



Universiteit Leiden

Angela Merkel's Legacy

An open-border policy:

The decision of an individual or one of the mass?

Political Leaders in International Conflicts and Issues

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Introduction

The European Refugee Crisis is one of the largest issues Europe has faced since the Second World War (Holmes & Castaneda, 2016, p. 12). The European member states are deeply divided on how there should be dealt with the constant influx of refugees from conflict areas into the European Union (EU). Therefore, refugees are unequally divided among member states (HumanRightsWatch, 27 January 2016). One particular member state stands out when it comes to the number of asylum claims received and accepted, especially in 2015. In that year Germany accepted almost seven times as many refugees than France, despite the fact that these two countries are approximately the same size (EuropeanStabilityInitiative, 30 January 2017). One explanation for this fact is that Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel, opened the German borders on September 5th 2015 for all refugees, no exceptions (Alexander, 2017, p. 63). Ever since, Merkel is both praised and criticized because of her surprisingly generous and open migration policy. However, experts are in the dark when it comes to the question 'why' Merkel made this decision.

This thesis seeks an explanatory factor that is likely to have influenced Merkel in her decision making process regarding the open-border policy initiated on September 5th 2015. Based on theory, personal characteristics and public opinion are two of many factors that are likely to have influenced Merkel in her decision making process. That being said, I've come up with the following research question:

Does either the German public opinion or her personal characteristics explain Angela Merkel's decision on September 5th 2015 regarding Germany's refugee policy during the European Refugee Crisis?

Based on theory, two hypotheses can be made. Merkel was either driven by her characteristics or driven by public opinion when she chose to open Germany's borders.

First, a literature review on the role of political leaders in (international) politics in general proves the importance of studying individual political leaders. Secondly, I will formulate my research question after which I provide background information on Merkel, the refugee crisis and the opening of the German border on September 5th 2015. Thereafter, I will provide a theoretical framework around the two explanatory factors of choice. After I explained the methods I have used to execute my research, the results of the research are presented and analysed. Then, I will discuss what these results mean for the theories I have

used and I will formulate the answer to my research question. Lastly, a suggestion for further research on this topic will close my thesis.

Literature Review

Grand theories

How is policy being made within countries? Who or what has influence in the decision making process? Within the realms of grand theories in International Relations (IR), individual political leaders aren't generally seen as a valuable unit of analyses. Realism, the most pre-dominant school in IR, declares 'the state' as the most important actor and leaves no space for the individual level of analysis. According to Realists, the state is the unitary actor that aims to maximize its utility and is driven only by its own interests (Donnelly, 2000, pp. 7-8). Another grand theory of IR is Liberalism, which in many cases focuses on economic cooperation and free trade relations as explanatory factors of state behaviour and decision-making. Again, political leaders are not mentioned as influential (Heywood, 2014, p. 66). Rational Choice theorist, like Downs (1989), privileges 'structure' (state and system) over 'agency' (individual leader) when it comes to explaining policy (Hindmoor, 2010, p. 57). They state that the acts of individuals are based upon a utility calculation instead of something more deeply rooted (McDermott, 2004, p. 47). The question whether the structure or the agency is more dominant is called the structure-agency debate, a debate within constructivism (Wendt, 1987). Constructivism became an important IR theory in the 1980s. It focuses, as a social theory, on the role of knowledge and agents who use that knowledge in the constitution of social reality. Also, Constructivists highlight the importance of the role of norms, identities, causal understandings and power in the decision-making process for national policy and international governance (Adler, 2013, p. 115). Constructivism sees the world "as 'becoming' rather than 'being' or in other words 'under construction'" (Adler, 2013, p. 113). The structure-agency debate is about what exists and happens in IR and if agents or structures, or both, are an explanation for that. One of the core social constructivists, Alexander Wendt (1987), created a new theory for IR to avoid this debate and accept the nature of the relationship between structure and agent. Wendt (1987) states in his theory that "as social structures are ontologically dependent upon and therefore constituted by the practices and self-understanding of agents, the causal powers and interests of those agents, in their own turn, are constituted and therefore explained by structures" (p. 359). To avoid confusion about if structure or agency should be the level of analysis, the argument was later made that the behaviour and properties of an agent are inherently constituted by structure, so the level of

analysis should be the structural level (Adler, 2013, p. 129). Thus, three leading IR theories grant most power to the state and structure when it comes to decision-making.

Political leadership and decision making

With today's globalized 'new world order' the perspective on leadership and its importance in policy making is growing. Scholars of IR are incrementally developing the idea that governmental leaders have the strength to play an important role in how their state behaves in domestic and international politics (Hermann & Hagan, 1998, p. 124). Mintz and DeRouen Jr (2010) speak of three levels of analyses when it comes to policy decision-making (p. 18). The three decision units of analysis regarding policy decision-making are individuals, groups, and coalitions. Who actually makes the decision is called the 'decision unit'. (Mintz & DeRouen Jr, 2010, p. 18). Hermann, Preston, Korany, and Shaw (2001) said that the nature of the decision unit can shape the policy outcome significantly. 'Nature' can be best understood as the combination of underlying factors that determine the unit as it is. Which factor is of most influence is the question.

Research on political leadership and decision making can be helped by the school of Political Psychology. Combining the discipline of political science and psychology provides additional insights in many research topics (McDermott, 2004, p. 2). Important in this school is how individual psychological processes lead to political outcomes (McDermott, 2004, p. 3). The scholarly discipline of Political Psychology was inspired by works of "Graham Wallas's Human Nature in Politics (1908), Harold Lasswell's Psychopathology and Politics (1930) and Power and Personality (1948), Hans Eysenck's The Psychology of Politics (1954), and Fred Greenstein's Personality and Politics (1969)" (Immelman, 2005, p. 198), which all had put a focus on personality. It is studied that during complex political negotiations politicians rapidly fall back on their, through personality dictated, behavioural patterns. This phenomena emphasises the political significance of personal characteristics (Holsti, 1962). Personal characteristics and a person's life's history are likely to play a bigger role in the decision making process than just a marginal one (Landtsheer, Middelhoff, & Schijvenaars, 2016, p. 5).

In times of both domestic and international crises, the power in states tends to concentrate around those individuals that have ultimate responsibility for maintaining the government in power, or in other words, the highest level of government (Hermann & Kegley, 1995; Hermann & Hagan, 1998). Individual political leaders are then highly influential while

they dominate the decision making process (Hermann & Kegley, 1995, p. 515). How these individuals interpret a situation defines how the state will act, which of course also effects the international political situation (Hermann & Hagan, 1998, p. 128). The interpretations of leaders on (international) political topics arise out of their beliefs and experiences on that political subject (Hermann & Hagan, 1998, p. 126). Beliefs could be explained as “that which we hold to be true” (Renshon, 2008, p. 822). If beliefs have a share in the formation of a leader’s perception of reality, and a leader’s interpretation of a situation affects the decision making process, ultimately, this suggests that the interpretations and thus beliefs of a political leader are an important subject for IR (Hermann & Kegley, 1995; Hermann & Hagan, 1998).

Leaders do not act objectively because they do not see things objectively. Namely, their belief system works like a filter through which they see reality, this makes a leader subjective. One could call the aggregate of all the beliefs that an individual has a ‘belief system’ (Renshon, 2008, p. 822). However, there is not yet a general agreement on what a belief system completely entails. Belief systems as the core of the debate of political science on political beliefs is originated by Philip Converse (Torcal & Muñoz, 2011, p. 144). Converse (2006) defined a belief system “as a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint of functional interdependence” (p. 3). Further literature on this matter shows that there is no general way to measure beliefs (Torcal & Muñoz, 2011, p. 145). Thus, ‘belief system’ as a concept is still vague and open for discussion. Two well-known belief systems are the ones of hawks and doves. Hawkish leaders are known to be aggressive, offensive and control freaks (Kahneman & Renshon, 2007, p. 34) while dovish leaders seek for consensus and cooperation (Colaresi, 2004, p. 555). The hawkish/dovish leadership style distinction is often used to explain why a leader or decision maker has chosen for a specific policy option. Leadership style frames, like a belief system, (crisis) situations and therewith the options a leader will choose from to act upon (Kaarbo & Hermann, 1998, p. 243) or differently said, leadership styles are “alternative ways in which leaders structure interactive behaviours to carry out their roles as leader” (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, p. 90). Arguments are made that leadership style is linked to the personal set of characteristics a leader has. This is argued with the logic that leadership is inherently dependent on the qualities and traits of the person in office (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002, p. 765). Most of the research on political personality and the characteristics of leaders is done within the field of Political Psychology (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p. 4). The field of the

study on personal characteristics is growing and the idea that personality of political leaders is of great importance in the decision making process is becoming more and more plausible (Greenstein, 1969; Hermann, 1980; Judge et al., 2002).

It is thought that the character profile of a leader is mostly created in the social environment in which the leader grew up (Amundson, William, & Tench, 1995, p. 603). This social environment is formed by the historical environment of that time (Post & George, 2004). Historical events also act as 'filters' that provide a script that influence how political leaders interpret reality (Hart, 2010, p. 108). Jervis (1976) argues that political decision-makers learn from history. He states that decision-makers are influenced firstly by historical events, and secondly by their beliefs and perceptions (personal history). When decision-makers need to form a policy, they look for familiar frameworks to have grip on the new situation. This could be a negative manner to approach a decision since they might ignore a more fitting option for that particular new situation (Jervis, 1976, pp. 409-410). Jervis also states that leaders are influenced by other actors, like policy makers, advisors and other heads of states (Jervis, 1976, p. 13). Group thinking can steer in to a different direction than the one the leader should have chosen based on his/her belief system (Jervis, 1976, p. 17). Also the context and environment in which a policy is being made is of importance because international, national and bureaucratic factors influence a leader, sometimes that much that again he/she will deviate from his/her belief system (Hermann & Hagan, 1998, p. 124).

Context can also mean 'the public opinion of that particular moment'. Theorists who do not necessarily see a close relationship between policy and public preferences are those that see the government as a problem solver, led by statesmen who serve public interest using a cost-benefit analysis to make policy decisions (Page & Shapiro, 1983, p. 175). Other theorists do see a correlation between public opinion and policy, but in reverse. Here, policies and politicians effect public opinion by explaining to citizens which policies will help their interest or, on the other hand, by manipulating the public with lies (Key, 1961). One of normative democratic theory's central concern is that government policy is responsive to citizens' preferences (Page & Shapiro, 1983, p. 175). Nobody believes that policy is always determined by public opinion, but only few believe that it never is (Burstein, 2003, p. 29). The phenomena seems to occur the most when the issue is highly salient with a good change of escalating into conflict. However, researchers are too vague in their conclusions of the relation between public opinion and policy to formulate a generalizable theory (Burstein,

2003, p. 30). For instance, Wlezien (1996) concludes in his work 'Dynamics of Representation' that "research generally corroborates a linkage between public preferences and policy" (p. 81). Such open conclusions are found everywhere on this phenomenon but none of them draws a hard line.

To conclude, new theories within the realms of IR have a growing interest in the individual level of analysis (Hermann & Hagan, 1998). Yet, there is still a lack of research on political leadership in IR (Post & George, 2004). Based on the theory above, political leaders certainly are powerful actors in the decision making process, especially in times of crisis. More research on this topic will be welcomed. Based on the theories above, leaders are influenced by several factors: belief system; characteristics/personal traits; leadership style and context/environmental factors (this includes historical/current events, public opinion and group thinking/peer pressure).

Research Question

I will focus my research on the decision making process of political leaders and the influence they have in policy making. This decision making process is influenced by several factors. I choose to investigate two factors: 'context' (in the sense of public opinion) for the fact that the literature on the influence of public opinion on political leaders is insufficient (Page & Shapiro, 1983) and 'personal characteristics' because of the growing academic interest in it (Bono et al., 2002). The distinction between a factor that represents a larger group and a factor that represent one unique person seems an interesting balance for this research. I will investigate which of the two is most influential in the decision making process of a political leader. With the two factors of choice and their theoretical based expectations in mind, two hypotheses can be made:

H1: Personal characteristics of a leader are most explanatory for a specific policy outcome

H2: Public opinion is most explanatory for a specific policy outcome

The current refugee crisis in Europe is truly an international issue of scale. Countries are struggling with the choice how many migrants they should adopt and thereafter how these new people should be treated. Germany has adopted a surprisingly generous open migration policy (Ostrand, 2015, p. 257). The decision of Merkel to open up the borders for all refugees on September 5th in 2015 is one of the most disputable policy decisions of this time. I will choose this specific policy decision for my research. Believing in the theories that grant political leaders the ability to influence policy, the migration policy of Germany can be traced back to Angela Merkel, the state chancellor (Paxton & Hughes, 2010; Vetter, 2010). My research question therefore is:

Does either the German public opinion or her personal characteristics explain Angela Merkel's decision on September 5th 2015 regarding Germany's refugee policy during the European Refugee Crisis?

As a start, some background information of Angela Merkel, the European Refugee Crisis and the border opening on September 5th will be provided below.

Angela Merkel

Angela Dorothea Kasner (Merkel) was born on July 17th in 1954. She grew up in East Germany and spent the first thirty years of her life behind the Iron Curtain. Her father was a pastor and she was raised in a Protestant milieu, which didn't lead to an active religious adult life. She studied physics and completed her Ph.D. in 1986 (Thompson & Lennartz, 2006). Merkel has kept the last name of her first husband and former classmate, Ulrich Merkel, even when she married her current husband Joachim Sauer. No sooner than the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, she started her political career. In 2005, by then the head of the *Christlich Demokratische Union* (CDU), she was elected to be chancellor of Germany (TheFederalChancellor, 2017). Due to the pragmatic and informed leadership style of Merkel, Germany (re)claimed its economic and political leading role in both Europe and the rest of the world (VPROtegenlicht, 19 April 2017).

The European Refugee Crisis

Summer 2015, Europe was facing the highest influx of refugees since the second World War. Most of the refugees were Syrian (Park, 23 September 2015). Syria has been under the quasi dictatorial rule of the Al-Assad Family since the 1960's until the Arab Spring in 2011 (Perthes, 2014, p. 19). The refusal of the Assad family to step down led to a civil war. A militaristic jihadist group, IS, used the chaos to establish a totalitarian Islamic Caliphate. As civilians were trapped between IS, rebellion groups and the Assad-regime, many millions have fled Syria (Bhardwaj, 2012, p. 78). Many decided to flee to Europe in order to seek asylum. EU regulations (Dublin II agreement) require refugees to stay in the country in which they enter first, putting an enormous pressure on Europe's border states (RefugeeCouncil, August 2002, p. 2). Instead of coming up with a unitary solution, Europe became more and more divided as multiple countries refrained from helping the border states.

September 5th 2015

Merkel suspended European asylum rules by opening up Germany's borders to all refugees, no exceptions. A moral gesture that was in line with the centric public opinion in Germany at that time (TheEconomist, 10 October 2015). Short after Merkel opened the borders, she was

thought of by the mass as a guardian angel. Posters of Merkel portrait as Mother Theresa with the caption '*Mutti Merkel*' were widespread shared on the streets and online (DerSpiegel, 21 September 2015). Analysts state that the open-border policy of Germany will be Merkel's legacy, something she will be remembered for (Alexander, 2017). However, only one week later, the German authorities were overwhelmed by the many refugees that crossed the borders. The borders had to be 'closed' again. This meant that only after one week border controls were reintroduced, refugees without a passport or a visa were again rejected (Alexander, 2017, p. 11).

Merkel's earlier stand towards the handling of the refugee crisis was a communal action plan of European countries, where refugees are distributed 'equally'. With her decision the European Union Dublin II agreement was nullified (Dernbach, 2015; Vestring, 6 October 2015). By doing so, she tossed away the leverage she had to persuade other member states to also take in refugees (Vestring, 6 October 2015). Strangely, until September 5th, Germany was the front runner when it came to consistently complying with the Dublin Principles (Dernbach, 2015). Therefore it seems that her action of September 5th wasn't based on strategy.

Theoretical Framework

Personal characteristics

Researchers in the field of Political Psychology see the significant value of studying the character profile of leaders to better understand policy outcome. According to political psychologist, personality features can be a crucial factor in the intentions, competence and strategy of political leaders (Holsteyn, 2012, p. 22). According to Immelman (2005) ‘personology’ and ‘psychodiagnostics’ are the fundamental fields to use when studying personal characteristics. Theory and method are to a great extent intertwined in this field. Immelman was inspired by Theodore Millon. Millon, a psychologist known for his work on personality disorders (Millon & Davis, 1996), made use of psychodiagnostics and aimed for a “comprehensive and generative framework for a model of political personality and leadership founded on latent phylogenetic-evolutionary principles rather than on observable characteristics and surface features” (Immelman, 2005, p. 200). Psychodiagnostics is the science of making personality evaluations as well as a tool to diagnose mental disorders (Kellerman & Burry, 2007, pp. 20-22). The concept psychodiagnosis is actually the combination of two very distinct fields, psychometrics and diagnosis (Kamphaus, Morgan, Cox, & Powell, 1995, p. 527). Psychometrics aims at measuring traits to predict behaviour (Anastasi, 1988, p. 210) and diagnosis is concerned with detecting symptoms in order to classify medical disorders and can be similar to classification (Kamphaus et al., 1995, p. 529). The Millonian approach emphasizes the value of predictive validity (Immelman, 2005, p. 218). Millon has been building a clinical science of personology over the past decades, mainly founded on evolutionary ecology and neuroscience (Immelman, 2005, p. 202). Immelman has used these insights from the ‘source’ disciplines of clinical science and personology and endeavoured to transpose them to his ‘target’ discipline of leadership and political personality (Landtsheer & Sutter, 2011).

Millon’s personality theory is built with three domains: existence (pain-pleasure polarity), adaption (passive-active polarity) and replication (other-self polarity) (Millon & Davis, 1996). The implication of the first domain is that a person is either oriented on avoiding events that bring an experience that is characterized as painful, or a person is actively searching for events that are characterized as pleasurable (Immelman, 2005, p. 198). According to Millon, those who act to avoid pain are negatively reinforced, those who act to

seek pleasure are positively reinforced (Millon & Davis, 1996). The second domain, passive-active polarity, divides people into ‘those that are reactive and accommodating to events in life’ and ‘those that take active initiative in changing life’ (Immelman, 2005, p. 209). The other-self polarity distinguishes ‘those that have the nurturing tendency to put the wishes and needs of others before their own’ and ‘those who seek to realize personal goals before giving attention to the needs of others’. (Immelman, 2005, p. 211).

Immelman (2005) saw great value in the Millonian theory for the reason that his work could be evolutionary for research on political leadership. Immelman’s goal was to establish a model of personality and political leadership with the theories of Millon as evolutionary basis. He made a list of relevant personality patterns that associate with Millon’s three domains. He came up with the following thirteen patterns: dominant; dauntless; ambitious; outgoing; accommodating; aggrieved; contentious; conscientious; reticent; retiring; distrusting and erratic (p. 204). Every personality pattern of Immelman (2005) relate in a certain way with the domains of Millon (high, medium or low) (p. 214). How they all associate with the domains is findable in appendix A. Using the MIDC method with the underlying Millonian theory, a different way of constructing a personality profile is being given (Landtsheer & Sutter, 2011). Immelman based his new method of constructing personality profiles on qualitative psychological qualifications with empirical validation (Immelman, 2005, p. 220). Further explanation of this method is discussed later in this thesis.

The reason why political psychologist tend to find a perfect way to establish personality profiles of leaders is to unravel which personality patterns (successful) leaders have in common, to explain and understand the behaviour of political leaders and to predict future leadership behaviour (Landtsheer & Sutter, 2011). Millon, like stated earlier, attempted to make his approach predictive (Immelman, 2005, p. 202). This emphasizes the expectation that political leaders act in line with their personality profile. Relying on the theory above, personality profiles should be predictive, meaning that based on the personality profile of Merkel, her decisions can be explained.

Public opinion

Leaders are influenced by both personal and contextual variables (Bredeson, Klar, & Johansson, 2011, p. 3; Stimson, MacKuen, & Erikson, 1995). Gronn and Ribbins (1996) emphasized the lack of research on the relation between context and leadership and the

importance of more research on this topic (p. 454). In today's world, media have great influence on for instance public opinion. Since information given by media is accessible for everyone, leaders are more than ever aware of the opinion of their electorate (Burstein, 2003; Cook & Herbst, 2011). Responsive leaders are "those who have learned to put their personal reactions on one side so that they can respond out of a wider context than their personal history" (Robertson, 1991, p. 314). But what drives responsive leadership? The 'median voter' theory emphasizes the personal benefits that a politician entails from acting upon the opinion of most voters, the 'centrist opinion' (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000, p. 8). This theory is in line with the assumption that politicians are driven by two goals: enacting their policy goals and secure their re-election. The last goal is achievable if politicians act upon the centrist opinion when it comes to decision making (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000, p. 10). Opinion polls are displayed by the media regularly on all kinds of subjects. Jacobs and Shapiro (2000) asked themselves, since the flood of polls and other indicators of public opinion nowadays, if politicians 'pander' to public opinion. American political commentators observed that political leaders that act independently from public opinion are highly unlikely to be re-elected (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000, p. 4). Does 'mass participatory democracy' comes with the cost of the abdication of responsible leadership? Does polling turn political leaders into followers? These important questions deserve to be taken seriously, especially for the debate whether representative democracy requires responsiveness to public opinion or if it requires that elected politicians act in the best interest of the state and therewith the citizens, regardless of the public opinion at that time (Jacobs & Shapiro, 2000, pp. 3-6). Burstein (2003) found in his research on the impact of public opinion on public policy that there exists a positive relationship between the impact of public opinion on public policy and the salience of an issue. Thus, the more salient the issue, the more influence public opinion has on policy making.

Stimson et al. (1995) may have the strongest recent claim on the idea that political leaders blindly follow public opinion. A conclusion they made was "When politicians perceive public opinion change, they adapt their behaviour to please their constituency" (Stimson et al., 1995, p. 545). According to Stimson et al. (1995), the mechanism of 'dynamic' representation is as follows. A politician is facing a policy choice having both personal ideological preferences for a policy option as well as the desire to preserve his/her career and get re-elected. Separating these two preferences, one could say that there exists a

'personal' ideal point and an 'expediency point' in the space of policy options. The expediency point can be understood as the preferences of the 'median voter' and thus the 'centrist opinion'. At this point, re-election is most likely (Stimson et al., 1995). Issue salience plays a big role in democratic responsiveness. When citizens care much about an issue, which is likelier when the issue is salient, they tend to vote for the politician that is most committed to resolving that particular issue (Burstein, 2003, p. 30). Often, it is the case that politicians are more likely to choose the 'expediency point' when elections are in the close future. Politicians that are more or less secure of their position will more often choose for their personal ideal point (Stimson et al., 1995, p. 544).

Relying on the theory given about political responsiveness to public opinion, Merkel is most likely to be influenced by public opinion when she wants to be re-elected (suitable when elections are in the near future) or when the salience of the issue is very large.

Research design and Methodology

The research question seeks to explain ‘how’ an outcome has come about. Thereby, one case but multiple variables are studied. These two facts indicate that I will execute a qualitative research (Becker, Bryman, & Ferguson, 2012, pp. 269-271). When executing qualitative research, there are several research designs to choose from. I choose to carry out a case study. A case study is “[...]the investigation of a well-defined aspect of an historical happening that the investigator selects for analysis, rather than an historical happening itself” (Bennet, 2007, p. 21). Executing a case study can be profitable when there are multiple hypotheses that try to explain a certain outcome, which is the case in this thesis. Rare events, like the European migration crisis, demand the use of a case study because of their unique character (McDermott, 2004, p. 37).

I will use the method qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis as a research method is known for its broad and open character (Wester, 2004, p. 123). Using this analytic method I will remain open for emergent ideas and concepts throughout the whole research. In this way, the research process is comparable with a learning process, periods of perceiving and analysing findings alternate (Glaser, 1965). Frequently reflecting on the results found creates a phased process which is important for the direction of the research (Yang, 2014, pp. 160-161). I will use most of my data from the media for the reason that the media generally ‘publicizes’ the public opinion (McCombs, 2014, p. 6; McDermott, 2004). I will also use opinion polls and (academic) reports to measure public opinion. In particular, the recent report ‘*Die Getriebenen*’ (the driven ones) written by Robin Alexander will have a substantial role in this part of the thesis, regarding its accurate and in-depth analysis of the decision making process of Merkel during the refugee crisis in Germany. Robin Alexander, a renowned German reporter and columnist, has a unique insight into the German decision making progress and power distribution because of his background as a political reporter that has investigated Merkel behind the scenes for years. He investigated the refugee crisis with a step-by-step analysis, highlighting the most important events during the crisis and displaying a qualitative view on the internal governmental processes. Partly steered by the work of Alexander (2017), I will focus on three time periods regarding the German public opinion towards migration policy: quite some time before the crisis, just before the crisis and just after the crisis. Like this, relevant fluctuations should, if present, be visible.

For the factor ‘personal characteristics’ I will rely on the research done by Landtsheer et al. (2016), who used the MIDC method to make a personality profile of Merkel. The work of Landtsheer et al. (2016) explains how Merkel’s personal characteristics and leadership style affect policy making at the EU level and affect her leadership performance. The method they used named ‘Millon Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria’ (MIDC) is based on Theodore Millon’s theory on personality which was converged by Aubrey Immelman into a “[...] personality scaling model and approach that enables researchers to determine the personality of political leader at a distance” (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p. 6). This method’s starting point is the confident expectancy that personal characteristics in a decision making process or other form of relationship are crucial to politics (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p. 6). In the MIDC method there are 12 scales that entail a total of 34 personality features (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p. 7). The MIDC feature list can be found in appendix B. “Scale 1 to 8 have three gradations: a, b and c. Scores between 5 through 9 signify a presence in level I, gradation a. Scores between 10 and 23 prove an excessive presence at level II, gradation b” (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p.7). The higher the score on a scale, the more present that feature is. The other levels are disregarded since it is not likely that healthy and sane people score on level IV and V, or even at gradation c at the first three levels. Here, the diagnostic background of psychodiagnostics shimmers through. The final score on the 12 scales of Immelman correspond with the three domains of Millon (see appendix A). Landtsheer et al. (2016) used opinion articles, magazine articles, news sites, profiles and multiple interviews to obtain data which they could use for the execution of the MIDC method (p. 9). Thereafter, the data was quantitatively encoded and the outcomes are plotted in the MIDC score sheet (see table 1).

Results and Analysis

Personal characteristics

In table 1 the results of the MIDC method are presented. Underneath the present patterns the score is given in green. The corresponding features are also in green.

Table 1

MIDC score sheet Angela Merkel			
<i>Scale 1A:</i> Score: 7	Dominant pattern a. Asserting b. Controlling c. Aggressive	<i>Scale 5B:</i>	Contentious pattern a. Resolute b. Oppositional c. Negativistic
<i>Scale 1B:</i>	Dauntless pattern a. Venturesome b. Dissenting c. Aggrandizing	<i>Scale 6</i> Score: 14	Conscientious pattern a. Respectful b. Dutiful c. Compulsive
<i>Scale 2:</i> Score: 8	Ambitious pattern a. Confident b. Self-serving c. Exploitative	<i>Scale 7:</i> Score: 6	Reticent pattern a. Circumspect b. Inhibited c. Withdrawn
<i>Scale 3:</i>	Outgoing pattern a. Congenial b. Gregarious c. Impulsive	<i>Scale 8:</i> Score: 10	Retiring pattern a. Reserved b. Aloof c. Solitary
<i>Scale 4:</i> Score: 11	Accommodating pattern a. Cooperative b. Agreeable c. Submissive	<i>Scale 9:</i>	Distrusting pattern d. Suspicious e. Paranoid
<i>Scale 5A:</i> Score: 4	Aggrieved pattern a. Unpresuming b. Self-denying c. Self-defeating	<i>Scale 0:</i>	Erratic pattern d. Unstable e. Borderline

As a conclusion, Merkel's personality, according to Landtsheer et al. (2016), is built upon the following features: respectful; dutiful; cooperative; agreeable; reserved; aloof; confident; asserting; circumspect and unpresuming. Merkel scores high on both scale 4 and scale 6 (accommodating- and conscientious pattern) which is unusual for the fact that these

patterns sometimes contradict each other. Politicians/persons who have this mixed personality can be indecisive and inflexible (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p. 18). During the EU decision making process regarding the debt crisis in Greece, indecisiveness is a characteristic that was allotted to Merkel by the public because of her cautiousness regarding taking hard or fast decisions in this crisis (Gibbs, 2015). Conscientious-Accommodating persons are known to be fearful of condemnation and therefore are often willing to act in line with expectations set by others (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p. 19).

Additional, the scores of Merkel also relate to the domains of Millon (see appendix A). Scale 6, 4, 8 and 2 are most present in Merkel's personality profile. In the first domain, the pain/pleasure polarity, there are no significant findings that show a strong tendency towards pain or pleasure. This means Merkel is neither pure negatively reinforced, neither pure positively. In the second domain, the passive/active polarity, the scales score generally high on the passive pole and low on the active one. This means Merkel is mostly reactive and accommodating towards the environment she finds herself in. In the last domain, the other/self polarity, there is a mixed outcome. Scale 6 and 4 (the most present scales) score both high on the 'other' pole and low on the 'self' pole. Scale 8 and 2 score both low on the 'other' pole. Since scale 6 and 4 are more present I will consider these scales as leading. This means Merkel has a tendency to put the needs and wishes of others before her own.

The question is now whether her personality profile lines up with the character she displayed when she suddenly opened up the German borders on September 5th of 2015. Merkel is categorized in level II of the conscientious pattern. This means she has a strong sense of duty. Playing by the rules, especially EU regulation, is very important to her (Alexander, 2017, p. 34). Therewith comes the tendency to be punctual, organized and responsible (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p. 10). Her choice to open the German borders on September 5th was against EU regulation based on the Dublin II agreements (RefugeeCouncil, August 2002). The high influx of refugees crossing the German border after her decision was overwhelming and not manageable for the German authorities since there was no plan 'how' Germany should deal with an open-border policy. This caused chaos and disorder in German municipalities which couldn't offer the refugees shelter and food all at once (Alexander, 2017, p. 13). The feature of Merkel to act in line with (EU) rules is thus not present, since she violated the Dublin II agreement, an agreement formerly strongly supported by Merkel herself (Vestring, 6 October 2015). Therewith, she acted without a plan neither a strategy to deal with

the refugees she had welcomed so generously. Her character profile displays that she acts 'organized' and well prepared, which is again not the case here. The fact that her choice was unorganized and lacking strategy caused an uncontrolled and reckless situation in the municipalities in Germany. The trait 'responsibility', where she is associated with, seems thus not present.

In scale 4, representing the accommodating pattern, Merkel is allotted with a categorization in level II because of her highly cooperative and agreeing personality. Merkel is very considerate of the opinion and wishes of her colleagues and tends to seek consensus instead of standing up for her own thoughts, preferring to admit and appease (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p. 12). Merkel always awaits approval from all parties involved before proceeding to action. According to the research of Landtsheer et al. (2016), the main diagnostic feature of Merkel's personality profile is 'submissiveness', assuring herself with the approval and support of others (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p. 13). However, the decision of hers on September 5th wasn't discussed, not on national level neither on European level (Alexander, 2017, p. 51). Merkel's own conservative block of CDU and CSU (*Christlich-Soziale Union*), which have always supported her in the past, condemned and disapproved her decision (TheEconomist, 10 October 2015). After her actions on September 5th, she got a lot of criticism from them and her coalition partner CSU even threatened to leave the coalition because of her unilateral action. The vice president of the European Parliament, Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, also made a statement about Merkel's action: "Angela Merkel should abstain. Now that she is stylized by some as the Saviour of the EU, is absurd. [...] The Chancellor has overridden all rules in the refugee crisis single-handedly." (DerSpiegel, 5 July 2016). Clearly, Merkel acted without support from her colleagues. She acted, like Alexander Graf Lambsdorff already said, single-handedly. There was no form of cooperation, let alone consensus. Therewith, according to Millon's passive/active polarity, Merkel has a tendency to accommodate to her environment instead of actively changing it. Again, there is no agreement between Merkel's decision and her personality profile, which strongly emphasises her need for agreement amongst all parties.

To conclude, her decision was "completely out of character for a woman who has patented a unique brand of pedantic pragmatism" (Sally, 16 September 2016). Namely, her career before September 5th was "tainted by caution and avoidance of anything resembling drama" (Gibbs, 2015). Her ever cautious manner of practising politics is also spoken of as *die Politik der kleinen Schritte* (the politics of baby steps). Merkel is well known for this

pragmatic leadership style (Alexander, 2017; Dempsey, 10 November 2015). This trait of hers is not often liked by her colleagues (domestic and foreign). The slow and incremental ‘plodding pace’ of Merkel is so typical of her that Germans made a verb out of it: *Merkeling* (Gibbs, 2015). The decision of Merkel to open the German borders at September 5th 2015 is not in line with the character profile sketched above.

Public opinion

Germany’s general opinion

Germany is a nation of immigration and has a *Willkommenskultur* (culture of welcoming) (DeutscheWelle, 17 September 2015). This is an anomaly in comparison to the other West European countries, where a nationalist wave has been dominating the political spheres for the last few years (VPROtegenlicht, 19 April 2017). Looking at the results of the most recent elections in Europe, in Germany’s neighbouring countries a lot more people voted on a nationalist party. 35.1 percent of the votes in Austria and 29 percent of the votes in Switzerland were distributed to extreme right or nationalist parties. In Germany, this percentage is significantly lower, namely 4.7 percent (BBCNews, 23 May 2016). In the decade between 2005 and 2015, even when migration and asylum numbers were rising, the public support for this welcoming character stayed the same in Germany (Heckmann, 2016, p. 1). The Refugee Welcome Index, a creation of GlobeScan (a renowned strategy consultancy agency), made a ranking of 27 countries worldwide based on the willingness of people to welcome refugees into their countries, towns, neighbourhoods and houses. The global survey included more than 27 thousand respondents. Germany is ranked on a remarkable second place. Almost all Germans (96 percent) are willing to accept refugees in Germany and 76 percent thinks that the German government should do more to help the refugees (AmnestyInternational, 19 May 2016).

Key events in Summer 2015

The events are lined up and explained in the following timeline.

Timeline

- July 2015: | Merkel was widely accused of ‘acting too slow’ regarding the numerous refugees waiting for shelter in pitiful circumstances. Visible in opinion polls, Merkel lost support because of the way she handled the crisis (Harding, Oltermann, & Nicolas, 2 September 2015; Reuters, 4 September 2015).
- July 15th 2015 | Merkel met Reem Sahwil (a 14 year old Palestinian refugee) in a German television show. The girl said she was scared to be deported out of Germany and that she was sad that she couldn’t build up her life in Germany just like her friends. Merkel responded by telling the girl that “Politics is sometimes hard” and “Some people will have to go back” (BBCNews, 17 July 2015) where after the girl broke out in tears. Merkel got a lot of critique on her response to the girl. On Twitter Germans called Merkel *kalt*, *kühl*, *emotionlos* and *empathieunfähig* (incapable of empathy). For the first time Merkel was confronted with *eine Image-Katastrophe* (Alexander, 2017; Smale, 16 July 2015).
- July 2015: | A well-known German opinion panel company ‘Emnid’ measured that 81 percent of the German population had the opinion that Merkel should visit a refugee camp, something she hadn’t done until then (Alexander, 2017).
- July-August 2015: | Thousands of Germans volunteered to help refugees, taking the lead while their government refrained from acting (Harding et al., 2 September 2015; Welle, 26 August 2015). Banners with the phrase ‘Refugees Welcome’ appeared everywhere in Germany. ‘#StandUpIfYouAreHuman’ was widely shared on social media (Harding et al., 2 September 2015).
- August 26th 2015 | Merkel finally visits a refugee camp. She was booed at by the crowd. Her visit to the camp in Heidenau was “way too late” according to the media (BrabantsDagblad, 26 August 2015; Donahue, 26 August 2015; RTLnieuws, 26 August 2015).

August 31st 2015 | During a press conference in Berlin, Merkel made her (now very famous) statement ‘*Wir Schaffen das*’ (we can do this) (Zeit, 30 August 2016). In a sense, with this statement Merkel announced that Germany was going to adopt a larger amount of refugees in the time to come, promising change.

September 2nd | Pictures of a washed up Syrian child found face down on a tourist beach in Turkey called out a wave of shocked reactions worldwide (NOS, 2 September 2015; Withnall, 2 September 2015). The boy was drowned after the boat on which he (and many others) attempt to reach Europe, was capsized. The boy became an icon of the horrible journey that refugees take to find a safe haven, away from violence and war (NOS, 2 September 2015). Human Rights Watch and many newspapers stated that “if these photo’s don’t change the attitude of European governments towards refugees, nothing does” (BBCNews, 3 September 2015). Germany’s already existing ‘Refugees Welcome’ tag, was retweeted an additional 74 thousand times after the pictures of Alan Kurdi appeared, stressing the demand to lift restrictions on asylum laws (Alexander, 2017, p. 47).

September 5th | On September 5th Angela Merkel opens the German borders for all refugees, no exceptions (Alexander, 2017).

After September 5th 2015

Short after Merkel’s choice for an open-border policy, her popularity rose very fast amongst German citizens and refugees (Alexander, 2017). Merkel was even considered a favourite to win the Nobel Peace Prize (TheTelegraph, 8 October 2015). She was chosen by Time Magazine as Person of the Year 2015 for, what they called, ‘The Choice’ (TimeMagazine, 2015). She was spoken of as ‘the Chancellor of the Free World’ by many newspapers, a name she is still associated with today (TheGuardian, 29 May 2017).

Looking back at the median voter theory, it is safe to say that the ‘centrist opinion’ amongst Germans was that Germany should obtain a more welcoming asylum policy or even an open-border policy. According to the mechanism of dynamic representation explained by Stimson et al. (1995), in the ‘space’ of policy options there is an ‘expediency point’ (the centrist opinion of Germany) and a ‘personal ideal point’ (the opinion of Merkel). Since there

is no information available regarding Merkel's inner thoughts and since there are no sources that clearly make a statement about Merkel's personal wishes regarding this subject, there can't be made strict conclusion on the content of this point. It is, however, possible to speculate about what Merkel's 'personal ideal point' could be. Namely, in the time before and during the crisis, Merkel had repeatedly pleaded for a European solution to the refugee crisis. She clearly favoured a "joint EU programme where all countries agree to take in a proportionate level of refugees" (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, & Moore, 2016, p. 111). This was already her wish in 2013, when Merkel ordered a policy brief conducted by the SWP (German Institute for International and Security Affairs) which proposed a quota system for European countries in order to distribute refugees equally in Europe. On August 26th, in a special half-hour television interview on a show of ZDF (German television channel) called 'What Now, Mrs Merkel?', Merkel called again for a EU-wide approach for asylum policy. Worth noticing is that she hence still pleaded for this option only several days before she single-handedly opened Germany's borders. It thus can be argued that Merkel's personal ideal point was 'a communal European action plan regarding the handling of the refugee crisis'. Of course, this is based only on speculation.

Discussion and Conclusion

On September 5th 2015, Merkel acted in line with the centrist opinion and chose for a policy option near the expediency point. Relying on the speculation that Merkel personally had preferred a joint European solution, she didn't chose for her personal ideal point. According to Stimson et al. (1995), politicians tend to act in line with the centrist opinion when elections are in the near future. Since Merkel's decision took place in 2015 and the next national elections take place after the summer of 2017, it can be argued that the wish for re-election probably wasn't a strong motivator for her at that time. However, her decision being in line with the centrist opinion in Germany calls out for speculation that she might have been influenced by the pressure of public opinion. Given the numerous (key) events that occurred just before her decision on September 5th, this can be thought of as plausible. Especially after the pictures of a washed up Syrian child went viral, the salience of the issue seemed to rise strongly (according to the media). According to Burstein (2003), the more salient the issue, the more impact public opinion has on policy making. Thereby, Merkel's popularity seemed to rise fast short after September 5th, which can be seen as an indicator that Merkel had acted in line with the wishes of the public. H2 is likely to be correct. However, there is no prove of an actual causal mechanism between public opinion and Merkel's decision.

The character that Merkel displayed on September 5th 2015 isn't in line with the test results of MIDC. Namely, she had abandoned her clear devotion to rules, cooperation and consensus. Based on these findings, I do not believe that Merkel's character was a key factor in her decision. However, a special 'mixed' personality was found. Scale 6 and 4, the conscientious pattern and the accommodating pattern, are both present at level II which indicates a very dominant yet mildly disturbing presence (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p. 19). Conscientious-accommodating persons are proven to be very sensitive for how others think they should act and are likely to yield when put under such pressure (Landtsheer et al., 2016, p. 19). Given that the public opinion was very strong in Germany regarding the handling of the refugee crisis, Merkel might have conceded to the imposed expectations by the public. So, in this fashion it is arguable that a small distinct part of Merkel's personal characteristics had something to do with her decision. However, her personality is only involved because of the presence of the public opinion. Secluded from this contextual factor, the personal characteristics of Merkel are not likely to have influenced her. Therefore, I reject H1. Theorist

in the field of Political Psychology would have expected that Merkel's actions could be traced back to her characteristics. Since this is not the case, the predictive value of personality profiles is questionable.

The answer to my research question, '*Does either the German public opinion or her personal characteristics explain Angela Merkel's decision on September 5th 2015 regarding Germany's refugee policy during the European Refugee Crisis?*' is that there is a plausible connection between the German public opinion and Merkel's decision. Yet, there is no explicit prove of a causal relationship.

Perhaps the lack of prove is to blame on the method I used. One can argue if an historical analysis might have placed the refugee crisis in a broader perspective. This can add additional insides on two fronts, Merkel's personal history and the history of Germany. Namely, since the Second World War (WWII), Germany hasn't been part of any humanitarian issue of this scale on own soil (Alexander, 2017, p. 193). Back then, Germany sailed a course for which it is still convicted and hold accountable for (DuitslandInstituut, 2013). Merkel, an east German woman who grew up in an environment tainted by the aftermath of this war, could possibly have acted the way she did on September 5th 2015 under the influence of the heavy black page in her countries history book. Many researchers have theorized that the Holocaust deeply affects collective memory and national identity in contemporary Germany (Branscombe & Doosje, 2004; Rensmann, 2004, p. 169). With the European Refugee Crisis being the first humanitarian issue on German soil since WOII, it is argued that Merkel saw this as a change to turn the page for Germany by performing a great humanitarian act (Bershidsky, September 2015; Levy & Sznajder, 2006, p. 19). I believe that further research on Merkel's decision making process regarding the European Refugee Crisis can be helped by an historical analysis of both Germany and Merkel.

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Appendix A

Personality Pattern	Aims of Existence:		Modes of Adaptation:		Strategies of Replication:	
	Pain/Pleasure		Passive/Active		Other/Self	
	Polarity		Polarity		Polarity	
	Pain	Pleasure	Passive	Active	Other	Self
Dominant	High	Medium	Low	High	Low	Medium
Dauntless	Low	High	Low	High	Low	High
Ambitious	Medium	Medium	High	Low	Low	High
Outgoing	Medium	High	Low	High	High	Low
Accommodating	Medium	Medium	High	Low	High	Low
Aggrieved	High	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Low
Contentious	Medium	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium
Conscientious	Medium	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Reticent	High	Low	Low	High	Medium	Medium
Retiring	Low	Low	High	Low	Low	Medium

Source: Immelman (2005).

Appendix B

Personality Patterns: Million Inventory of Diagnostic Criteria

- Scale 1A: Dominant pattern
 - a. Asserting
 - b. Controlling
 - c. Agressive
- Scale 1B: Dauntless pattern
 - a. Venturesome
 - b. Dissenting
 - c. Aggrandizing
- Scale 2: Ambitious pattern
 - a. Confident
 - b. Self-serving
 - c. Exploitative
- Scale 3: Outgoing pattern
 - a. Congenial
 - b. Gregarious
 - c. Impulsive
- Scale 4: Accommodating pattern
 - a. Cooperative
 - b. Agreeable
 - c. Submissive
- Scale 5A: Aggrieved pattern
 - a. Unpresuming
 - b. Self-denying
 - c. Self-defeating
- Scale 5B: Contentious pattern
 - a. Resolute
 - b. Oppositional
 - c. Negativistic
- Scale 6: Conscientious pattern
 - a. Respectful
 - b. Dutiful
 - c. Compulsive
- Scale 7: Reticent pattern
 - a. Circumspect
 - b. Inhibited
 - c. Withdrawn
- Scale 8: Retiring pattern
 - a. Reserved
 - b. Aloof
 - c. Solitary
- Scale 9: Distrusting pattern
 - d. Suspicious
 - e. Paranoid
- Scale 0: Erratic pattern
 - d. Unstable
 - e. Borderline

Source: Immelman (2005).