three identifies five dimensions structuring Germany's elites' Europeanness through a Principal-Component-Analysis (PCA). Section four develops the theoretical expectations concerning the evolution of Europeanness in the course of the crises and describes its longitudinal development between 2007 and 2014, separated for the five identified dimensions. The last section summarizes our results and provides some conclusions.

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## 2. European Integration and German Politics in Times of Crisis

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European integration has been supported by German national elites consensually and almost unconditionally since the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, at least until Germany's re-unification. Pro-Europeanism and European integration as part of the *Westbindung* helped to regain room of maneuver for Germany's national elites and ultimately the sovereignty of the nation state. They further flanked Germany's politics as a 'tamed power' (Katzenstein 1997) constrained by its integration into a supranational multi-level system, and supported the recovery of political trust despite the relative (economic and demographic) German dominance in Europe. Following re-unification and the end of the Cold War, however, national interests have gradually re-emerged as a guiding principle of German politics, which may have transformed the unconditional pro-Europeanism to a conditional one. Some observers perceive Germany's politics in the Eurozone crisis as driven by 'national interests and assertiveness' (Bulmer 2014, 1249), while the deepening of European integration and solidarity are reduced to rhetorical ornaments.

The events following the burst of the real estate bubbles in the US and other states in autumn 2008 began as a crisis of the financial and banking system, but because the credibility of banking houses was severely damaged, serious credit crunches soon occurred, resulting in economic contraction and rising levels of unemployment worldwide comparable only to the economic recession witnessed during the Great Depression in the 1930s. National governments responded with deficit spending and expanding public debt in order to bail out the banking houses allegedly 'too big to fail' and to substitute for investments not anymore provided by market-based credit flow. The addition of these bailouts and investments to the already existing levels of sovereign debt led to consequences that prompted the crisis to evolve further into a sovereign debt crisis in some EU Member States (see introduction to this HSR Special Issue, Vogel and Teruel 2016). Germany's debt rose from 63.6 percent of GDP in the

pre-crisis year 2007 to 81.8 in 2010 and has decreased since then. The GDP growth rate, which was negative in 2009 (-5.6), turned positive by 2010. In contrast, Greek sovereign debt totaled 103.5 of GDP already in 2007, while climbing to 146.2 percent in 2010. At the same time, however, the economy failed to recover from the 2009 decline; growth rates have remained negative since 2009. Thus, while Germany's economy underwent a heavy but short-lasting shock, Greece's economy has suffered from severe economic recession, while its state budget has faced skyrocketing levels of indebtedness since the outbreak of the crisis.

The interest rates of Greek state bonds increased rapidly by the end of 2009, when financial market actors lost confidence that Greece would continue to perform its debt service and major rating agencies downgraded Greece's credit rating. Initially, the German government considered the sovereign debt crises in Greece and other states, primarily in Southern Europe, as country-specific affairs caused by their internal structural problems (Bulmer 2014, 1253). This policy and rhetoric was hardly suited to calm the markets for state bonds, as it cast doubt on the notion that the economically prosperous states would eventually bail out Greece. The danger of a Greek default increased only a few weeks later, in Spring 2010 after the 2009 German federal elections – fueled by massive speculation and the Greek government's official request for financial aid. Amongst others, the German government feared that a Greek default would lead to the sovereign debt crisis spreading to other, especially southern, Eurozone countries and a return of the banking crisis in northern countries, given that these banks were Greece's main creditors (Hall 2012, 364). Thus, the EU agreed on the first Greek bailout in 2010, funded by the EU, the European Monetary Union (EMU) and the IMF. This rescue package was followed by bailouts of Ireland and Portugal and culminated in the establishment of the temporary European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) and later the permanent European Stability Mechanism (ESM).

These measures were designed to bailout EU Member States encountering difficulties selling their bonds on the private financial market and thus at risk of default, and were based on loans provided by the financially prosperous Member States, the EU and the IWF. The availment of these loans is conditional and requires that debtor states enact austerity policies to reach and/or maintain fiscal stability. These conditions have been firmly fixed in the European Fiscal Compact (EFC) and comprise amongst others a balanced state budget, a debt ceiling installed in the constitution of each country (or comparable level), and automatic sanctions should members fail to meet the conditions of the EFC. The EFC is a multilateral treaty signed by most EU Member States except the Czech Republic and Great Britain, thereby circumventing the decisional mechanisms and institutions of the EU.

Germany has played a major role in shaping this 'bailout-against-austerity' policy, which was determined by the widespread belief among Germany's

political elite that consolidating state budgets is key to economic growth and fiscal stability. Germany's economic strength made it the major contributor to the multiple rescue packages, and thus aided in enforcing its austerity policy at the EU level. This austerity policy was indeed challenged, but never abandoned, although the governments of various EU Member States tried to resist it and proposed alternative strategies, particularly given that this policy caused severe pressure in the form of political upheavals and the rise of populist parties, and despite the fact that some governments were even forced to resign in the course of this crisis (such as Greece, Spain and Italy). Germany's dominant role is last but not least reflected in the decision-making procedure of the ESM, in which vote share depends on a country's contribution to the ESM capital stock, giving Germany (and France) the potential to veto virtually every decision.

Despite the elevation of Germany's economic and fiscal principles to the predominant policy in the EU, resistance by domestic political actors in Germany has been present since the outbreak of the Eurocrisis. The 2009 national elections, held immediately before the Greek bailout when disturbances caused by the financial crisis had begun to recede in Germany, resulted in the termination of the governing grand coalition between Christian and Social Democrats. Henceforth until 2013, the government was based on a coalition between the Christian Democrats and the FDP (Liberals). The Social Democrats, who constituted the biggest opposition party over this period, were principally in support of the newly-elected government's bailout-against-austerity policy. Nevertheless, they called for economic investments as a supplement to austerity in order to support the devastated economies of the crisis-ridden countries, and demanded that private creditors participate in debt relief. In contrast, the Liberals, as junior partner in the governing coalition, had based their 2009 electoral campaign on clear positions in favor of tax cuts, and were thus reluctant to spend money on financially unconsolidated countries. Moreover, they regarded a Greek exit from the Eurozone as a potential solution to prevent further damage to the currency union. A party congress was held in 2010 to decide the Liberals' stance on the first Greek rescue package, wherein its supporters won, albeit only by a small margin. Subsequently, the number of defecting MPs in the ranks of the government continued to swell with every parliamentary vote on rescue packages for individual countries or the installation of the permanent rescue mechanisms (Zimmermann 2014, 328).

Despite this resistance, ongoing parliamentary support was secured by the Social Democrats. Consequently, the bailout of suffering Member States did not constitute a major issue in the electoral campaign of 2013 (Zimmermann 2014), although the election nevertheless resulted in the end of the governing coalition of Christian Democrats and Liberals (due to the complete dropout of the Liberals from parliament ) and was followed by a new grand coalition. Unlike many other European countries, the pressure from Eurosceptic parties in the election was marginal. The AfD, a party constituted only several months

prior to the 2013 elections and fundamentally opposed to the Euro and deepened European integration, failed to enter parliament. Nevertheless, it missed the threshold only narrowly and was successful in all subsequent state elections, as well as in elections to the European Parliament.

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### 3. Patterns of Europeanness among the German Political Elite, 2007-2014

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What drove the policy of Germany's political elites during the crises outlined above, have these crises altered their perceptions, evaluations and dispositions towards European integration, and if so, how? To answer these questions, a simple distinction between Europhiles and Eurosceptics is inappropriate, as it has already been demonstrated that Europeanness (Best, Lengyel and Verzichelli 2012a) encompasses multiple dimensions of attitudes towards European integration and elites' stances vary with respect to the dimension of Europeanness they are asked to evaluate. Accordingly, national elites are only rarely consistent Europhiles or Eurosceptics in all dimensions, resulting in party- and country-specific patterns of Europeanness (Cotta and Russo 2012).

Several dimensions of Europeanness have been identified. Best, Lengyel and Verzichelli (2012b) distinguish between an emotive, cognitive and conative-projective dimension. The first dimension is based on an emotional attachment to Europe and self-identification as a European; the cognitive dimension refers to the evaluation of the state of European integration between the two poles of further deepening and rolling back integration, while the conative-projective dimension comprises the approval or rejection of policy delegation to the EU. The concept proposed by Cotta and Isernia (2009) distinguishes between identity, representation and scope of governance, which is obviously closely connected to the aforementioned triad. However, the facet of representation primarily considers the relation between the nation state and the supranational layer, oscillating between intergovernmentalism and federalism. Cotta and Russo (2012) present empirical evidence for national elites in eighteen European countries, elucidating an even more differentiated structure. General support for supranational integration is fused with attachment (the emotive component) and with approval of federalism, i.e. strengthening the Commission and the European Parliament (the representation component). The allocation of policy competencies at the different levels (scope of governance) forms a distinct dimension, but is further differentiated by policy fields. Elites draw a clear delineation between the delegation of policies traditionally linked to the nation state (taxation, social security) and policies that transcend national borders (such as immigration, crime and environment). This distinction between national and transnational policies partially overlaps with the differentiation between redistributive and non-distributive policies (Best 2012, 236). Finally,

the evaluation of how one's own country is represented in EU politics and the asymmetric influence of its Member States constitute a fifth dimension.

To investigate the dimensions of Europeanness among German political elites, principal-component analysis (PCA) with non-orthogonal rotation is applied to a set of eighteen survey items suited to capture a wide variety of the abovementioned concepts (Table 2). The data for the PCA is the totality of all German MPs interviewed in all three survey waves (N=224). Some items initially included in the PCA were later removed, as they failed the even generous requirement of a KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criterion) exceeding .5. The answers to these items are accordingly independent of the remaining dimensions of Europeanness. Among them are respondents' opinions as to whether or not their own country has benefitted from EU membership,<sup>3</sup> the question as to whether or not economic differences between Member States are a threat to the EU overall,<sup>4</sup> whether health care policy is best allocated at the regional, national or European level,<sup>5</sup> and lastly, the perception that some countries have too much weight inside the EU.<sup>6</sup>

Five factors that display an *Eigenvalue* above one in advance to their rotation were initially extracted and subsequently rotated. The first factor is defined by the perception of two threats for European integration: Turkish accession to the EU and immigration from countries outside the EU,<sup>7</sup> as well as whether the primary policy aim of the EU is to increase the competitiveness of the European economy or the social security of its citizens.<sup>8</sup> This factor constitutes the *ideological (left-right) dimension* in terms of policy aims and cultural boundaries of European integration with elites on the right opposing Turkish accession and reluctant to accept immigration from outside the EU, but favoring competitiveness over social security. It is important to note that some other issues have

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<sup>3</sup> "Taking everything into consideration, would you say that Germany has on the whole benefitted from being a member of the European Union, or not?" 1 Has benefitted, 2 has not benefitted, DK, Ref.

<sup>4</sup> "Do you think that [...] is a threat or not a threat to the EU?" Here: Economic differences among Member States; 1 A big threat, 2 Quite a big threat, 3 Not a big threat at all, 4 Not a threat at all, DK, Ref.

<sup>5</sup> "How do you think it would be most appropriate to deal with each of the following policy areas? Do you think that [Health care] should be mainly dealt with at the regional level, national level, or European Union level?" 1 exclusively Regional/National, 2 including EU (volunteered), 3 mainly EU, DK, ref.

<sup>6</sup> "The interests of some Member States carry too much weight at the EU level". 1 Strongly agree, 2 Agree somewhat, 3 Disagree somewhat, 4 Strongly disagree, Neither, DK, Ref.

<sup>7</sup> "Do you think that [...] is a threat or not a threat for the EU?" Here: Enlargement of the EU to include Turkey / Immigration from Non-EU countries; 1 A big threat, 2 Quite a big threat, 3 Not a big threat at all, 4 Not a threat at all, DK, Ref.

<sup>8</sup> "I'm going to read you two statements. Please tell me which of them comes closest to your view." (rotated) 1 The main aim of the EU should be to make the European economy more competitive on the world market. 3 The main aim of the EU should be to provide better social security for all its citizens. 2 Both (volunteered).

smaller but noteworthy loadings on this dimension. Strongest among them is the general evaluation of the status of European integration.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the socioeconomic and cultural conceptions of European integration are fused on the left-right-dimension, while the general evaluation of European integration constitutes a distinct but partially overlapping dimension of Europeanness, i.e. MPs from the right are less enthusiastic supporters of deepened unification. This pattern further contributes to the multifaceted dimensionality of the three fundamental conflicts – socioeconomic, cultural, and supranational integration – that structure party competition throughout Europe in a multitude of combinations (Marks, Steenbergen and Hooghe 2012; Proksch and Lo 2012; Real-Dato, Göncz and Lengyel 2012, 77; Prosser 2016).

**Table 2:** Principal Component Analysis of Political Elites' Attitudes towards European Integration (KMO Criteria and Component Loadings)<sup>10</sup>

	KMO	Components				
		I	II	III	IV	V
Threats: Immigration from outside EU	.691	<b>.797</b>	.146	-.049	-.100	.138
Threats: Enlargement to Turkey	.745	<b>.764</b>	-.055	.167	.109	.302
Main aim of EU: Competition – Social Security	.805	<b>.693</b>	-.150	.233	.018	.050
Trust in European Commission	.571	.091	<b>.867</b>	.137	-.038	-.052
Trust in Council of Ministers	.622	-.268	<b>.786</b>	-.163	-.004	.016
Trust in European Parliament	.774	.171	<b>.569</b>	.157	-.148	.332
Member States should remain central actors	.819	.326	.033	<b>.635</b>	-.063	.110
The own country is <i>not</i> represented in EU	.780	.316	.023	<b>.628</b>	.187	-.183
National vs. EU-Army	.762	-.009	-.040	<b>.580</b>	.084	.095
Commission should become true government	.772	.044	-.278	<b>-.557</b>	-.045	-.369
EU should make policy: Fighting crime	.593	-.059	-.020	-.020	<b>.743</b>	-.087
EU should make policy: Environment	.643	.044	.009	.152	<b>.705</b>	-.069
EU should make policy: Unemployment	.686	.080	-.145	-.001	<b>.630</b>	.328
EU should make policy: Immigration	.711	-.115	-.006	.393	<b>.462</b>	.306
Powers of EP should be strengthened	.759	-.121	.310	-.341	.160	<b>-.606</b>
Unification should be strengthened	.854	.337	.094	.087	-.013	<b>.565</b>
Attachment to Europe	.828	-.136	-.199	.009	-.228	<b>-.537</b>
Eigenvalue		2.19	1.99	1.91	1.83	1.61

*Trust in EU institutions* constitutes the second factor.<sup>11</sup> Given that the European Commission (EC) comprises a federal element and the European Council of

<sup>9</sup> "Some say European unification should be strengthened. Others say it already has gone too far. What is your opinion? Please indicate your views using a 10-point-scale. On this scale, '0' means unification "has already gone too far" and '10' means it "should be strengthened". What number on this scale best describes your position?"

<sup>10</sup> Overall KMO: .726, Rotation: Varimax, Pairwise correlations.

<sup>11</sup> "Please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the following EU institutions to usually take the right decisions. 0 means that you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust: European Parliament, European Commission, European Council of Ministers."

Ministers an intergovernmental body, it is remarkable that trust in these institutions is much closer linked to each another than to trust in the European Parliament (EP).

The third factor is defined by the evaluation of the role of the Member States within the EU,<sup>12</sup> whether one's own country is adequately represented in EU policies,<sup>13</sup> stances on the establishment of a European army,<sup>14</sup> and finally whether or not development of the Commission towards a true executive body is supported.<sup>15</sup> This dimension of Europeanness is therefore suited to capture the distinction between *intergovernmental and federal conceptions* of Europe, with the former envisioning Member States (as opposed to the supranational commission) as central actors, exhibiting a preference for maintaining defense as task of the respective Member States, and sharing the conviction that the national interests of their own country are insufficiently represented in the EU. Nevertheless, since the two anchor items concerning the role of nation states display noteworthy loadings as well on component I, German MPs consider the cultural and economic aims of unification to be not entirely independent from the means thereof.

For German MPs, the *delegation of policies to the European level* constitutes a factor independent of the general evaluation of European integration and its core institutions.<sup>16</sup> This is similar to earlier results, according to which MPs take an instrumental view on the delegation of policies (Real-Dato, Göncz and Lengyel 2012), depending on which level (regional, national, EU) they can be conducted most efficiently at (Cotta and Russo 2012, 39) or at which their (redistributive) leverage for electoral gains in the national arena is maximized (Best 2012, 236). But the evaluation of policy delegation is even more nuanced. This dimension seems to be dominated by valence policy issues about whose aims – *reducing* unemployment and crime, *protecting* the environment – German MPs expect agreement between the Member States, but not necessarily about which means are most appropriate to reach them. Judging from the sec-

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<sup>12</sup> "The Member States ought to remain the central actors of the European Union." 1 Strongly agree, 2 Agree somewhat, 3 Disagree somewhat, 4 Strongly disagree, Neither, DK, Ref.

<sup>13</sup> "Those who make decisions at the European Union level do not take the interests of Germany into sufficient account." 1 Strongly agree, 2 Agree somewhat, 3 Disagree somewhat, 4 Strongly disagree, Neither, DK, Ref.

<sup>14</sup> "Some say that we should have a single European Union Army. Others say every country should keep its own national army. What is your opinion?" 1 A national army, 2 Both a national and a European Union army, 3 A European Union army, Neither (volunteered), DK, Ref.

<sup>15</sup> "The European Commission ought to become the true government of the European Union." 1 Strongly agree, 2 Agree somewhat, 3 Disagree somewhat, 4 Strongly disagree, Neither, DK, Ref.

<sup>16</sup> "How do you think it would be most appropriate to deal with each of the following policy areas? Do you think that [Unemployment, Immigration, Environmental policy, Fighting against crime, Health care] should be dealt with primarily at the regional level, national level, or European Union level?" 1 exclusively Regional/National, 2 including EU (volunteered), 3 mainly EU, DK, ref.

ondary loadings on other components, the issue of immigration is, in contrast, torn between the insight that it may be most efficiently handled at the EU level and the fear that this delegation will harm the national interest. Furthermore, immigration and (to a smaller degree) unemployment are determined by the fifth and final factor, which can be described as *general support for European integration* combining support for the strengthening of the European Parliament (EP),<sup>17</sup> the general evaluation of the state of European integration and emotional identification with Europe.<sup>18</sup> General support for deepened integration among German elites is primarily emotionally grounded, largely independent of the aims, means and particular policies combined with further integration, but linked to democratization of the EU by parliamentarization. As indicated by its secondary loadings, the prospect for further democratization via a strengthened EP is further supported by trust in this institution and by a federal conception of the EU.

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#### 4. Development of German Elites' Europeanness, 2007-2014: Expectations

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Given these patterns, what sort of development of German elites' Europeanness can we theoretically expect in the course of the subsequent crises since 2008? Against the backdrop of the economic origin of the crises and indications that economic considerations are growing in importance (Hobolt and Wratil 2015), a utilitarian approach seems to be most appropriate, stating that the support for European integration is conditional in terms of economic outcomes, either individually or with view to perceived collective outcomes for one's own country (Gabel 1998; Aspinwall 2007). Utilitarian considerations are especially important if salient economic outcomes are linked to European integration and if the choice for deepened integration appears as relevant to the outcome (Hooghe and Marks 2005, 422). This is definitely true for national elites forced to choose between national, federal and intergovernmental responses to the challenges posed by the crises. Since Germany has neither suffered prolonged economic difficulties (in contrast to most of the countries investigated in this HSR Special Issue), nor was it pushed to externally-imposed austerity measures, stability of Europeanness in all its dimensions seems likely. Moreover, the rescue measures, initially created for tottering banking houses and subsequently for European Member States, were successfully coordinated

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<sup>17</sup> "The powers of the European Parliament ought to be strengthened." 1 Strongly agree, 2 Agree somewhat, 3 Disagree somewhat, 4 Strongly disagree, Neither, DK, Ref.

<sup>18</sup> "People feel different degrees of attachment to their region, to their country and to Europe. What about you?" 1 Are you very attached, 2 somewhat attached, 3 not very attached or 4 not at all attached to Europe, DK, Ref.

between most Member States, which may have increased MPs' perception that European integration is beneficial for their own country, thus subsequently bolstering pro-European positions among them.

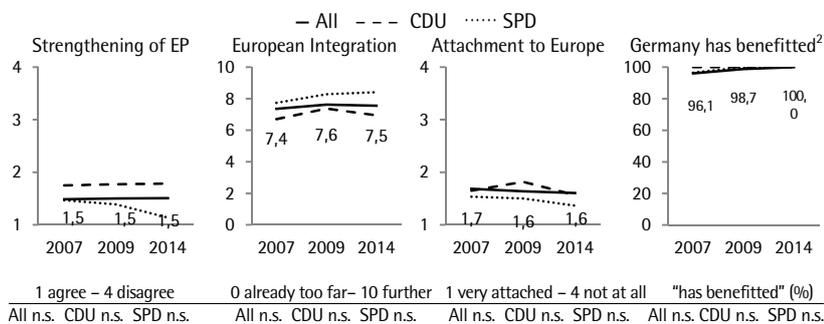
The utilitarian-instrumental approach could be expanded further. Intergovernmental views of European integration presume integration as a strategy of national elites to maintain or to enlarge its room of maneuver vis-à-vis the challenges and risks of globalization (Moravcsik 1999; Haller 2008). Its conduct and the means chosen for it are dependent on the trade-off between the empowerment and political support national elites gain from integration and the risk that they will be pushed to enforce unpopular policies imposed by the EU, for which they are then likely to be punished by their national voters (Best 2012, 236). Germany was able to transfer its national austerity policy onto almost all EU Member States, requiring and entailing a tremendous empowerment of German national elites. The politics that led to the EFSF, ESM and finally the FSC were dominated by intergovernmental regimes circumventing EU institutions and decision-making processes. We therefore assume a shift in the intergovernmental-federal dimension and its encompassing items to the pronouncement of the impact of the nation states. One caveat against this, however, is that MPs may be less empowered than their governments by the shift to intergovernmental regimes, which may make them less enthusiastic about it.

At the same time, punishment by voters in national elections became more likely, because the Eurocrisis contributed to the politicization of European integration in Germany. While the grand coalition exhibited broad agreement around 2008/9 to save national banking houses and find EU-wide solutions to (re-)regulate the financial- and banking sector, the agreement on rescue mechanisms for EU Member States has constituted a more controversial issue within German domestic politics. In particular, the various Greek bailouts have fueled anti-European sentiments in the public debate. Germany already undertook neo-liberal reforms beginning around 2003, which the public nowadays views as burdens that were nevertheless necessary for the subsequent positive economic developments in Germany. This positive evaluation and the perception of a lack of comparable will among the Greeks to implement painful but efficient reforms made the German public reluctant to support the bailouts. Despite upheavals in public opinion and among parts of the governing coalition, the populist AfD was nevertheless the only party that transformed these sentiments into anti-European stances. Thus, politicization occurs primarily as conflict between the established parties, which share a pro-European consensus, and the emerging AfD, comparable to the political situation in other countries (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2016). Nevertheless, the electoral heyday of the AfD did not begin before 2015 (see above), around the time that the inflow of refugees and migrants rapidly increased, indicating that the AfD was not a severe threat to the established parties until then. Therefore, major changes in the Europeanness of German MPs between 2007 and 2014 are not expected.

## 5. Development of German Elites' Europeanness, 2007-2014: Empirical Results

The various items surveying general support for European integration (component V) show no significant changes throughout the course of the crises. Large majorities of Germany's national elites favor strengthening the EP, deepening European integration, and feel, on average, attached or very attached to Europe. One important source for this general pro-European stance is their consensually shared and stable conviction that Germany has benefitted from European integration. Given this consensus, it becomes clear that this conviction is separate from the remaining dimensions of Europeanness.

Figure 1: General Support for European Integration 2007-2014 (Means and Percentages)<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Figures for means and percentages refer to "All". P-values for differences between years reported in the last row are based on F-tests for means and Chi<sup>2</sup>-tests for percentages. +p<.1; \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001.

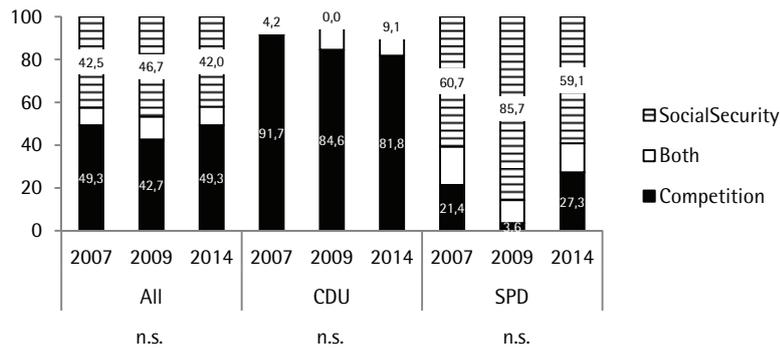
<sup>2</sup> Not included on PCA due to lack of variance.

Despite this consensual tendency, nuanced differences between parties can be observed: The general support among the Christian Democrats is slightly less enthusiastic, whereas the Social Democrats display a more supportive stance in all items. This support has not increased since 2007, as the differences between waves are not significant. These results confirm the assumption that the crisis had no negative impact on the general support of European integration among Germany's political elite. However, neither multilateral coordination in the global financial crisis nor the experiences of the Eurocrisis have increased the level of general support either.

In contrast to aforementioned general support, the ideological aims of European integration are more controversial, and are determined by the underlying left-right party competition. Political elites in Germany are rather divided on the issue of whether social security or competitiveness should prevail, with

Christian Democrats clearly opting for the former and Social Democrats for the latter (Figure 2). Nevertheless, there seems to be a consistent tendency among Christian Democrats to acknowledge social security as an important aim. This trend is accompanied by an increased emphasis of this aim among Social Democrats at the peak of the financial and economic crisis in 2009, although both developments fail to attain statistical significance.

Figure 2: Competition or Social Security as Main Aim 2007-2014 (Percentages)<sup>1</sup>

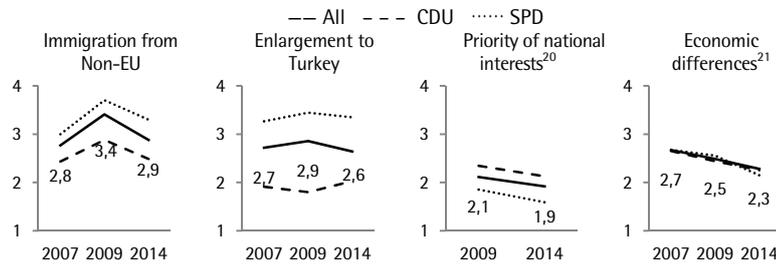


<sup>1</sup> P-values based on Chi<sup>2</sup>-tests.

The perception of the boundaries of European integration resembles this left-right-distinction (Figure 3). Christian Democrats perceive immigration from outside the EU and the potential accession of Turkey as much more pressing threats than Social Democrats. While the perception of Turkey remains stable during the crisis, the stance towards non-EU immigration is more volatile: its salience drops significantly in 2009 but rises again in 2014. The threats in question are externally induced, while the following two threats are constituted by the internal configuration of the EU. Both could not be included in the PCA<sup>19</sup> and exhibit a distinct development i.e. a continuous increase in salience of the two threats under consideration. German MPs regard internal threats as more severe than external threats and party differences are dramatically less pronounced. The perception of problematic economic asymmetries among Member States has increased during the course of the crises, while the assessment of superiority of national interests as threats remains quite stable. Thus, the crises have elevated the idea that economic asymmetry is a destabilizing element of European integration.

<sup>19</sup> The question of the priority of national interests was not asked in 2007 and the question about economic differences as threat had a KMO below .5.

Figure 3: Threats for European Integration 2007-2014 (Means)<sup>1</sup>

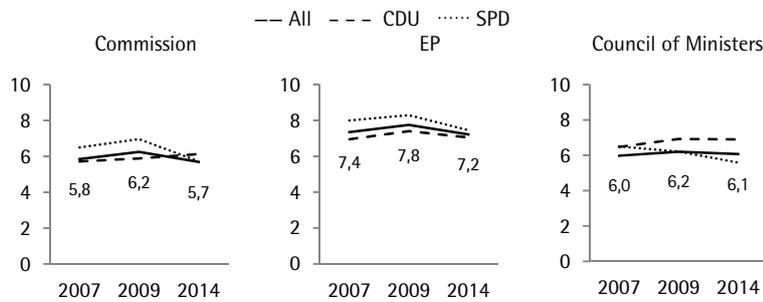


1 big threat – 4 no threat

All (\*\*\*) CDU (+) SPD (\*\*\*) All n.s. CDU n.s. SPD n.s. All n.s. CDU n.s. SPD n.s. All (\*) CDU n.s. SPD (\*)

<sup>1</sup> Figures for means refer to "All". P-values for differences between years reported in the last row are based on F-tests. +p<.1; \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001.

Figure 4: Trust in EU institutions (Means)<sup>1</sup>



0 no trust – 10 complete trust

All n.s. CDU n.s. SPD () All n.s. CDU n.s. SPD n.s. All n.s. CDU n.s. SPD n.s.

<sup>1</sup> Figures for means refer to "All". P-values for differences between years reported in the last row are based on F-tests. +p<.1; \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001.

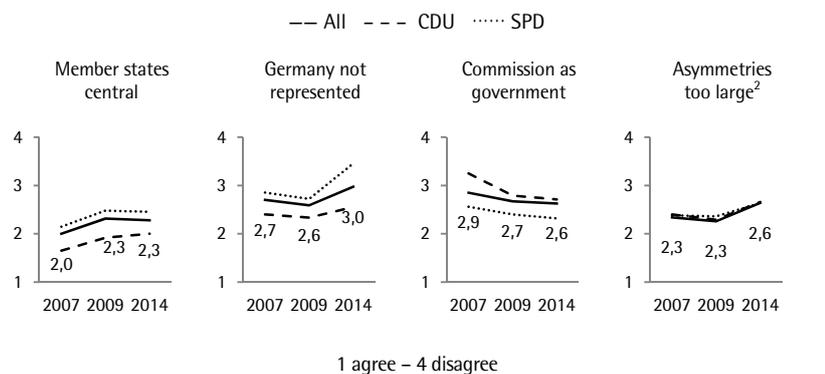
Trust in EU institutions is quite solid among German MPs, whereby the EP enjoys the highest trust (Figure 4). Trust remains stable during the course of the crises and party differences are negligible. Only the Social Democrats lost trust in the Commission at the peak of the global financial and economic crisis in 2009, but by 2014 they were back to pre-crisis levels.

<sup>20</sup> Question wording in FN 6. Here: The propensity of some Member States to put their national interest first.

<sup>21</sup> Question wording in FN 6. Here: Economic differences among Member States.

Intergovernmental and federal convictions concerning European integration seem to be more susceptible to change during the course of the crises. While a clear tendency to retain the Member States as central actors could be observed in 2007, the outbreak of the crisis in 2008 has slightly weakened this conviction, although the intergovernmental approach nevertheless prevails, especially among the Christian Democrats (Figure 5). The perception that Germany's interests are *not* adequately represented in EU decision-making was never widespread and has even decreased among Social Democrats since the financial crisis evolved into the Eurozone crisis between 2009 and 2014. Thus, Germany's political elite perceives a relative empowerment of their country in the course of the Eurocrisis. The minor increase in support for federal approaches could be observed as well in the stable or – among the Christian Democrats – gradually increased support to furnish the Commission with governmental competencies. Despite this tendency, Germany's political elites evaluate the path to federalism via an enhancement of the Commission as a secondary option compared to the path via a strengthened EP (see above).

Figure 5: Intergovernmental and federal concepts of the EU, 2007–2014 (Means)<sup>1</sup>



All (\*) CDU (+) SPD (\*\*\*)    All (\*\*) CDU n.s. SPD (\*\*\*)    All n.s. CDU (+) SPD n.s.    All (\*\*) CDU n.s. SPD (\*)

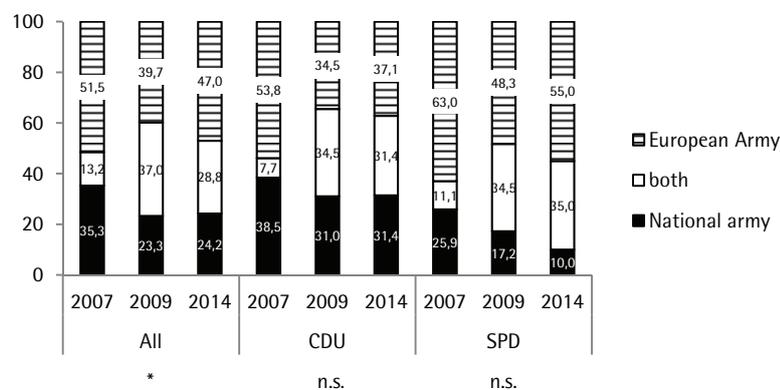
<sup>1</sup> Figures for means refer to "All". P-values for differences between years reported in the last row are based on F-tests. +p<.1; \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001.

<sup>2</sup> Not included in PCA due to KMO below .5.

Party differences structure all three items, with the Christian Democrats displaying a stronger intergovernmental view that emphasizes the national interest. In contrast, there is agreement between parties that the asymmetries between Member States in their influence on EU decision-making are dysfunctional. This perception has increased between 2009 and 2014, parallel to the increase of perceived German influence. Both items capture the relation

between Member States and their relative importance, whereas the two other questions consider the relation between Member States and supranational institutions. The latter convictions display a minor shift towards strengthening the supranational elements exclusively during the period of financial and economic crisis in 2009. The former convictions only change when the state budget crisis evolved to the Eurozone crisis. This may indicate that the initial period of the crisis was perceived by Germany's political elite as being characterized by similar challenges for all Member States, which alleviated common responses, while the deficit spending strategy to counter the global financial and economic crisis amplified national differences that subsequently began to dominate and to impede collective political responses within the EU.

Figure 6: National vs. European Army 2007-2014 (Percentages)<sup>1</sup>

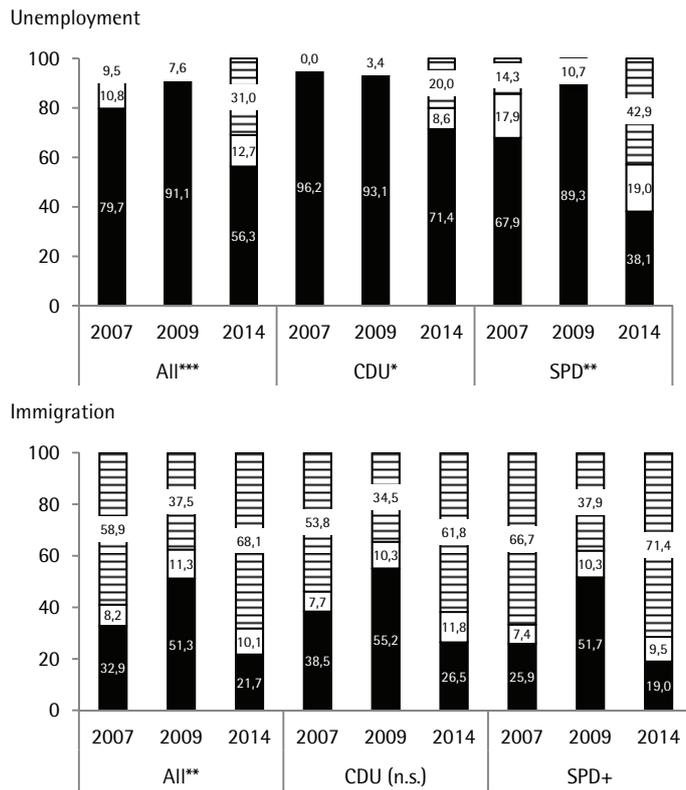


<sup>1</sup> P-values for differences between years reported are based on Chi<sup>2</sup>-tests. +p<.1; \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001.

Beyond general evaluations, the balance between Member States and the supranational level becomes especially visible in the preferred level of policy-making. A common European army substituting national armies is the litmus test for federal convictions, for the reason that defense policy is at the core of national sovereignty. Its importance is confirmed by the attribution of this question to the general evaluation of intergovernmentalism and federalism and by its demarcations to remaining policy issues evaluated on divergent principles. In 2007, an absolute majority of MPs preferred a European army to a national one, and although this majority decreased at the outset of the crises, it had almost climbed back to pre-crisis level in 2014 (Figure 6). However, there is a tendency among the Christian Democrats to remain at a lower level of support since 2009. The backdrop for a federal army is not accompanied by

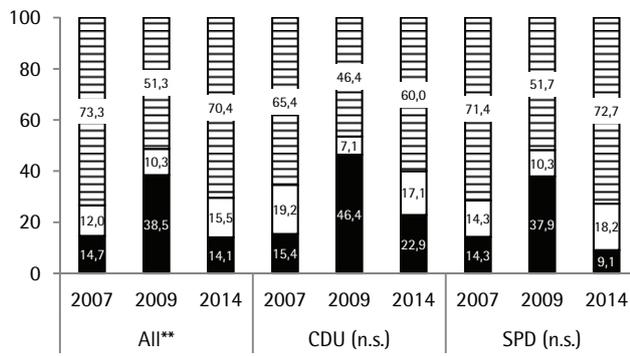
renewed requests for national armies but for a merging of supranational and national military structures.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the development of this core policy area during the years of crises reveals growing approval for a mix of supranational and national elements, steadily decreasing preference for national solutions and temporarily weakened support for strict federalism in 2009, which is yet again the most preferred option in 2014.

Figure 7: Allocation of policy-making 2007-2014 (Percentages)<sup>1</sup>

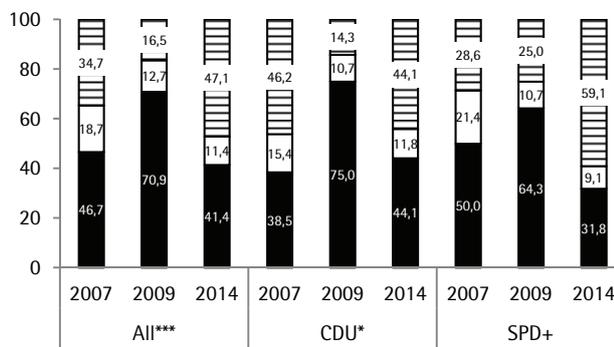


<sup>22</sup> The "both" category was *not* volunteered in all three waves.

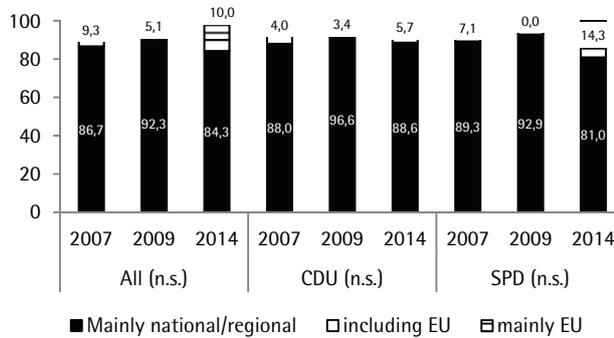
Environment



Fighting Crime



Health Care<sup>2</sup>



■ Mainly national/regional □ including EU ▨ mainly EU

<sup>1</sup> P-values for differences between years reported are based on Chi<sup>2</sup>-tests. +p<.1; \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001.

<sup>2</sup> Not included in PCA due to lack of variance.

Other policy areas are determined by alternative considerations and accordingly constitute a separate factor. Furthermore, the patterns of policy delegation to the regional/national and EU level are both distinct from the military issue and internally heterogeneous (Figure 7). Germany's political elite prefers to retain responsibility for the health care system and for the reduction of unemployment completely at the national level. On the contrary, there are huge majorities for the Europeanization of immigration and environmental policies at most of the measured time points. The fight against crime is somehow located in between, since the preferences of German MPs are divided between opting for the national or the European level. The remarkable exception is 2009, when many MPs changed their views and regarded crime issues primarily as a national task. Labor market and health care are the two out of all investigated policy areas most predestined for redistributive policies. Thus, the results support the assumption that elites reject policy delegation to the EU if it lowers their distributive potentials.

In comparison to the differences between policy areas, the party differences are of secondary importance. Virtually none exist with regard to health care policy. But while the preferences concerning the appropriate level to fight crime in 2007 and 2014 are collectively divided among the Christian Democrats, the majority of Social Democrats changed from national to European solutions during the course of the crises. Concerning immigration and environment, the dominance of Europeanization is slightly more pronounced among the Social Democrats. The most remarkable party difference appeared in 2014, when the Social Democrats were collectively undecided about the level at which to deal with unemployment while the Christian Democrats opted by an overwhelming majority for the national or regional level.

With the exception of health care, the remaining policy delegation issues are among the most volatile of all dimensions of Europeanness, measured by the amount of change and its significance.<sup>23</sup> The dominant pattern is the temporary increase in support for (re-)allocation of immigration, environmental and criminal policies to the national level in 2009, which nevertheless vanishes afterwards, and the growing desire for Europeanization of labor market policies among the Social Democrats in 2014. Since this peak of national policy solutions occurred in both parties absent national elections between 2007 and 2009, it cannot be explained by electoral turnover, but rather by MPs' reconsiderations concerning the proper level of policy allocation. This change indicates that Germany's political elites base their judgments concerning the delegation of policies on rather flexible calculations, whose result was negative for Europeanization at the time of the financial and economic crisis but reverted to positive the longer the crises endured and the more they developed into the

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<sup>23</sup> This is supported by a comparison of Cramer's V for all investigated items crossed by years, whereby the items of the policy delegation dimension score most frequently highest.

Eurozone crisis. This result contrasts to the development of supranational and federal convictions, which increased between 2007 and 2009 in the course of the global financial crisis, and accordingly confirms the distinctiveness of these two dimensions (see above).

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## 6. Conclusion

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This contribution explored the structure and development of the Europeanness of Germany's political elite during the course of the global financial and economic crisis and the subsequent Eurocrisis. The structure of attitudes towards Europe and European integration among Germany's political elites is – similar to other European countries – multidimensional. Although some interrelation exists between the five dimensions of general support, trust in EU institutions, left-right ideological aims, and the two means of intergovernmental-federal conceptions and policy delegation, they constitute distinct evaluation criteria and refer to different objects and facets of European integration.

A dichotomy between Europhiles and Eurosceptics is thus inappropriate to characterize elites' Europeanness in Germany. Nevertheless, they could be described as Europhiles in general terms, as they are consensually unified (Higley and Burton 2006) with regard to almost all dimensions of Europeanness, and this consensus can be described as generally permissive, i.e. favoring European integration. General support is emotionally grounded and backed by the unanimously shared conviction that Germany has benefitted from European integration. Although general support is only loosely linked to rather concrete conceptions of Europe, it is closely connected to the distinctive request for further democratization via the parliamentarization of the EU. At first glance, this may come as no surprise given the inclination of parliamentarians towards representative institutions, but it is surprising given that strengthening the EP does not necessarily imply enhancements for the national parliaments – indeed, the opposite is more likely. Although the Christian Democrats are slightly less enthusiastic supporters than the Social Democrats, the more important party differences appear below the level of general support, namely with regard to the aims, boundaries and means of European integration. The position of their respective parties on the left-right dimension structures the aims and boundaries MPs assign to European integration. Concerning the means of European politics, Social Democrats favor a federal and supranational institutional framework slightly more, while Christian Democrats are more reluctant, pursuing intergovernmental and thus national-centered approaches. The same pattern can be observed with regard to decisions concerning the allocation of particular policy issues at the national or EU level. However, party affiliation is less decisive in these decisions than the respective policy area an issue belongs too. Especially with view to policies exhibiting strong redistributive potentials, MPs

are reluctant to delegate them to the EU level. Overall, these results reconfirm that consensus is prevalent among German MPs, while party differences are of secondary importance.

The consensus among Germany's political elites described in this chapter has not dissolved in the course of either the global financial and economic crisis nor during the Eurocrisis, which means that European integration was not further politicized at the level of domestic elites. Overall, general support and trust in core EU institutions remained stable, along with the reported ideological aims and boundaries assigned to the integration process. Less stability was observed concerning the remaining dimensions encompassing the means of European integration. At the level of basic institutional conceptions, federalism gained slightly more support during the global financial and economic crisis, but remains less prominent than intergovernmental approaches. Support for federalism has not increased further during the Eurocrisis, but since this crisis emerged, Germany's political elites perceive growing heterogeneity between Member States and the growing tendency towards assertion of national interests increasingly as threats to the integration process. This perception has increased particularly among Social Democrats, perhaps fueled by their likewise heightened perception of growing German influence within the EU. Support for continued fusion of European national armies has grown since 2007, but in the course of the global crisis, national solutions for other policy areas were temporarily more preferred. However, this push towards nationalization receded during the Eurocrisis. The different phases of the crisis are thus associated with different developments in the Europeanness of German elites, with the global financial and economic crisis paradoxically fostering national policy solutions and growing trust in federal, or rather supranational institutions, while the Eurocrisis unleashed a return to European policy solutions and the impression of amplified and problematic national asymmetries.

Most of the aforementioned changes occurred during the 2005-2009 legislative period, and were either observable in all parties investigated or could be traced back to intra-party developments. Therefore, shifts in party stances were more responsible for patterns of change than the party system change of 2013 with the Liberals exit from parliament. Investigating whether those shifts were the outcome of responsive MPs who anticipated shifting public opinion is beyond the scope of this chapter.

The results confirm our theoretical assumptions, albeit only partially. We assumed stability at least in terms of general support for European integration, given that economic considerations were prominent during both stages of the crisis and the German economy recovered quickly after the initial stage of the global financial and economic crises ended. Accordingly, Germany was able to bail out major national banks and contribute significantly to the rescue packages for tottering Member States, while at the same time was not forced by external pressure to implement harsh austerity policies in the way other Member

States investigated in this volume were. Although the assumption of stability is confirmed, general support did not increase in the course of the crises, which may indicate that the positive national economic developments are not ascribed to European integration, and general support is still rather driven by the (stable) emotional identification with Europe.

We further expected growing support for intergovernmentalism, as the transfer of Germany's austerity policy to the EU level implies an empowerment of German elites, achieved primarily by implementing elements of multilateral coordination and stratification based on the different economic weight of the Member States. Our empirical findings, however, show a modest turn towards federal conceptions, pursued preferably by means of parliamentarization of the EU. This seems to be caused by growing concerns among the German political elite with view to rising inequalities and asymmetries between Member States that may – in their view – enfold their centrifugal tendencies especially in intergovernmental structures. This may further explain German elites growing preference for a strengthened European Parliament and its close relation to the dimension of general support, as one functional principle of parliaments is to integrate societal conflicts by means of parliamentary representation (Best and Vogel 2014). However, it must be considered that elites in the German Bundestag are less empowered by the aforementioned developments compared to the government itself. Thus, their federal turn may be further motivated by an attempt to counter executive empowerment.

The retention of the overall permissive consensus *vis-à-vis* European integration was facilitated by the lack of a major political challenge from Eurosceptic parties – in contrast to most of the other countries investigated in this volume. However, since barely missing the entry into the national parliament in 2013, the AfD has developed to the major Eurosceptic and right-wing populist party in Germany, challenging the pro-European consensus of the established parties. For this but also other reasons, the party has proven tremendously successful in all recent regional and European elections. Whether the permissive consensus of Germany's national elites will prevail under these circumstances, particularly should a Eurosceptic party enter the national parliament, remains an open question. Given the multidimensional structure of European-ness, it is likely that the established national elites in Germany will initially respond to the Eurosceptic challenge by increasing their party competition in other dimensions than in terms of general support for European integration.

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