

Leadership Skills, Style of Power and Influence over Regional Policies of Germany in the Post Crisis Europe (2012-2015)

Capacidades de Liderança, Estilo de Poder e Influência sobre as Políticas Regionais da Alemanha na Europa Pós-crise (2012-2015)

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Abstract—Since the Eurozone crisis, scholars framed different interpretations about the power role of Germany in Europe, pointing at the possible return of the “German question”. Recently, with the “Brexit”, the populist tensions within the EU and the election of Trump as US president, Germany on the contrary, was regarded as the last bastion of the liberal order by Western media. Starting from the premise that with the global economic crisis Germany acquired a supremacy position in Europe “by default”, we proceed by confuting the idea of Germany as a coercive hegemon, without falling into idealistic interpretations. To do so, we define an analytical framework distinguishing leadership and hegemony and insisting on the importance of the context of permanent multi-level crisis in Europe. The argument we advance is that between 2012 and 2015 Germany played a positive power role in Europe, exhibiting appreciable leadership skills, vast regional influence and, first of all, a style of power closer to a benign multilateral leadership than to a coercive unilateral hegemony. The empirical research is based on three case studies from different policy areas, the Banking Union (2012-2013), the European migration crisis (2014-2015) and the Russia-Ukraine conflict (2014-2015).

Keywords—Regional Power, Europe, Leadership, Crisis.

Resumo—Desde a crise da zona do euro, os investigadores elaboraram diferentes interpretações sobre o papel do poder da Alemanha na Europa, apontando para o possível retorno da “questão alemã”. Recentemente, com o “Brexit”, as tensões populistas na UE e a eleição de Trump como presidente dos EUA, a Alemanha seguiu o caminho contrário, sendo considerada o último bastião da ordem liberal pela comunicação social ocidental. Partindo da premissa de que, com a crise económica global, a Alemanha adquiriu uma posição de supremacia na Europa “by default”, prosseguimos confundindo a ideia da Alemanha como um poder hegemónico coercitivo, sem cair em interpretações idealistas. Para isso, definimos uma estrutura analítica que distingue liderança e hegemonia e insistindo na importância do contexto de permanente crise multinível na Europa. O argumento que avançamos é que, entre 2012 e 2015, a Alemanha desempenhou um papel positivo de poder na Europa, exibindo habilidades de liderança apreciáveis, vasta influência regional e, sobretudo, um estilo de poder mais próximo de uma liderança multilateral benigna do que de uma hegemonia unilateral coerciva. A investigação empírica baseia-se em três estudos de caso de diferentes áreas políticas, a União Bancária (2012-2013), a crise migratória europeia (2014-2015) e o conflito Rússia-Ucrânia (2014-2015).

Palavras-Chave—Poder Regional, Europa, Liderança, Crise.

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1 Introduction

THE aim of this paper is to research the regional power role exercised by Germany in the post-crisis Europe, between 2012 and 2015.¹ The article distances itself from both the views of a post-2008 Germany as an authoritarian hegemon in Europe and the idealistic interpretation considering it the last hope of the liberal order worldwide, as appeared on the first pages of numerous renowned international media². Indeed, on one hand Germany was prematurely judged as re-proposing the emergence of a “German question” in Europe; on the other hand, the country was lately considered as the last bastion of the liberal order globally, contrasting rising populisms and opposing a constructive path to isolationist solutions adopted by countries such as the United Kingdom. Far from these over-simplified analyses, the article builds an accurate picture of the regional power role of Germany from 2012 to 2015, defining critically its limits during a complicated historical context.

A key point concerns the leadership skills of Germany, in particular the capacity to lead Member States of the European Union out of the crises that recently plagued the region. We state that Germany should receive more credit in consideration of those historical contingencies, as the post-2008 in Europe can be considered a period of permanent crisis, characterized by uncertainty.

1.1 Review of the literature

The literature concerning the Post-Crisis regional status of Germany includes opposite positions, ranging from iconic “champion of liberal order and multilateral approach” to a “ruling in a despotic way over a de facto German Europe”. The analysis of the literature is useful to outline a map of

the main interpretative lines regarding the post-crisis Germany in Europe and, consequently, understand where our thesis lies. By reviewing the literature on this topic, we counted at least six macro interpretations.

The first interpretative position is the “Zivilmacht” or Civilian Power. The rationale is embedded in the post WW2 order, and considers Germany as a normative actor, founding its foreign policy on non-negotiable values (such as the avoidance the use of military force, the induced ultra-pacifism, pro-regional integration attitude), and a multilateral approach to crises and disputes via international fora³. According to the scholars supporting this view, the post-2008 regional role of Germany is basically based on the approach of Western Germany and the post-reunification, however in a historically and geo-political different context, displaying a substantial continuity in the European politics of Germany (Manners 2002, 2006; Telò 2015)⁴. The second interpretative line considers Germany as de facto the hegemon in Europe, as a consequence of the global economic crisis. We identify two main sub-trends within this interpretation, defining different priorities: authors, such as Habermas (2010, 2011), focus on the intentional and structural nature of the new role of Germany; on the other hand, authors such as Beck (2014) highlight the importance of contingency issues (the asymmetric impact of the economic crisis) which contributed to the origin of Germany as the unrivaled hegemon over the region⁵. The third interpretation or of the “leadership by default”, agrees with the aforementioned consideration of a de facto leadership role of Germany in Europe after the global economic crisis. However, the new power role of Germany would be the mere result of a change of regional context, denying any intentional plan to hegemony over the continent. According to Janning and Möller (2015) Germany’s elites have the possibility to

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1. The article is partially based on the researches made by Dr. Valerio Alfonso Bruno for his doctoral thesis.

2. Smale and Erlanger 2016; Noack 2016; Oltermann 2016

3. In this direction, we could mention the interesting thesis of Maull, considering Germany and Japan as the prototypes of a new typology of powers. See in particular Maull 1990.

4. The studies of Manners are fundamental on the topic. See in particular: Manners 2002, 2006). The article of Telò (2015) on the topic is also important. For a critic of the notion of “civilian power” see Bull (1982).

5. Among the articles and interviews of Habermas, see at least the following: Habermas 2010, 2011; Beck 2014.

use the favorable momentum to exercise an active leadership role; other authors (Streeck 2015) believe the “leadership by default” not convenient to both Germany and other EU countries, and advocate for a consensual separation, beneficial to both sides on the long run⁶. The “false power” interpretation insists on the weaknesses of Germany and denies it any possibility to exercise a leadership role in Europe. One reason concerns economics: Germany’s would be too dependent on its exports, lacking public investments, plagued by small jobs and ageing population (Legrain 2014; Gros 2015). A different declination sees the weakness in the fading bilateral leadership with France. A third reason is the relative military weakness of Germany in terms of manpower and equipment (Speck 2012). A last reason is historical, considering the reluctance of Germany to act as regional leader a sign of the difficulty to overcome its past, making the country *sui generis* (Rusconi 2015; Guerot 2013)⁷. The “geo-economic power” interpretation explains the apparent paradox of Germany (economic giant and military dwarf) by defining Berlin as merely interested in geo-economic power rather than military and geo-political, the country preference for investing in its Chambers of Commerce abroad and trade diplomacy missions, rather than increase its military budget. However, although Germany represent the paradigm of this new logic of power, it should not be overlooked, as some key issues are still open, as evidence by authors such as Kundnani (2011, 2015) and Youngs (2014). Finally, the interpretation considering Germany Post-Crisis status and its European politics as the last step towards “normality”. Germany, in the immediate post-reunification, continued to play a sort of *sui generis* civilian power role, but with the global crisis, it completely finalized the return to normality, pursuing its national interest (Ash 1993, 2010a, 2010b)⁸. In the post-2008, Germany should be considered, under every aspects, a normal country

6. The study of Streeck is a lucid analyses of the current impasse of the EU.

7. Among the many studies pointing at the role of Germany’s past on its current European power role, see at least the following works: Rusconi 2015; Guérot 2013.

8. Ash has been portraying Germany as a country on the pattern of normalization since Germany reunification.

such as the United Kingdom or France⁹.

1.2 Analytical approach of the research

This article follows the analytical framework proposed by Destradi (2008, 2010) and Nolte (2010) distinguishing between several types of regional style of power. In particular, “leadership” strictly conceived (multilateral, common objective, liberal) and hegemony (unilateral, egoistic objective, authoritarian) are placed on a *continuum* ranging from Empire to benevolent leadership. Our approach also includes the analytical contributes of Schild (2013) on the “followership” and Mattli (1999) and the way it contributes to successful regional leadership and the distinction between intentional and unintentional forms of power proposed, among others, by Stoppino (2015).

1.3 Methodology and design of the research

In our paper, we consider three main variables (leadership skills, style of power and overall influence over policies outcomes) and develop an independent set of indicators for each variable¹⁰. The indicators are used into the empirical part of the research, consisting of three case studies in order to test the thesis. These cases are drawn from different policies areas of the EU: economic affairs, internal affairs and external affairs. The first case study regards the development of the so-called “European Banking Union” (2012-2013), the second concerns the sharp increase of the “European migrant crisis” (2014-2015) and the last case deals with the complex “Russia-Ukraine conflict” (2014-2015)¹¹. The empirical analysis is conducted through the analysis of: (i) reports from international organizations and agencies; (ii) articles of international news/press agencies; (iii) well-renowned journals providing key public

9. We may affirm most scholars recognized the evolution of the regional power status of Germany following the economic crisis of 2008, nevertheless important differences of opinion persist. Our argument, although with some *distinguo*, is close to the interpretative line of the “leadership by default”, as the most adapt to understand the European stance of Germany following the global economic crisis the terminus a quo of the research.

10. In the operation of selection of the indicators, some of the considerations of Sandra Destradi have been fundamental: “Empire, hegemony, and leadership” (2008).

11. The crises analysed in the case studies cannot be considered completely over in 2017.

statements of decision-makers; (iv) researches and reports by think-tanks from different political perspective on recent events; (v) and scholarly papers by authoritative policy experts.

2 Analytical Framework

To support empirically our thesis, we first address the problem of accurately defining the analytical approach adopted, by introducing the building blocks of our argument. The main building blocks required by our analysis are:

2.1 Distinction between leadership, hegemony and supremacy

As mentioned in the introduction, we believe useful to differentiate between “Leadership” and “Hegemony” from “Supremacy”. The first two concepts define somehow an activity of leading, which may substantially be characterized by willingness, awareness and planning. On the other hand, to our view, supremacy identifies an asymmetrical distribution of resources defining a hierarchical order concerning a given context. We adopted the conceptual framework developed by Destradi (2008, 2011) and the suggestions proposed by Nolte (2010) in order to compare regional powers. The main conceptual dimension discriminating between Hegemony and Leadership is the pursuit of an egoistic or common objective by the Leader. On this point, the contributions of Schirm (2012) on “followership”, insisting on the relevance of including aims and ideals of followers into the strategic plan of the Leader to succeed, is interesting:

“I argue that it is essentially the lack of support by neighboring countries which precluded emerging powers from successfully pursuing their goals in several instances. In order to perform successfully their leadership must be accepted by followers, especially by neighboring countries since gains in power affect the respective region directly. Followership by neighboring countries is a necessary condition to give these countries the power base for both regional and global power projection.”

Schirm 2012, 199

The distinction hegemony-leadership brings some critical elements: both concepts are used as synonymous, describing the action by a State/actor of temporarily leading one or more followers, in virtue of a more or less pro-active submission. However, leadership recalls, in a more pronounced way, the action of leading followers in moment of crises, with followers more voluntarily submitting. On the other hand, hegemony brings with it the idea of followers into a less spontaneous way.

2.2 Crisis management and leadership

The conceptual analysis regarding the variable x (leadership skills) is closely connected with the style of power mentioned above. Some dimensions as consensus and coalition building, acting as focal point in international fora, working towards the promotion of a common agenda and the leadership by example are elements defining the leadership style of power. Other conceptual dimensions such as crisis management, strategic planning and proactivity define both the action of the hegemony power than the one of the leadership strictly conceived. As stated by Nolte: “Regional powers [...] have to bear a special responsibility for regional security and for the maintenance of order in the region.” (Nolte 2010, 890).

2.3 Intentional and un-intentional conceptual dimensions of power

In our paper, we consider a different analytical perspective, based on the overall influence over regional policies outcomes. In particular, some scholars (Russett 1985; Schirm 2012) focus not merely on the material or military resources at disposal of the Leader State, but on the effective capacity to influence the outcomes at the regional level as a *conditio sine qua non* to define a regional power. Therefore, we decided to integrate some classical theories and concepts from International Relations, such as agenda setting and veto power with more subtle items. In particular, the normative persuasion (Ikenberry 2009) involving the capacity to change norms (and politics) of the Follower States without involving sanctions,

political pressure, material benefits and side payments, and the emulation and non-decision effect (Stoppino 2015)¹².

2.4 The role of the Regions

In the International Relations debates, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Empire seemed to introduce a new era, characterized by the US hegemony. IR scholars argued that the end of bipolarism inaugurated the unipolar moment with the triumph of the capitalist economy and with the dissemination of liberal democratic systems (Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*). Other scholars (Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*) assumed the unipolar moment as a transitional era towards a new multipolar order, which instead of being dominated by military power only, would be characterized by cultural (tribal, religious, linguistic etc.) identity and consequent confrontations. Huntington stated the origin of the clash of civilizations: while rejecting some of the theoretical and conceptual premises of the Huntington research, we acknowledge his intuition over the shape of a regional-bloc order. In fact, the 21th Century confirmed the precariousness of unipolarism and the creation of a multipolar order, dominated by regional powers and regional blocs, whose most important example is the origin of the BRICS countries, which openly challenged the US power, by promoting alternative decision-making processes. The 2008 financial crisis seemed to benefit the rising powers, while the traditional powers had an important retreat. We here state the significance of the roots of alter-hegemonic powers, which tried to change the *games rules* into the International arena, recognizing the new balancing mechanisms, by determining implicit regional spheres of influence and power. At the same time, we assumed the deepening of integration processes (political and economics, geopolitical) into the regional blocs (i.e. Asia's ascending powers, Latin American integration processes, Gulf powers in the Middle East) imposed by the global system to the key-actors. It is important here to state that regional

power approach tries to combine IR realist and neorealist theories with constructivist and liberal perspectives, by 'conceptualizing regional powers combined elements of different IR approaches; they include the internal power base (liberal), the power resources (realist) and their application (realist), role definitions and strategies (constructivist), and interaction patterns in the region with a special emphasis on the role of regional institutions' (Nolte 2010). In Latin America, the ascending role of Brazil made of it an indispensable key actor, as a regional power (a new sub-imperial power?) (Marini 1977; Zibechi 2012). A similar approach could be applied also to other regional blocs, including European Union in order to have a different perspective to International Relations Theories.

3 Methodology and Research Design

Defined the analytical approach of the work and aspects related to the distinction of concepts such as supremacy, hegemony and leadership, we focus on the methodological and design aspects of the research.

We define three variables: *leadership skills (x)*, *style of power (y)* and *overall influence over policies outcomes (z)*, as the combination of those three substantially covers all the major aspects regarding the dynamic of regional power. The transition from abstract concepts such as leadership, hegemony or influence to indicators capable to grasp empirical reality is complex. The step adopted was to conceive some conceptual dimensions, operating as a "bridge" between abstract concepts and empirical reality. Thus, each of the three abstract concepts behind the variables was structured into empirical indicators; consequently, we developed one independent sets of indicators for each variable, with multiple conceptual dimensions¹³. The working definitions of the conceptual dimensions are the following: Variable

12. The works of Ikenberry are fundamental to understand the relations existing between hegemon/leader and institutional frameworks. In particular see at least Ikenberry (2009).

13. The indicators are on a 0-4 points scale (0= minimal, 4= maximum). The dimensions *crisis management* and *common agenda promotion* were weighted with a higher overall impact (25% each), while the remaining four dimensions of variable x have an impact of 12,5% each. The four dimensions of the variable y were given different weightings. The dimension *goal/objective* assigned weight is of 50% of the overall score, while the remaining four dimensions are assigned 12,5% each.

x – leadership skills (as it is exposed in detail in Table 1):

- 1) *Consensus and coalition building*: Bridging different perspective of Followers on collective action and forming coalition of followers;
- 2) *Focal point in international fora*: Representing the interest of the region in international fora;
- 3) *Crisis management*: Managing successfully critical and extra-ordinary situations;
- 4) *Common agenda promotion*: Fostering a regional common agenda;
- 5) *Strategic planning*: Acting following a strategy, without sudden turns and constant reconsideration;
- 6) *Leadership by example*: Inducing followers to act following its example;
- 7) *Proactivity*: Dealing in anticipation with expected difficulty.

Table 1: Dimensions and indicators of leadership skills (variable x)

Dimension	Explanation	Indicators	Index leadership skills
Consensus and coalition building (10% impact)	<i>Bridging different perspective of followers on collective action</i>	A. Majority of States (incl. competitors) and most of dossier B. Majority of States (incl. competitors) and most of dossier	0. Minimal (G) 1. Weak (E, F) 2. Medium (D, E) 3. Solid (B, C) 4. Strong (A)
	<i>Forming coalition of followers</i>	C. Majority of States and minority of dossier D. Majority of States and minority of dossier E. Minority of States (incl. competitors) and most of dossier F. Minority of States (incl. competitors) and minority of dossier G. Minority of States and most of dossier H. Minority of States and minority of dossier	
Focal point in international fora (10% impact)	<i>Representing the interest of the region in international fora</i>	A. All the international fora with efficacy B. All the international fora C. Most international fora D. Few international fora E. No international fora	0. Minimal (E) 1. Weak (D) 2. Medium (C) 3. Solid (B) 4. Strong (A)
Crisis management (25% impact)	<i>Managing successfully critical and extra-ordinary situations</i>	A. Every critical situation, with promptness and resilience B. Every critical situation C. Most of the critical situations D. Few critical situations E. No critical situations	0. Minimal (E) 1. Weak (D) 2. Medium (C) 3. Solid (B) 4. Strong (A)
Common agenda promotion (25% impact)	<i>Fostering the regional common agenda</i>	A. Every aspect of the agenda B. Most of the aspects of the agenda (including major economic aspects) C. Most of the aspects of the agenda (excluding major economic aspects) D. Few aspects of the agenda E. No aspects of the agenda	0. Minimal (E) 1. Weak (D) 2. Medium (C) 3. Solid (B) 4. Strong (A)
Strategic planning (10% impact)	<i>Acting following a strategy, without sudden turns and constant reconsideration</i>	A. Strategic planning independently of international and domestic pressure B. Simple strategic planning C. Minor shifts and reconsiderations D. Major shifts and reconsiderations E. No evidence of strategic planning	0. Minimal (E) 1. Weak (D) 2. Medium (C) 3. Solid (B) 4. Strong (A)
Leadership by example (10% impact)	<i>Inducing followers to act following its example</i>	A. In all the situations B. In most situations C. In few situations D. In no situations E. Detering action	0. Minimal (E) 1. Weak (D) 2. Medium (C) 3. Solid (B) 4. Strong (A)
Proactivity (10% impact)	<i>Dealing in anticipation with expected difficulty</i>	A. Fully proactive B. Mostly proactive C. Partially proactive D. Minimal E. Reactive	0. Minimal (E) 1. Weak (D) 2. Medium (C) 3. Solid (B) 4. Strong (A)

Variable y – style of power (as it is exposed in detail in Table 2)¹⁴.

14. As concerns variable y (style of power), indicators are on a scale 0-4 with 0 being hegemonic style of power and 4 being liberal leadership style.

- 8) *Goals/objectives*: Aim pursued by the leader (common vs egoistic);
- 9) *Multilateral approach*: Working in concert with two or more Follower States;
- 10) *Follower States attitude*: Attitude of the Follower States towards the action of the leader;
- 11) *Follower States status*: The Follower States' status are substantially improved by the action of the leader.

Table 2: Dimensions and indicators of style of power (variable y)

Dimension	Explanation	Indicators	Index style
Goals/objective (50% impact)	<i>Goals or objectives pursued by the leader</i>	A. Egoistic B. Prevalently egoistic C. No net distinction D. Prevalently common E. Common	0. Hegemony (A) 1. Prevalently hegemonic (B) 2. No net prevalence (C) 3. Prevalently leadership (D) 4. Leadership (E)
Multilateral approach (12,5% impact)	<i>Working in concert with two or more follower States</i>	A. Absent B. False multilateralism (facade) C. Bilateralism with a "junior" partner D. With minority of followers E. With majority of followers	0. Hegemony (A) 1. Prevalently hegemonic (B) 2. No net prevalence (C) 3. Prevalently leadership (D) 4. Leadership (E)
Follower States Attitude (12,5% impact)	<i>Attitude of the follower States towards the action of the leader</i>	A. Open and firm resistance B. Initial/soft resistance C. Subordination D. Non-decision E. Mutual bargain F. Voluntary followership G. Follower-initiated	0. Hegemony (A) 1. Prevalently hegemonic (B,C) 2. No net prevalence (D) 3. Prevalently leadership (E) 4. Leadership (F, G)
Follower States status (12,5% impact)	<i>The followers States' status are improved by action of the leader</i>	A. Harmful or negative impact B. No improvement C. Minimal-improvement D. Partial improvement E. Real improvement	0. Hegemony (A) 1. Prevalently hegemonic (B) 2. No net prevalence (C) 3. Prevalently leadership (D) 4. Leadership (E)

Variable z – overall influence on policies outcomes (as it is exposed in detail in Table 3)¹⁵:

- 12) *Agenda setting*: Power of setting the agenda;
- 13) *Veto power*: Veto capacity over Follower States;
- 14) *Normative persuasion*: Changing norms (and politics) of the Follower States without involving sanctions, political pressure, material benefits and side payments;
- 15) *Emulation effect*: Un-intentional influence observable by emulation behaviors of Followers States in order to trigger pos-

15. The first three indicators of variable z take into account intentional forms of influence, while emulation effect and non-decision effect try to grasp empirically unintentional influence.

itive reaction/avoid negative ones from the leader;

- 16) *Non-decision effect*: Un-intentional influence observable by non-decision of Follower States aiming at avoiding negative reactions of the leader.

Table 3: Dimensions and indicators of power over outcomes (variable z)

Dimension	Explanation	Indicators	Index influence
Agenda setting	<i>Power of establishing the agenda</i>	A. On majority of States (incl. competitors) and most of dossier B. On majority of States (incl. competitors) and minority of dossier	0. Minimal (H) 1. Light (F, G) 2. Medium (D, E) 3. Valuable (B, C) 4. Strong (A)
Veto power	<i>Veto capacity</i>	C. On majority of States and most of dossier D. On majority of States and minority of dossier	0. Minimal (H) 1. Light (F, G) 2. Medium (D, E) 3. Valuable (B, C) 4. Strong (A)
Normative persuasion	<i>Changing norms (and politics) of the Follower States without involving sanctions, political pressure, material benefits and side payments</i>	E. On minority of States (incl. competitors) and most of dossier F. On minority of States (incl. competitors) and minority of dossier	0. Minimal (H) 1. Light (F, G) 2. Medium (D, E) 3. Valuable (B, C) 4. Strong (A)
Emulation effect	<i>Un-intentional influence observable by emulation behaviors of Followers States in order to trigger positive reaction or avoid negative ones from the leader</i>	G. On minority of States and most of dossier H. On minority of States and minority of dossier	0. Minimal (H) 1. Light (F, G) 2. Medium (D, E) 3. Valuable (B, C) 4. Strong (A)
Non-decision effect	<i>Un-intentional influence observable by non-decision of Follower States aiming at avoiding negative reactions of the leader</i>		0. Minimal (H) 1. Light (F, G) 2. Medium (D, E) 3. Valuable (B, C) 4. Strong (A)

As defined in tables 1, 2 and 3, multiple indicators were built from the conceptual dimensions of the three variables. In order to summarize the main evidences derived from the empirical analysis, we developed three comprehensive indexes for the variables, by weighting some indicators, corresponding to higher impact for critical indicators, such as crisis management, agenda promotion and nature of the goals (please refer to tables 1, 2 and 3 for an extensive analysis).

The design of the research considers three case studies in order to find empirical support for our thesis. The cases are: (1) the “European Banking Union” (2012-2013), (2) the “European migrant crisis” (2014-2015) and (3) Russia-Ukraine conflict (2014-2015); drawn from different policies areas of the EU: economic affairs, internal affairs and external affairs. Following the single empirical analysis of each case study, we operate an overall analysis by combining the data and the elements emerged by the three cases. The empirical section is conducted through the analysis (i) of reports from international organizations (such NATO, UN Agencies, Eurostat), (ii) articles of inter-

national news/press agencies, (iii) well-renowned journals from different political and ideological orientation (*The Financial Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Der Spiegel*, *The Washington Post*, *Le Monde*, etc.) providing key public statements of decision-makers, (iv) researches and reports by think-tanks from different political perspective on recent events (Brugel, Carnegie, European Council on Foreign Relations, Social Europe, Project Syndicate, etc.), and (v) scholarly papers by authoritative policy experts. The data emerging from the empirical analysis, divided by sample sources, are used to elaborate indexes related to the three different variables, which are object of the analysis. Each index assigns a numerical parameter to the empirical analysis on a scale: in particular, the variable leadership skills ranges from “minimal leadership skills” (value of 0), to “strong leadership skills” (value of 4); the variable style of power assigns a value of 0 to “hegemony” and a value of 4 to “leadership”; the variable power over outcomes assigns a value of 0 “minimal power” to 4 “strong power”

4 Empirical Section

The paper develops the empirical part of the research by testing the thesis in the selected case studies, using the indicators described in the precedent paragraph, with three sets of indicators (one for each variable) and overall sixteen conceptual dimensions.

4.1 The European Banking Union (2012-2013)¹⁶

The “Eurozone crisis” erupted in 2010, highlighting the necessity for Member of the Eurozone of deeper economic integration to protect themselves from the instability of financial markets over possible default risks (Zaharia 2012; Aloisi 2012). The idea of an European Banking Union was originally conceived as made up of three “pillars” (Beck 2014; Howarth and Quaglia 2013): (1) a shift of banking supervision from the national to the EU level under a Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM); (2) a Single Resolution Mechanism (or

16. This case study was kindly suggested by Prof. Paul H. Dembinski of the University of Fribourg (Switzerland).

SRM) at the Eurozone level on bank reconstructing and resolution, with a related Single Resolution Fund (SRF); (3) a common bank deposit guarantee scheme. Germany opposed by proposing a Banking Union: (1) led by a network of national resolution agencies of the Member States instead of the EC and the ECB, (2) leaving out minor cooperative banks and credit institutions under national supervisions and focusing only on larger banks, (3) agreeing only in general terms to a common bank deposit guarantee scheme (O'Donnell 2012). The Banking Union required months of intensive talks and negotiation, eventually resulting in two “pillars” only: the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM) and the Single Resolution Mechanism (SRM).

Leadership skills (x)

As it is possible to argue from Table 4, in the establishment of the Banking Union Germany displaying relatively modest leadership skills, particularly in relation to (1) consensus building and (2) leadership by example, performing relatively better in relation to (3) common agenda promotion and (4) crisis management. German policy has been criticized by EU politicians for focusing excessively on intergovernmental approach (Spiegel 2013). Some scholars (Hennessy 2013) pointed out the desire of Germany to grant assistance to troubled banks of Member States only at the condition of immediate clarity in relation to the kind of institutional legal framework envisaged, avoiding any risks to German taxpayers and possible moral hazards in the Eurozone, resulting in (5) an effective “detering action” against the claims of “European solidarity” (Hennessy 2014).

Table 4: Banking Union and leadership skills

Dimension	Indicators	Index leadership skills
Consensus and coalition building	H. On minority of States (excl. competitors) and minority of dossier	0. Minimal
Focal point in international fora	N/a	N/a
Strategic planning	D. Major shifts and reconsiderations	1. Weak
Crisis management	D. In few critical situations	1. Weak
Common agenda promotion	D. Few aspects of the agenda	1. Weak
Leadership by example	E. Detering action	0. Minimal
Proactivity	D. Minimally proactive	1. Weak

Style of power (y)

As it understandable from Table 5, the style of regional power of Germany can be considered

prevalently hegemonic. If it is true that Germany granted some relative, albeit limited, gains to the Eurozone as a whole, the main driver of its action was egoistic (1). This approach triggered on the side of EU Member States (2) an initial resistance, frustrated by solid veto power. Therefore, Germany focused on the protection of its small banks, while only as secondary aim to structure a comprehensive plan to protect the Eurozone, through (3) a unilateral approach only occasionally supported by bilateral efforts. The goal achieved can be considered prevalently egoistic, as only large European banks (120-130) received direct supervision from the ECB of over 6000 credit institutions remaining under national supervision, following Germany view. Most of the Member States had no choice than conforming to Germany’s preferences¹⁷.

Table 5: Banking Union and style of power

Dimension	Indicators	Index style of power
Goals/objectives	B. Prevalently egoistic	1. Prevalently hegemonic
Multilateral approach	C. Bilateralism with a “junior” partner D. With minority of followers	2. No net prevalence 3. Prevalently leadership
Follower States attitude	B. Initial/soft resistance C. Subordination D. Non-decision	1. Prevalently hegemonic 2. No net prevalence
Follower States status	C. Minimal-improvement D. Partial improvement	2. No net prevalence 3. Prevalently leadership

Power over outcomes (z)

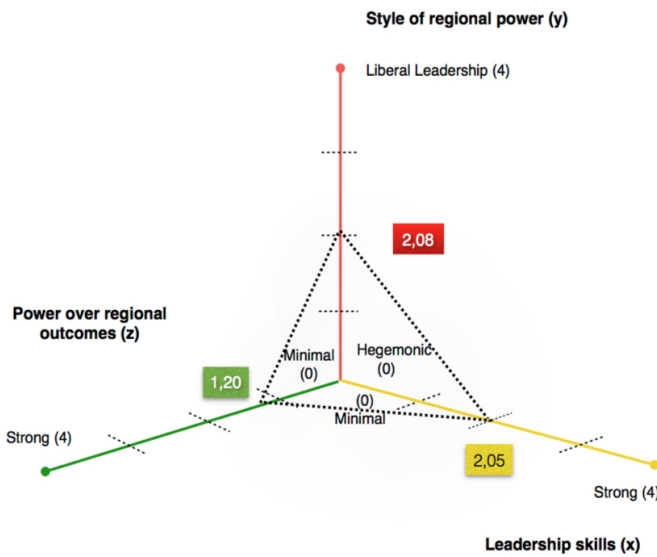
The European Banking Union is a perfect example of (1) the veto power at disposal of Germany and of its unintentional capacity to influence regional policy outcomes through what we have been calling (2) emulation effect and (3) non-decision effect (please refer to Table 5). We observed how Germany was able to counterbalance the coordinated efforts of France, Spain and Italy (supported by the European Commission) for the mutualization of risk and liabilities in the Euro area in name of “European solidarity” or the common deposit scheme (Strupczewski 2015).

17. However, Germany acted following a clear institutional project, preferred to an immediate unregulated assistance, with the Banking Union giving relative gains to other Member States, resulting in granting enhanced pre-crisis status of EU Member States.

Table 6: Banking Union and power over outcomes

Dimension	Indicators	Index regional influence
Agenda setting	C. On majority of States and most of dossier	3. Valuable
Veto power	A. On majority of States (incl. competitors) and most of dossier	4. Strong
Normative persuasion	H. On minority of States and minority of dossier	1. Minimal
Emulation effect	A. On majority of States (incl. competitors) and most of dossier	4. Strong
Non-decision effect	C. On majority of States and most of dossier	3. Valuable

Graphic 1: The European Banking Union (2012-2013)



Sample sources: Journal Articles and Reports: Beck 2012, Dullien and Guérot 2012, Henessy 2014, Howarth and Quaglia 2013, Moloney 2014. Newspaper Articles: Aloisi 2012, Fairless 2013, Le Monde 2013, O'Donnell 2012, Spiegel 2013, Strupczewski 2015, Zaharia 2012.

4.2 The European migrant crisis (2014-2015)

A peculiar set of conditions in the neighborhood of the European Union such as the wars in Libya (2011) and Syria (2011) concurred in triggering dramatic flows of migrants and asylum seekers towards Europe. Data compiled by Eurostat show that a record 1.2 million asylum seekers registered in the EU in 2015, from 562,680 in 2014 (Eurostat Newsrelease 2014). The number of refugees crossing the sea from Turkey to Greece increased 20 times from 2014 to 2015 [...]. Germany and Sweden received over half of all applications, with Hungary, Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark and Bulgaria accounting for another 30% (Merler 2016). Germany was the 4th Member State of the EU for number of asylum requests in relation to

population during 2011-2015 (following Sweden, Hungary and Austria) and the first in absolute terms with 707.000 refugees. More than a third of asylum applications were made in Germany, which accepted the most as part of Chancellor Merkel's refugee policy.

Leadership skills (x)

Germany scored higher in relation to leadership skills than in the case study of the Banking Union, in reason of (1) a good crisis management and (2) a good activity as focal point in international fora and (3) a strong leadership by example, as can be inferred by Table 7. This was a sensitive case, with possible links between migrants and security policies, with leadership by example being of crucial importance. Rachman (2016) recognized Germany's refugee policy was considered too liberal, both internally that at the EU level, by German politicians and by European leaders, highlighting relatively low capacity of (4) consensus building and (2) common agenda promotion (Reuters Staff 2015). If it is true indeed that Merkel's popularity suffered both domestically and at the EU level because of the policy pursued, Germany gained at the international level much popularity as liberal regional leader (Oltermann and Wintour 2016).

Table 7: European migrant crisis and leadership skills

Dimension	Indicators	Index leadership skills
Consensus and coalition building	G. On minority of States (excl. competitors) and most of dossier	1. Weak
Focal point in international fora	B. All the international fora	3. Solid
Strategic planning	C. Minor shifts and reconsiderations	2. Medium
Crisis management	C. Most of the critical situations	2. Medium
Common agenda promotion	B. In relation to few aspects of the agenda	1. Weak
Leadership by example	A. All the situations	4. Strong
Proactivity	A. Partially proactive	3. Medium

Style of power (y)

As can be argued by Table 8, the style of power exhibited during the refugee crisis an overall by neither net prevalence of liberal leadership nor hegemonic style. In fact,,on one hand Germany (1) acted towards prevalently common objective whilst (2) on the other, the German policy related to the migrants and refugees was perceived by the majority of the EU Member States as excessively liberal, given that it was unsustainable on the long run, and dangerous for a variety of reasons, such as possible links to terrorism, incidence on

social policies and especially encouraging illegal migration. This is true particularly in relation to (3) a mostly unilateral approach and (4) the follower States attitude, characterized by initial resistance and means adopted.

Table 8: European migrant crisis and power style

Dimension	Indicators	Index style of power
Goals/objectives	D. Prevalently common	3. Prevalently leadership
Multilateralism	B. False multilateralism (facade)	1. Prevalently hegemonic
Follower States attitude	B. Initial/soft resistance/pseudo legitimacy status C. Subordination/pseudo legitimacy status	1. Prevalently hegemonic
Follower States status	A. Harmful or negative authority D. Partial authority	0. Hegemony 3. Prevalently leadership

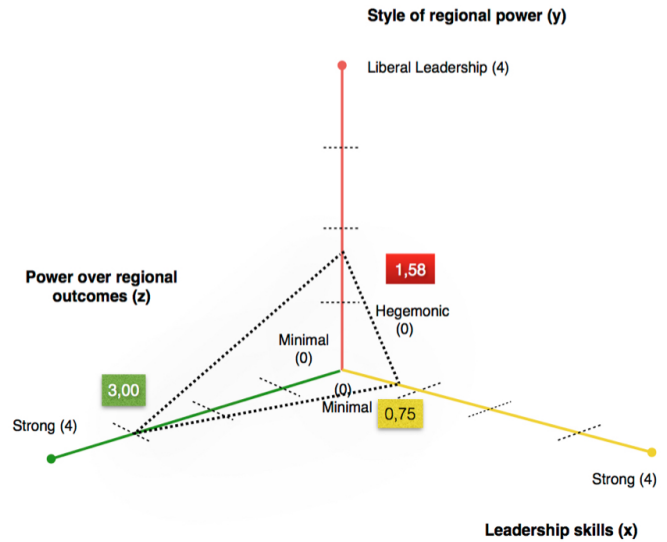
Power over outcomes (z)

Table 9 shows the level of power over regional outcomes expressed by Germany during the refugee crisis of 2014-2015 was overall limited. A part from its veto power, (1) agenda setting and (2) normative persuasion performed rather poorly, with (3) emulation effect completely absent. Lehne (2016) was among the scholars highlighting the rather uncommon role of Germany as “demandeur” of EU solidarity, differently from the Greece bailout or confrontation with Russia, where Germany “was an essential part of any solution and thus capable of a leading role in shaping the EU’s response”.

Table 9: European migrant crisis and power over outcomes

Dimension	Indicators	Index influence
Agenda setting	G. On minority of States (excl. competitors) and most of dossier	1. Light
Veto power	C. On majority of States (excl. competitors) and most of dossier	3. Valuable
Normative persuasion	F. On minority of States (incl. competitors) and minority of dossier	1. Light
Emulation effect	H. On minority of States (excl. competitors) and minority of dossier	0. Minimal
Non-decision effect	F. On minority of States (incl. competitors) and minority of dossier	1. Light

Graphic 2: The European migrant crisis (2014-2015)



Sample sources: Journal Articles and Reports: Lehne 2016; Merler 2016). Newspaper Articles: Copley 2015; Eurostat Newsrelease 2016; Oltermann and Wintour 2016; Rachman 2016; Reuters Staff 2015a, 2015b.

4.3 The Russia-Ukraine military intervention in Crimea (2014-2015)

The last case study belongs to the field of the EU external affairs and regards the Russia-Ukraine military confrontation taking place in 2014 and 2015, triggered by the civil unrest of pro-EU citizens (Euromaidan) started in Kiev on November 2013 against the government Janukovic. When Janukovic was forced to resign (February 22, 2014), in Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk, public demonstration took place in favor of Russia. A first agreement (Minsk I) to halt the war in Ukraine was reached in September 2014 but failed to stop fighting in Donbass, collapsing in January 2015. A second agreement (Minsk II) was signed in February 2015 by Russia, Ukraine and the representative of the separatists forces, under a strategic plan conceived by the joint diplomatic efforts of Germany and France in order to broke an immediate ceasefire. In addition, the European Union produced a comprehensive package of diplomatic, economic and trade sanctions against Russia (July 2014), linking the duration of those to the complete implementation of the Minsk agreements, while US-led plans to involve

NATO in arming Ukraine with lethal weapons was rejected by the EU under the German-French bilateral leadership.

Leadership skills (x)

Germany performed positively in terms of leadership skills during the Russia-Ukraine conflict of 2014-2015, with all the dimensions indicating strong leadership, as it can be inferred from Table 10. This is particularly evident for (1) strategic planning and (2) leadership by example. The strategic plan behind German leadership was successful, regardless domestic and international pressure. At the regional and international level, Germany’s government faced strong criticism over the refusal of arming Ukraine with lethal weapons, still it exhibited perseverance and solidity (Reuters 2016). Germany was able to manage a complex international crisis without jeopardizing the interests of any particular Member States of the EU, sharing fairly the overall burden of the sanctions¹⁸.

Table 10: Russia-Ukraine conflict and leadership skills

Dimension	Indicators	Index leadership skills
Consensus and coalition building	C. On majority of States (excl. competitors) and most of dossier	3. Solid
Focal point in international fora	A. All the international fora with efficacy	4. Strong
Strategic planning	A. Strong strategic planning independently of domestic pressure	4. Strong
Crisis management	B. Most of the critical situations	3. Solid
Common agenda promotion	B. Most of the aspects of the agenda (including economic aspects)	3. Solid
Leadership by example	A. All the situations	4. Strong
Proactivity	B. Mostly proactive	3. Solid

Style of power (y)

Table 11 shows the style of power of Germany during the Russia-Ukraine confrontation can be described as a full-fledged liberal leadership, as (1) the goal pursued was common to the majority of the Member States of the European Union and it (2) acted by using diplomatic tools, prevalently on (3) follower States’ request. Following Schirm’s methodological approach, we can say Germany was able to mostly integrate ideals and projects of the majority of the EU countries in its own

18. A study conducted by NATO’s defense economist Hunter Christie (2015) showed the cost in terms of EU exports to Russia, being for Germany 2,566 millions of euro, or 29,6% of the whole EU exports towards Russia between the first quarter of 2014 and the same period in 2015, while only partially affecting other EU countries (Hunter 2015)

leadership strategy, resulting in a solid common opposition front to Russia.

Table 11: Russia-Ukraine conflict and style of power

Dimension	Indicators	Index style of power
Goals/objectives	E. Common	4. Leadership
Multilateralism	E. With majority of followers	4. Leadership
Follower States attitude	D. Non-decision	2. No net prevalence
Follower States status	D. Partial leadership	3. Prevalently leadership

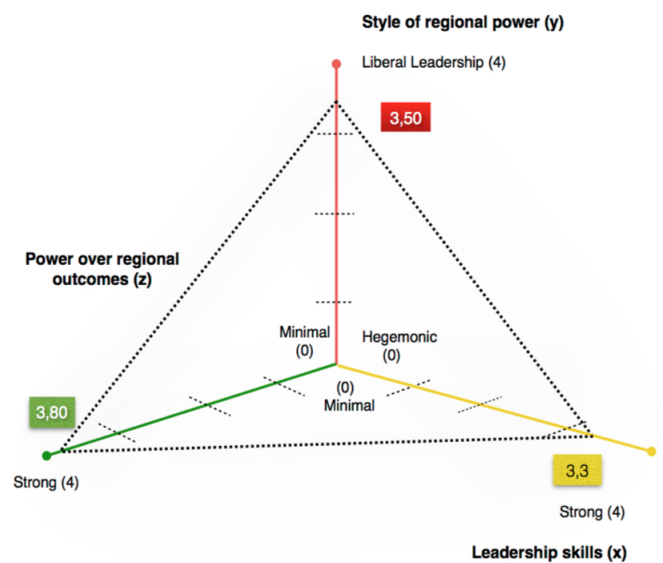
Power over outcomes (z)

By referring to Table 12, it is possible to understand the regional influence displayed by Germany during the conflict was extremely vast with (1) an effective agenda setting; therefore the sanctions successfully supported against Russia and (2) a veto power equally powerful exhibited by the modality Germany firmly vetoed the US-backed NATO’s proposal of arming Ukraine with lethal military weapons, or the strong contrast at the level of consensus with some Member States.

Table 12: Russia-Ukraine conflict and power over outcomes

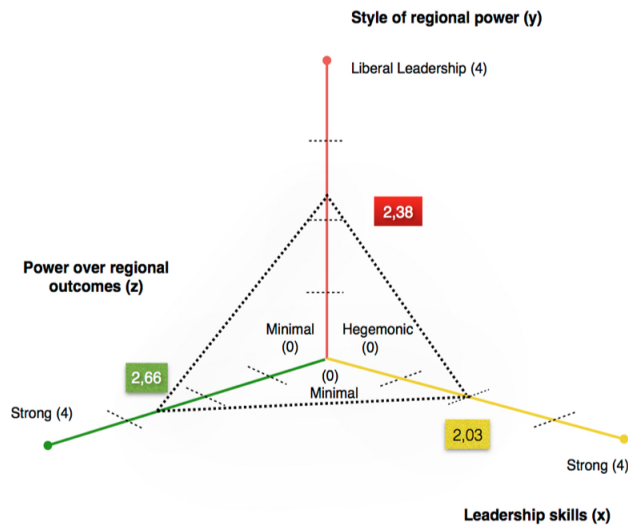
Dimension	Indicators	Index influence
Agenda setting	A. On majority of States (incl. competitors) and most of dossier	4. Strong
Veto power	A. On majority of States (incl. competitors) and most of dossier	4. Strong
Normative persuasion	C. On majority of States and most of dossier	3. Valuable
Emulation effect	A. On majority of States (incl. competitors) and most of dossier	4. Strong
Non-decision effect	A. On majority of States (incl. competitors) and most of dossier	4. Strong

Graphic 3: The Russia-Ukraine conflict (2014-2015)



Sample sources: Journal Articles and Reports: Hunter 2015; Janning and Möller 2016; Möller 2016; Speck 2016. Newspaper Articles: Carrel and Rinke 2016; Kirschbaum 2016; Emmott and Baczynska 2016; Gordon, Smale, and

Erlanger 2015.

Graphic 4: Conclusive evidences

Germany, between 2012-2015, was not the prototype of the liberal and constructive leader (the “last champion of the liberal world order” portrayed by many media), nor displayed optimal leadership skills; however, it is completely false to describe Germany’s post-crisis regional power role with negative attributes such coercive, hegemonic or its leadership skills as inexistent. Regarding the first aspect (leadership style), when judging Germany, we should consider its approaches into a global context characterized by rising populisms and isolationism, also in countries of long democratic tradition, such as the USA, and the revival of authoritarian attitude in countries such Russia, China, Turkey or deadly plagued by corruption and economic crisis (Brazil, India)¹⁹. At the regional level, we assisted in Europe to a dramatic revival of populism, in reason of growing dissatisfaction of citizens of Western Europe towards the perceived technocratic institutions of the European Union or triggered by xenophobic ghosts in the Eastern Europe (Bruno 2018). Moreover, we should not forget to mention the isolationist solution of the United Kingdom. As concerns leadership skills, the post-crisis represented, both globally and regionally, an extremely difficult

19. For instance, the recent removal of the two-term limit rule for presidency in China. See on the topic Buckley and Bradsher(2018).

test for powers. In Europe, the global crisis took quickly the features of a sovereign debts crisis, and mixed with a complex series of crises in its neighborhoods, such as the refugee and migrant crisis, the Arabic spring, the Syrian conflict, the Russia-Ukraine crisis and the emergence of terrorist threat.

To conclude, it is important to highlight the aim of this work was not to find “alibis” to Germany’s leadership, rather to define a balanced picture of its action. True, the leadership of Germany may evoke the feature of a “minimal leadership”, in the sense of providing the minimum necessary to survive in critical situations or keeping alive the regional integration process. Also true, Germany rarely showed spirit of “European solidarity”, as it is not easy to find domestically a viable political compromise between internal expectations (the “tax payers” and “moral hazard” rhetorical) and commitment to the European cause. However, in relation to the mentioned historical context and the peculiar set of conjunctures, the leadership and the skills provided by Germany proved, according to the analysis, positive. To our view, there are some cases in which progress is not possible: in such situations, not going backward is already a big victory.

5 Conclusion

Our research considered the regional role of Germany in the Post-Crisis as substantially a constructive liberal leadership, based on positive leadership skills and vast influence over regional outcomes. We tested our thesis empirically against three case studies, receiving overall some mixed evidences, confirming partially the thesis. It is possible to sum here the main empirical findings: 1- In the Banking Union case, Germany expressed poor leadership skills but valuable power over outcomes, declined as strong intentional veto power against several efforts by different actors (France and Spain, the European Commission and ECB) and un-intentional emulation effect, with many EU Member States emulating Germany’s policy. The style of regional leadership was prevalently hegemonic, with the country acting to achieve the preferences of its banking system; although Germany gained most in relative terms,

the EU as a whole received in absolute some important gains.

2- In the second case study Germany struggled in terms of power over regional outcomes, as the “open the door” policy sponsored by Merkel was criticized by many EU Member States over sustainability, placing Berlin in the unusual role of “*demandeur*” of European solidarity and exhibiting lack of strategic planning. As regards leadership skills, limits emerged, in particular on: consensus and coalition building, strategic planning and common agenda promotion, while leadership by example and proactivity performed well.

3- In the last case study opposing Russia and Ukraine, Germany displayed solid leadership, leading the EU through an international crisis without military engagement. Germany controlled almost every policy outcome, such as nature and length of the EU sanctions. The style of power was “leadership”, as Germany acted pursuing common interest of the EU and mainly via bilateral cooperation with France, never really missed representing the interested of the whole EU.

By integrating the data gathered from the different indexes and relative scores, the style of regional power (variable *y*) resulted in a median score of 2.38/4, closer to liberal leadership (4) than to hegemony (0). The leadership skills (variable *x*) resulted in a median score of 2.03/4, perfectly in the middle between minimal skills (0) and strong (4). Lastly, power over regional outcomes (variable *z*), scored 2.66/4, closer to strong influence (4) than minimal influence (0). In sum, according to the empirical evidences derived, we can say the regional power role of Germany following the crisis up to 2015 was (1) substantially characterized by fair leadership skills, (2) valuable influence over regional outcomes and (3) a typology of power resulting in a slightly prevalence of liberal leadership over hegemony. From the empirical analysis, Germany’s regional power role between 2012 and 2015 emerges somehow distant from both the ideas of Germany as coercive hegemon and the idealistic interpretation of the country as supporter, at any cost, of a foreign policy based upon normative values, multilateral approach to international politics. On the contrary, the regional influence and the power over policy outcomes expressed by Germany was

mostly strong and broad, with some new issues emerging, as seen, during the migration crisis. The ultimate contribution of this works is a different portrait of Germany: a very powerful regional leader, yet somewhat contrasted and “grey” in its action, in the sense that the country was interested in providing limited “leadership supply”, to use Mattli words, only to keep the inertia of the European integration going, and to avoid major setbacks. However, if during the 2012-2015 the minimal leadership supply revealed to be sufficient for Germany to keep the EU together, this does not mean it may necessarily be the same in the future.

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