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Recalibrating Germany's Role in Europe: Framing Leadership as Responsibility

FRANK WENDLER

Unification has had a catalytic effect on discursive justifications for Germany's involvement in the European Union at two levels: first, through the Federal Republic's more exposed leadership role in an enlarged EU; and second, through the rise of the Left Party as a predominantly East German, but also the first consistently Eurosceptic party with parliamentary representation at the federal level. Investigating plenary debates in the Bundestag regarding the Lisbon Treaty and the management of the Eurozone crisis, the article investigates the adaptation of political discourse to these new circumstances in the contention between Chancellor Merkel on the one hand, and speakers of the Left Party, on the other. While both sides refer to two sources of normative justification – the appraisal of European integration as a project for prosperity and peace, and the norms of the Basic Law as the foundation for Germany's involvement in the EU – the main dispute centres on how these justifications must be applied to changed external circumstances. It is shown that the normative concept of responsibility plays a key role for the way in which entrenched norms are used either for the justification or the critical contestation of Germany's political leadership in the European Union.

UNIFICATION AS A CATALYST OF CHANGE FOR GERMANY'S DISCOURSE ON EUROPE

German unification and European integration are frequently perceived as two mutually reinforcing and mutually legitimising developments. After the fall of the Berlin wall, West German political elites envisaged unification as part of a larger process that would lead to true political union among European countries. Especially Chancellor Kohl made it clear that unification and deeper political integration across Europe were inseparable, both as a step for overcoming the historical separation caused by the Cold War, and as reassurance to other (West) European countries that Germany's irreversible commitment to supranational integration would not allow it to return to unilateralism and nationalist aggression. In this sense, the move towards closer political integration embedded in the Maastricht Treaty (1992) was seen not only as a milestone in the history of European integration, but also as a consequence of unification and a step needed to ensure its legitimacy and stability. References to German unity

(*Einheit*) and European unification (*Einigung*) were so semantically related that they became almost inseparable. In the words of Chancellor Kohl:

The political unification of Europe is decisive for our future peace and freedom. As the country with the most neighbours in Europe, we Germans, especially, have a vital interest in preventing a return to the political rivalries of previous times, nationalist egoism and volatile coalitions. The proposition made by (the first post-war German chancellor) Konrad Adenauer continues to be valid that German unity and European unification are two sides of the same coin.¹

As in many other fields, the process of German unification produced unintended consequences, leading to far-reaching change.² Concerning Germany's attachment to integration, it had a catalytic function in raising new challenges regarding its political role in the EU, based on two factors. First, unification can be understood as an indirect source of change in Germany's external environment within the European Union. As outlined above, the fusion of the two German states is historically linked to EU enlargement, which grew from 12 member states at the time the wall fell to 28 members today. As a consequence, Germany stands out today as the most populous and politically powerful member state. Moreover, it finds itself in a more diverse community that often requires engaged mediation and decisive leadership by its biggest member state to resolve disputes. Another consequence has been that deeper political integration, launched by the Maastricht Treaty, led to the creation of a European currency union. Moreover, the enlargement of the EU required several rounds of treaty revision, to accommodate more members in order to achieve political integration goals. In this sense, two of the biggest challenges facing the EU in recent times, namely, debates over treaty reforms and management of the Eurozone crisis, can be traced back to the historical turning point of 1989.

Second, a direct domestic consequence of unification is the rise of the PDS/Left Party, which has surpassed the 5 per cent threshold needed to achieve parliamentary representation in the Bundestag; it secured 8.7 per cent of the vote in 2005, and reached 11.9 per cent in the 2009 election. The Left Party is neither exclusively an East German party nor a product of unification. However, its establishment in the party system is hard to imagine without the fusion of the two German states or, more specifically, the failure of western political elites to respond to eastern concerns, experiences and demands for representation.³ While the Left Party takes outsider positions in many policy fields, its impact as a newcomer is particularly felt in the field of European governance: as subsequent sections reveal in greater detail, the Left Party can be considered the first Eurosceptic party to secure consistent representation in the Bundestag, and its position towards the EU is one of the main reasons why the SPD rejects possible coalitions with this party at the federal level. In summation, unification has been a catalyst for change in Germany's relation to Europe, reinforcing other factors contributing to the more controversial character of German involvement in the EU, widely commented upon in the literature.⁴

Against this background, this paper approaches Germany's changing role in the European Union by focusing on parliamentary debate as one of the most important links between the decision-making by political elites and wider public perceptions of Germany's role in the European Union. The main puzzle of this paper is how the

adaptation of the Federal Republic to changed circumstances is mirrored in the adjustment of elite discourse and its public contestation: Given the fact that post-unification Germany is confronted with new questions about its role in a changed European context, and given the presence of a Eurosceptic challenger party based largely in the east, the subsequent analysis asks to what degree entrenched norms of German EU policy are adjusted by governing elites, and how this adjustment is contested by speakers of the Left Party as the main Eurosceptic challenger party. The paper consists of three parts. First, it develops the evolution of the Bundestag to its current role as a primary arena for public debate on Germany's role in Europe, prompted by stronger scrutiny rights regarding European affairs, and an increased readiness among parliamentary parties to address EU developments in public debate. Second, it discusses two case studies involving the Lisbon Treaty and the Eurozone crisis as two primary examples of the federal government's more exposed leadership role, which prompted political dissent from the Left Party's parliamentary caucus in the Bundestag. Empirically, the subsequent analysis compares two elements of parliamentary debate on EU issues, namely, declarations made by Chancellor Merkel about Germany's positions and actions in European governance, and its contestation by Left Party delegates. Finally, the article concludes with two main findings, the first involving the centrality of a normative understanding of European integration – as a peace project rooted in the Basic Law – and the second highlighting the concept of responsibility as an important fault line in emerging disputes over the application of this framework to Germany's role in current EU governance.

PUBLIC DEBATE ON GERMANY'S ROLE IN THE EU: THE BUNDESTAG MOVES CENTRE STAGE

Against the background of the Bundestag's gradual empowerment in European affairs⁵ the following analysis highlights two central aspects of this involvement. First, the gradual increase in Bundestag scrutiny rights in European affairs confirms the central importance of the Basic Law, as interpreted by the Constitutional Court, on two levels: as a set of norms framing German EU policy, and as a constraint on executive autonomy in European decision-making.⁶ Many of the recent steps strengthening the rights of the Bundestag were required by Constitutional Court verdicts, as reflected in both case studies presented here. Ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in April 2008 was suspended until the justices ruled that treaty approval could only occur after rules for Bundestag involvement were revised, to guarantee parliamentary scrutiny under the simplified treaty revision procedure (an aside being that Left Party members gleefully noted that their parliamentary leaders Gregor Gysi and Oskar Lafontaine had been among the plaintiffs in Karlsruhe at the Federal Constitutional Court). A new law concerning parliamentary scrutiny requirements was passed in September 2009. During the Eurozone crisis, the Constitutional Court issued further verdicts requiring full Bundestag participation. The federal government had to respect clear, obligatory liability limits set by parliament. The Constitutional Court approved Germany's involvement in major EU decisions but continued to stress the limits of supranational integration and the national sovereignty of the Bundestag in questions of budgetary responsibility.

Secondly, and equally important as increasing formal rights of scrutiny is the degree of parliamentary activity in European affairs. As documented by comparative research on the Europeanisation of parliaments, the Bundestag is among the most politically active of all the EU member state parliaments, especially regarding its public communication of European policies through plenary debate.⁷ In fact, it is now common practice for the federal government present a public justification (*Regierungserklärung*) to the Bundestag prior to its European Council meetings that is subsequently debated by the full chamber. The increase in Bundestag debates is at least partially explained by the greater salience of European decision-making, as dramatically highlighted by the Eurozone crisis.⁸ An additional factor, more specific to the Bundestag, is that the frequent authorisation votes required by Constitutional Court rulings invite more intensive public debate: Authorisation votes are never held without prior debate, generally prompting statements and discussion among very senior political leaders in parliament. Furthermore, the fact that the news media consider these as 'test votes' for the cohesion of the governing majority increases public attention to ratification votes. It is thus no surprise that Bundestag authorisation votes on issues like the Greek 'rescue packages' or the European Stability Mechanism were covered as headline news by the press and television media. These two observations – the strong presence of the Basic Law as a basis for Germany's EU engagement, and far more active Bundestag debates on European affairs – establish the context for our empirical case study.

THE LISBON TREATY AND EUROZONE CRISIS: TWO EXAMPLES OF GERMAN LEADERSHIP IN THE EU

The two case studies at issue here – Lisbon Treaty negotiations and decisions on bail-out packages in response to the Eurozone crisis – have two important commonalities. First, in both cases the federal government emerged as a leader and problem-solver for a European Union in crisis. The Lisbon Treaty was negotiated after the European Constitution had been rejected in two national referenda. Most observers agree that the German Council presidency from January to June 2007 played a key role in forging a consensus among the member states. The Eurozone crisis was even more clearly perceived as an unprecedented, existential crisis for the integration project, and as a major challenge to German leadership in the EU. Decisions taken to contain the crisis were seen as strongly advocated and influenced by Germany, and also associated with Chancellor Merkel's personal convictions and leadership style among the public.⁹

Secondly, both developments required Bundestag approval in ways that highlighted the Left Party's role as the main (and in most cases, sole) dissenter against a pro-European consensus evinced by all other parties. The vote tally on 24 April 2008 far exceeded the two-thirds majority (515 of 574 yes votes) needed to ratify the Lisbon Treaty. The 58 no votes included all 49 votes cast by Left Party delegates, in addition to seven no votes by CDU/CSU caucus members, two independent Bundestag members, and one Green abstention. The revised law on Bundestag involvement in European affairs (*Begleitgesetz*), a Constitutional Court requirement for Lisbon Treaty adoption, passed on 8 September 2009; it secured 446 yes votes (out of 494), against all

44 no votes of the Left Party MPs, two rejections by independent Bundestag members, and two abstentions from the SPD and FDP.¹⁰

As of this writing, the Bundestag has approved 13 bills addressing the Eurozone crisis.¹¹ The voting results show that although the support of all Bundestag parties is far from unanimous and has eroded somewhat over time, the Left Party stands out as the one that most consistently opposed measures for managing the Eurozone crisis. Left Party parliamentarians voted against the first ad hoc programme for Greece (Yes/No/Abstain: 0/67/0), against the credit programmes of 2012 (0/66/0) and 2015 (0/45/7), the creation of the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) (0/66/0), its extension (0/70/0), as well as against the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and Fiscal Compact (0/71/0). The only item that drew Left Party support was the Bundestag vote to extend the credit programme for Greece in February 2015, following difficult, protracted negotiations between the Eurozone actors and the left-wing Tsipras government. Here, the Left Party supported the decision to continue the European credit programme to avoid a Greek default (41/3/10).

By contrast, scepticism among the other Bundestag parties has been more conditional or expressed by dissenting votes rather than by entire party caucuses. Reservations regarding Eurozone rescue policies first appeared by way of a large number of abstentions. The first ad hoc package for Greece passed despite 139 abstentions (134 among the SPD, 5 among the Greens); the EFSF saw 195 abstentions (128 from the SPD, 63 from the Greens). Subsequent votes produced fewer abstentions but more No votes from parliamentarians outside the Left Party caucus. These did not endanger the emergence of comfortable majorities favouring all measures but did repeatedly prevent the coalition parties from attaining a 'Chancellor's Majority' among Bundestag members.¹² The Left Party stands out as the one parliamentary caucus displaying a consistently critical stance on all matters, with the exception of the extension of the European credit programme, seen as gesture of support for the left-wing Greek government. In combination, these two decision processes offer ideal case studies for investigating two aspects of parliamentary discourse on European matters: the more exposed leadership role assumed by the federal government, and its contestation by representatives of the Left Party.

GERMAN LEADERSHIP UNDER DEBATE: THE FEDERAL CHANCELLOR CHALLENGED BY HER CRITICS

The subsequent analysis reviews five plenary debates in the Bundestag regarding both topics (for a detailed debate list, see the appendix). Almost all of these debates dealt with formal government declarations (*Regierungserklärungen*) on recent or pending decisions at the European level), followed by discussions among representatives of all parliamentary groups.

Negotiating the Lisbon Treaty: Germany as Sound Crisis Manager

The Lisbon Treaty case draws on five plenary debates in the Bundestag. The first four centre on the chancellor's declarations to parliament about the broader, long-term goals of German EU policy (12 May 2006); her government's efforts to re-launch the failed Constitutional Treaty during the German Council presidency (conducted

on 1 March and 14 June 2007); and regarding the imminent meeting of the European Council, about to convene to sign the Treaty of Lisbon (12 December 2007). The analysis also includes the debate preceding Bundestag ratification of the new treaty (24 April 2008), which also opened with a statement by the chancellor.

Merkel's remarks reveal her intention to reaffirm a principled, normative commitment to European integration rooted in previous decades of German EU policy, while adapting it to dramatically changed political and economic conditions. The conclusion drawn from both arguments is that Germany is in a special position to advance, adjust and redefine the EU's political purpose and institutional form. It has done so by taking the lead in the Lisbon Treaty negotiations. The main point of departure for this sequence of arguments is to solidly confirm traditional justifications for European integration as a peace and stability project: 'Europe as a community of peace – this utopia was really filled with life in the post-war decades. The vision became reality – our everyday reality'.¹³ The European Union is identified as a major source of post-war stability and prosperity for Germany, as well as for its path towards unification in the post-Cold War setting: 'We should remind ourselves of the fact that all good turning points in German post-war history are inseparably linked to Europe. . . . We owe an unprecedented period of peace, freedom and prosperity to European integration'.¹⁴ These statements, confirmed and repeated by numerous others, especially by CDU/CSU and SPD speakers, confirm the continuity of Germany's commitment to the European Union. It specifically refers to unification as one of the positive returns of the Federal Republic's engagement in European integration.

This traditional justification for European unification has been challenged since the turn of the millennium, requiring innovation and adjustment. Two reasons are given for this. The end of the Cold War can be identified as a source of change regarding the external context and conditions which has removed one of the primary justifications for the European Community, namely its role as a West European bulwark of democracy and freedom, as opposed to the Eastern bloc. Having lost this primary rationale, Europe sees itself confronted with new competitive pressures at the global level; it therefore needs to redefine and legitimise itself in response to these pressures. In the words of Chancellor Merkel:

The Cold War is over. The whole continent can live according to the European idea today. [. . .] Europe needs to find intrinsic reasons for its existence, and has to demonstrate that it can shape politics according to its own values in a world of increased competition and global transparency.¹⁵

The second challenge identified by Merkel lies at the domestic level, in Germany as well as in other EU member states. The argument here is that the continuation of a strong, supranational form of political integration runs the risk of alienating citizens from the European project. According to Merkel, the establishment of a 'European super-state', or even the adoption of 'state-like symbols', is seen to threaten the autonomy of nation states, characterised as the 'familiar home' (described in the cosy German terms as *vertraute Heimat*), which provides an 'essential source of orientation' for citizens.¹⁶ Merkel suggests that her government needs to tone down its supranational ambitions out of respect for citizens' concerns and to advance negotiations with other member states, even if it does not share such concerns.¹⁷

The conclusion is not that Germany should play a less active role in the European Union, but that it should advance the European project while adjusting it to new circumstances. The keyword for framing this new, more exposed role is ‘responsibility’, a term often repeated in the debate to avoid use of semantically problematic terms for leadership (such as *Führung* or *führen*, still considered a taboo term in German political discourse). Merkel argues that in crisis situations, which she describes as critical junctures, Germany needs to show leadership, acting not on its own but in the collective interest of member states. In her words:

What is at stake today is [the need] to complete the previously neglected or half-completed task of adapting the European Union to its new size, on the one hand, and a completely changed global situation, on the other. By taking up the Council Presidency, the Federal Government accepts this responsibility.¹⁸

Here as in other parts of the debate, Merkel refers to Germany’s ‘particular responsibility’ (*besondere Verantwortung*¹⁹), once again offering an understated recognition of her country’s leadership role.

Merkel provides a more explicit acknowledgement of German influence in the EU in her description of the new treaty’s contents. She presents its clearer delineation of competences and the strengthened oversight rights accorded national parliaments as reflecting long-standing German demands for subsidiarity. She moreover infers that the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the political framework used for the European Single Market are modelled on norms enshrined in the Basic Law and the social market economy, confirming its ongoing influence:

As we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the German social market economy, this is a very important message: Our European Union is committed to the same values as we know them in the German Social Model. This strengthens our voice even in the current global era.²⁰

The response of Left Party speakers to the chancellor’s statements – all highly critical, as suggested by the party’s rejection of the treaty in the Bundestag vote – is interesting for two reasons. First, instead of questioning an inherited West German commitment to European integration by referring to East German experiences, Left Party delegates emphasise their strong support for these ideas. Secondly, they justify their critical stance towards the treaty on the grounds that the EU’s new roles and institutions, as defined by the treaty, violate traditional goals of European unification and Basic Law norms. In other words, it is not traditional ‘West German’ approaches to European policy-making that prompts a critical challenge from the Left Party but rather the chancellor’s position that traditional justifications and norms need adjustment. Ironically, the main argument proposed by the party with the strongest roots in East German experiences is a defence of West German traditions, norms and legal standards.

The forceful criticism levelled against the Lisbon Treaty by the Left Party²¹ consists of three main arguments. First, the institutional framework for the European Single Market outlined in the treaty is rejected as an expression of market-based neoliberalism, conducive to social and tax dumping. Most of these remarks reflect a leftist discourse expressed in drastic terms: for example, the rejection of the ‘unfettered

competitive cannibalism' (*ungehemmter Wettbewerbskannibalismus*) supposedly unleashed by the treaty.²² More importantly, they denounce the treaty as incompatible with constitutional norms, especially its prescriptive characterisation of the Federal Republic as a social state: 'The principle of a social state is missing completely. This is a violation of articles 20 and 79 of the Basic Law. We will probably have to come back to this at the level of constitutional law'.²³

Second, they accuse the Lisbon Treaty of militarising European foreign policy, criticising the recognition of a common European defence policy, the creation of a European Defence Agency, and the requirement that member states coordinate their defence spending. They repeatedly refer to the Basic Law as a rule-book precluding the use of military force for anything other than self-defence:

If you had asked the mothers and fathers of the Basic Law if they could imagine using the German army for the promotion of our economic interests, they would rightfully have strongly rejected this idea. We should stick to the norms of the Basic Law.²⁴

Similarly, speakers of the Left Party stress the traditional ideal of the European Union as a peace project, contrasting it with the treaty requirements for a European Security and Defence Policy:

NATO is there to stay, national armies as well and now Europe also wants military troops as well. Why is that so if we Europeans do not want to wage wars any more? That is the question asked by our citizens.²⁵

The third argument amounts to a blistering critique of the EU's democratic deficits, in general, and the methods used to negotiate and ratify the treaty, in particular. Left Party delegates refer to the Dutch and French referenda that rejected the Constitutional Treaty in spring 2005 in order to make the point that the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty by national parliaments (instead of a referendum) in most EU member states lacks democratic legitimacy. Some of these claims are combined with a call for a German referendum on the new EU treaty, a step that would require a change of the Basic Law. However, this critical claim is still framed in terms of a positive appraisal of previous decades of European integration: 'Tomorrow one of the main setbacks since the foundation of the EEC will take place, because you are organising the EU like a conspiracy behind the people's back'.²⁶

A noteworthy aspect of the previous observations is the fact that Left Party MPs present themselves as the defenders of inherited West German norms and institutions, in particular the Basic Law, the social market economy, and the traditional justification of European integration as a peace project. The only demand made by the Left Party that goes beyond the appeal to conserve established norms is the call for a referendum to ratify a new European treaty.

Managing the Eurozone Crisis: Germany as a Defender of Stability

In many ways, the debates on the Eurozone crisis echo the observations made in relation to the first case study. Again, Merkel emphasises Germany's special responsibility to preserve the common currency as a central element of political integration under adverse circumstances. The Left Party challenges this argument by claiming

that norms prescribed in the Basic Law pursued by West German institutions would prescribe a different course of action. This case study also rests on five plenary debates in the Bundestag that began with the chancellor's government declaration (*Regierungserklärung*), involving decisions on solutions to the Eurozone crisis.²⁷

Once again, the chancellor's main point of departure is an expression of strong, principled support for the European integration project. The European Union is described as a 'community of fate' (using the emotionally charged term *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*),²⁸ acknowledging that European citizens have experienced decades of peace, prosperity and good neighbourly relations, in which they are 'unified for their own benefit'.²⁹ This commitment is largely invoked to express a strong sense of urgency, requiring immediate action; the European integration project is seen as endangered, facing a critical juncture and an existential crisis.³⁰ This dramatic perception is reflected in Merkel's often-cited statement that 'if the Euro fails, Europe will fail'.³¹ What is at stake, according to the chancellor, is the historical task of both sustaining the European idea (*Bewahrung*) and proving its viability (*Bewährung*).³²

In this crisis situation, the concept of responsibility is used once more to acknowledge and justify Germany's leadership role as the EU's main problem-solver. This responsibility is remarkably described as an obligation that has been entrusted to, or even imposed on Germany, as other European nations turned to that country for a solution.³³ Once more, this formulation offers an essential justification for German leadership, and the chancellor's readiness to project national interests and solutions onto the supranational framework of Eurozone governance: if Germany leads, it has done so because it assumes an obligation to serve the collective interests of member states; its own motives are therefore altruistic, with the ultimate aim of preserving the achievements of European integration. Germany's reasons to assume this prominent role follow from its centrality and political weight in the European Union; however, it also stems from its international recognition as a role model, being an economic powerhouse and 'stability anchor' within the European Union.³⁴

The first part of Merkel's argument resonates with characterisations of Germany as a 'reluctant leader' in the European Union: political action is justified primarily as a reactive response to a crisis situation, ostensibly downplaying genuinely national interests to collectively benefit European nations (although the idea of 'responsibility' towards other member states carries paternalistic overtones). The second part stresses that ideas of economic governance specifically identified with Germany offer the best solution to the crisis, thus more openly advocating political leadership by the Federal Republic. Its leadership claims assume the form of two conclusions drawn by Merkel. The first is that any approach to crisis resolution must be rule-bound and applied using a step-by-step approach. Most of Merkel's speeches concentrate on enumerating criteria that must be met before recipient countries can access Eurozone assistance programmes, or on laying out principles to be followed with regard to specific decision-making processes.

Previously described as a 'flight from risk',³⁵ this rule-bound approach is justified in terms of responsible leadership, seeking to calculate and minimise risk. Responding to calls for a faster, more decisive approach, Merkel forcefully emphasises her responsibility for avoiding risks as a constitutionally sanctioned obligation: 'As Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany I sometimes should and must take risks; but I cannot

enter into adventures: My oath of office precludes me from doing that'.³⁶ Ironically, Merkel uses the same pejorative term for reckless political action (*Abenteuer*) that was famously used by her predecessor, Gerhard Schröder, when he rejected German involvement in the 2003 Iraq campaign. In this case, however, a rule-bound approach is not only applied to reflect legal and political norms of the Federal Republic but also the true spirit of European integration: 'A good European is he who respects the European Treaties and relevant national laws, and thereby makes his contribution so that the stability of the Eurozone and the entire European Union is not damaged'.³⁷

The second conclusion goes beyond procedural questions: the point made here is that Germany is assuming a properly justifiable position in pushing other Eurozone states to endorse a principle that serves as the foundation for its own economic model, namely, 'stability' – a term implying fiscal restraint, individual responsibility and subsidiarity. Merkel and other speakers of CDU/CSU make numerous references to 'stability' and the need to create a new 'stability culture' and 'Stability Union'. One example reads,

Germany advocates sustainable stability in Europe. This was the case at the creation of Economic and Monetary Union, this is still the case and it will be the case in the future. We will spare nobody in Europe from this. I say: The core of the disputes we have about every detail is about exactly this stability culture.³⁸

This bold statement, in which the chancellor expresses her readiness to project a set of normative rules and principles onto other member states even if they resist, contrasts with her earlier, more cautious arguments justifying German leadership.

In summation, Merkel argues that her government's actions are intended to preserve political action norms that are deeply entrenched in the Federal Republic's European policies. In spite of adverse political and economic circumstances, the basic norms shaping its European involvement – its principled commitment to supranational integration, a rules-based approach and its emphasis on stability and subsidiarity – are to be followed and reinforced. It is noteworthy that Left Party delegates do not contest or seek to de-legitimise these norms of reference but rather make the point that the federal government is actually betraying and abandoning them. As seen earlier, Left Party MPs do not make reference to any specifically East German experiences, but refer to entrenched West German and West European perspectives to criticise what they perceive as the ineptness, irresponsibility and hypocrisy of the Merkel government.

Three main Left Party arguments can be identified. The first is not framed in ideological, party-political terms but targets the federal government's alleged inactivity and integrity; it is accused of lacking orientation, cohesiveness and, ultimately, the ability to govern:³⁹ 'The capacity to govern means to be able and willing to translate the interests of citizens into practical decisions through democratic means. However your government is only struggling with its own dissent and lack of orientation'.⁴⁰ Several claims made by Left Party speakers challenge the government's credibility and integrity. They discredit Merkel's claim to responsible risk management, noting that her government acts like a puppet on a string, intent on keeping the 'casinos' of speculation on financial markets running.⁴¹ Gregor Gysi pointedly accuses the

governing parties of betraying their own principles of individual responsibility in a market economy:

You are all socialists. . . . You are socializing the debts of banks and hedge funds. . . . We are the only ones admitting to be socialists. But we want to socialise banks and their profits. That is the difference between your and our understanding of socialism.⁴²

Once again, the discursive strategy chosen here is not to discredit norms proposed by the government but rather to demand a higher degree of integrity regarding their application.

The Left Party's second charge against the Merkel government is that it neglects and harms the cherished achievements of European integration it claims to defend. It presents the Federal Republic's stance as an act of betrayal against the ideas of European solidarity, social cohesion and peace. In the words of its far-left figurehead, Sahra Wagenknecht:

Europe – if I may remind you – was once supposed to be a project for peace, democracy and of the social state, a lesson drawn from centuries of brutal war . . . Today's Europe, which you want to complete with the second bank rescue fund and the Fiscal Pact, is the exact opposite of that. This Europe is a project for the destruction of democracy and social justice.⁴³

Gesine Löttsch makes a similar argument, accusing the Merkel government of destroying the political integration achievements of several decades: 'The real danger is that everything that Europe achieved after the Second World War will be given up to save the euro'.⁴⁴ One remarkable aspect of these arguments is that historical perspective arguably assumes a Western European rather than eastern viewpoint. It is ironic that the Left Party's caucus leader, Gregor Gysi, juxtaposes the government's position against the Western Allies' initiative that sought to rebuild post-war Europe through the Marshall Plan; he likens Merkel's stance to the unyielding position of the victorious powers at the Versailles Treaty: 'You subject Greece to Versailles. However the Greeks need Marshall'.⁴⁵ This example cites one of the strongest foundational memories of the West German Federal Republic as an argument against the government, referring to one of the most important initiatives to expand US influence in Western Europe as a way to propose a different course of action in response to the Eurozone crisis.

Third, the Left Party once again uses frequent references to the German Basic Law to discredit the Fiscal Compact advocated by Merkel's government. During the debate preceding the ratification vote for the Fiscal Compact, for example, Sahra Wagenknecht admonished the chancellor to admit honestly to citizens that the treaty sought to abolish the 'social state' clause as well as the Bundestag's fiscal authority, amounting to a 'cold-hearted coup d'état' against the Basic Law (*kalter Putsch gegen das Grundgesetz*).⁴⁶ The Left Party's discursive strategy, once again, is not to dispute established historical memories and norms framing Germany's involvement in Europe, but to discredit their use by the chancellor herself, claiming that it was the true defender of these memories and norms. Interestingly, the main points of contention are not entrenched norms, but calls for their adjustment to new realities.

DISCURSIVE ADJUSTMENT AND CONTESTATION: WHO IS A RESPONSIBLE EUROPEAN?

The review of Bundestag debates on two major questions in recent European Union governance highlights one question as the main source of contention: how can political leadership by the Federal Republic be redefined and justified in a more powerful and enlarged EU, while still being based on a commitment to two principles – namely, a commitment to supranational integration and the constitutional norms prescribed by the Basic Law? As recent debates regarding the Lisbon Treaty and the Eurozone crisis have shown, Chancellor Merkel and representatives of the Left Party use these two points of reference to underscore the need for continuity concerning the normative foundation for German involvement in European integration.

As many references to the historical value of European integration demonstrate, current debates regarding German EU policy are still firmly rooted in these norms, prescribing a balance between a strong commitment to multilateralism, on the one hand, and constraints established by the Basic Law, on the other. This observation fits with assumptions involving the ‘domestication’ of German foreign policy: external action is constrained and prescribed through domestic norms and institutions.⁴⁷ The need to adapt these deeply entrenched principles, however, is implicit in references to two additional factors: first, a sense of urgency resulting from a perception of existential crisis; and second, the reference to responsibility as a moral obligation on the part of policy-makers exercising political leadership. This is where the main source of contention lies: whereas Chancellor Merkel uses ‘responsibility’ to justify her pragmatic, incremental, rule-based and strictly conditional approach for the resolution of crisis, the Left Party rejects this argument, claiming the government’s lack of political activity, its irresponsible use of rescue funds and democratic flaws in decision-making are resulting in permanent damage to German constitutional norms and the founding idea of European integration.

In a wider context, German unification is both conspicuously absent and virtually inevitable as a source of contention. The debate on German EU policy appears firmly rooted in inherited West German norms, perspectives and justifications. Even Left Party speakers seem intent on avoiding any explicit reference to East German experiences or perspectives, although the European Community was arguably a part of the Western alliance network aimed at containing the former Eastern bloc. While unification disappears from view as a focus of explicit discourse, it retains its fundamental importance as a catalyst for the content of the controversy: It is hard to imagine a similar debate about the appropriateness of German leadership without the historical changes brought to bear on the Federal Republic and Europe through unification. It is even more difficult to envisage similar contentious debates about Germany’s role in Europe without the presence of the Left Party, a political force that emerged as a direct consequence of the way in which the fusion of the two German states was managed politically. While German unification hovers quietly in the background, it changes everything.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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NOTES

1. 'Die politische Einigung Europas entscheidet über unsere Zukunft in Frieden und Freiheit. Als Land mit den meisten Nachbarn in Europa haben gerade wir Deutsche ein vitales Interesse daran, einen Rückfall in die machtpolitischen Rivalitäten früherer Zeiten, den nationalstaatlichen Egoismus und wechselnde Koalitionen zu verhindern. Es gilt unverändert der politische Leitgedanke Konrad Adenauers, dass deutsche Einheit und europäische Einigung zwei Seiten derselben Medaille sind.' Speech to the Industrie- und Handelskammer, 18 Jan. 1994, this and all subsequent translations are my own. (URL: http://www.helmut-kohl-kas.de/index.php?menu_sel=15&menu_sel2=213&menu_sel3=117).
2. J. Anderson, 'Modell Deutschland: From the Bonn to the Berlin Republic', in S. Colvin and M. Taplin (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of German Politics and Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp.71–84.
3. D. Patton, *Out of the East. From PDS to Left Party in Unified Germany* (New York: SUNY, 2011).
4. S. Bulmer, 'Germany and the Eurozone Crisis: Between Hegemony and Domestic Politics', *West European Politics* 37/6 (2014), pp.1244–63; W. Paterson, 'The Reluctant Hegemon? Germany Moves Centre Stage in the European Union', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 49, Annual Review (2011), pp.57–75; F. Wendler, 'End of Consensus? The European Leadership Discourse of the Second Merkel Government during the Eurozone Crisis and Its Contestation in Debates of the Bundestag (2009–13)', *German Politics* 23/4 (Special Issue, 2014), pp.446–59.
5. T. Beichelt, 'Recovering Space Lost? The German Bundestag's New Potential in European Politics', *German Politics* 21/2 (2012), pp.143–60; C. Sprungk, 'The French Assemblée Nationale and the German Bundestag in the European Union: Towards Convergence in the "Old" Europe?', in J. O'Brennan and T. Raunio (eds), *National Parliaments within the Enlarged European Union: From 'Victims' of Integration to Competitive Actors?* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), pp.132–62.
6. Oliver Höing, 'With a Little Help of the Constitutional Court: The Bundestag on Its Way to an Active Policy Shaper', in Claudia Heffler, Christine Neuhold, Olivier Rozenberg, and Julie Smith (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015); M. Wendel, 'Judicial Restraint and the Return to Openness: The Decision of the German Federal Constitutional Court on the ESM and the Fiscal Treaty of 12 September 2012', *German Law Journal* 14/1 (2013), p.21.
7. K. Auel, O. Rozenberg, and A. Tacea, 'Fighting Back? And If So, How? Measuring Parliamentary Strength and Activity in EU Affairs', in C. Heffler et al. (eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of National Parliaments and the European Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); F. Wendler, *Debating Europe in National Parliaments. Public Justification and Political Polarization* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016).
8. T. Risse, 'European Public Spheres, the Politicization of EU Affairs, and Its Consequences', in T. Risse, (ed.), *European Public Spheres. Politics is Back* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 141–64; Hanspeter Kriesi and Edgar Grande, 'The Euro Crisis: A Boost to the Politicisation of European Integration?', in Swen Hutter, Edgar Grande, and Hanspeter Kriesi (eds), *Politicising Europe. Integration and Mass Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Pieter de Wilde, Anna Leupold, and Henning Schmidtke, 'Introduction: The Differentiated Politicisation of European Governance', *West European Politics* 39/3 (2015), pp.3–22.
9. Aleksandra Maatsch, 'Are We All Austerians Now? An Analysis of National Parliamentary Parties' Positioning on Anti-Crisis Measures in the Eurozone', *Journal of European Public Policy* 21/1 (2014), pp.96–115; Eric Miklin, 'From 'Sleeping Giant' to Left–Right Politicization? National Party Competition on the EU and the Euro Crisis', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 52/6 (2014), pp.1199–206; F. Wendler, 'End of Consensus? The European Leadership Discourse of the Second Merkel Government During the Eurozone Crisis and Its Contestation in Debates of the Bundestag (2009–13)', *German Politics* 23/4 (2014), pp.446–59.
10. Deutscher Bundestag, Plenarprotokoll 16/233, 8 Sept. 2009, pp.26359/60.

11. These included several votes on credit programmes for Greece (concerning the first ad hoc programme passed on 7 May 2010, the second more comprehensive package of 27 Feb. 2012, the extension of this programme on 27 Feb. 2015, the establishment of a mandate for new negotiations with Greece on 17 July 2015, and the third credit programme passed on 19 Aug. 2015). The Bundestag also voted on the adoption of credit programmes for Ireland (1 Dec. 2010), Portugal (12 May 2011), Spain (19 July 2012), and Cyprus (18 April 2013), as well as the establishment of the temporary crisis management fund EFSF (21 May 2010) and its extension (29 Sept. 2011), on the establishment of the European Stability Mechanism and so-called Fiscal Compact (29 June 2012) and the first element of a European Banking Union (6 Nov. 2014).
12. The extension of the EFSF passed against the no votes of 15 Bundestag members aside from the Left Party (including 10 of CDU/CSU and 3 of the FDP), the second package for Greece against 24 (CDU/CSU 13, FDP 4), the ESM and Fiscal Compact against 26 (16 and 8), and the extension of the credit programme for Greece in early 2015 against 29 (all of which were cast by CDU members). The highest number of negative votes was reached when the Bundestag decided on a new mandate for negotiations with Greece (119 no votes, 60 of which were cast by CDU/CSU members) and on the subsequent third credit programme (113 no votes, including 63 from CDU/CSU).
13. 16/35, A. Merkel: 'Europa als Friedensgemeinschaft – diese Utopie wurde in den folgenden Jahrzehnten wirklich mit Leben erfüllt. Aus der Vision wurde Realität – unsere Lebensrealität'.
14. 16/35, A. Merkel: 'Wir sollten uns schon bewusst machen, dass alle guten Wendepunkte in der deutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte untrennbar mit Europa verbunden sind. [...] Wir verdanken der europäischen Integration eine beispiellose Zeit von Frieden, Freiheit, und Wohlstand'.
15. 16/35, A. Merkel:

Der Kalte Krieg war zu Ende. Der ganze Kontinent kann heute nach dieser europäischen Idee leben. [...] Europa muss sich aus sich selbst heraus begründen und zeigen, dass es in einer Welt grösseren Wettbewerbs, in einer global transparenten Welt Politik nach seinen Wertvorstellungen gestalten kann.
16. 16/103, A. Merkel: 'Gemeint ist die Sorge vor einer unnötigen Schwächung der Nationalstaaten. Denn sie sind für die Menschen vertraute Heimat und notwendige Orientierung' (I am referring to an unnecessary weakening of the nation states. They are the familiar home and a necessary orientation for our citizens).
17. 16/103, A. Merkel:

Staatsähnliche Bezeichnungen und Symbole werden in einen neuen Vertrag nicht aufgenommen. Sie stehen für zu viele unserer Partner für den sogenannten europäischen Superstaat, von dem ich vorhin gesprochen habe. Ich teile diese Sorge nicht, aber ich habe sie zu respektieren.

(State-like denominations and symbols will not be adopted in the new Treaty. For too many of our partners, they represent the so-called European super-state to which I referred earlier. I do not share these concerns but I do have to respect them).
18. 16/82, A. Merkel: 'Heute geht es darum, die bisher versäumten oder nur halb vollzogenen Anpassungen der Europäischen Union an ihre neue Grösse auf der einen Seite und eine völlig veränderte Weltlage auf der anderen Seite vorzunehmen. Die Bundesregierung stellt sich mit der Aufgabe der Ratspräsidentschaft dieser Verantwortung'.
19. Examples include the following two statements made by Chancellor Merkel: (16/132) 'In diesem Jahr hat Deutschland durch die Wahrnehmung der EU-Präsidentschaft in besonderer Weise Verantwortung für Europa getragen' (This year, Germany has accepted extraordinary responsibility for Europe by serving in the EU Presidency, my own translation); (16/132) 'Für ein Europa in diesem Geist wird Deutschland auch in Zukunft seine besondere Verantwortung wahrnehmen' (Germany will continue to assume its special responsibility for Europe envisaged in this spirit).
20. 16/157, A. Merkel:

Für uns in Deutschland, die wir in diesem Jahr den 60. Jahrestag der sozialen Marktwirtschaft begehen, ist dies eine ganz wichtige Botschaft: Unsere Europäische Union ist den gleichen Werten verpflichtet, wie wir sie im deutschen Sozialmodell kennen. Das ist eine Stärkung unserer Stimme auch in einer globalen Zeit.
21. Within the Bundestag debates dealing with the Lisbon Treaty reviewed here, these speakers include Gregor Gysi, Oskar Lafontaine, Diether Dehm, Lothar Bisky and Monika Knoche.

22. 16/35, Diether Dehm: 'Die Leute . . . wollen keine Verfassung vor der sie in Deckung gehen müssen, und keinen ungehemmten Wettbewerbskannibalismus' (Citizens . . . do not want a constitution from which they have to take cover, and no unfettered competitive cannibalism).
23. 16/132, D. Dehm: 'Die Sozialstaatlichkeit fehlt aber vollständig. Das ist ein Verstoß gegen Art. 20 und Art. 79 des Grundgesetzes. Darauf wird gegebenenfalls noch verfassungsrechtlich zurückzukommen sein'.
24. 16/35, G. Gysi: 'Wenn Sie die Mütter und Väter des Grundgesetzes gefragt hätten, ob sie sich vorstellen könnten, die Bundeswehr zur Durchsetzung ökonomischer Interessen einzusetzen, hätten sie das völlig zu Recht strikt verneint. Wir sollten uns an das Grundgesetz halten'.
25. 16/35, G. Gysi: 'Die NATO soll bleiben, die nationalen Streitkräfte sollen bleiben und Europa will auch noch Streitkräfte. Wozu eigentlich, wenn wir Europäer keine Kriege mehr führen wollen? Das ist die Frage, die die Bevölkerungen stellen'.
26. 16/132, Diether Dehm: 'Morgen wird eine der größten Niederlagen der europäischen Integration seit der Gründung der EWG stattfinden: denn Sie organisieren die EU wie eine Verschwörung hinter dem Rücken der Völker'.
27. Debates reviewed for this paper include those about the establishment of the first ad hoc credit programme for Greece (5 May 2010), the creation of the EFSF as a temporary credit fund for Eurozone member states (19 May 2010), the adoption of a second credit programme for Greece (27 Feb. 2012), and the negotiation leading up to the establishment of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance (TSCG, or 'Fiscal Compact', 27 June 2012) as well as their ratification in the Bundestag (29 June 2012). A list with full details is in the appendix of this paper.
28. 17/39: 'Deutschland lebt in der Europäischen Union in einer Schicksalsgemeinschaft (Germany lives in a community of fate in the European Union); similarly, 17/42 Es geht um viel mehr als um diese Zahlen; es geht um viel mehr als um eine Währung. Die Währungsunion ist eine Schicksalsgemeinschaft' (This is about much more than these figures; what is at stake is much more than a currency. The currency union is a community of fate).
29. 17/39: 'Ihr (der Europäischen Union) verdanken wir Jahrzehnte des Friedens, des Wohlstands und des Einvernehmens mit unseren Nachbarn (. . .) Wir Bürgerinnen und Bürger Europas sind zu unserem Glück vereint' (We owe decades of peace, prosperity and good understanding with our neighbours to the European Union. . . . We citizens of the European Union are united for our benefit).
30. 17/42: 'Europa steht am Scheideweg, und es liegt jetzt an uns, den richtigen Weg einzuschlagen, um die existenzielle Bewährungsprobe zu bestehen, in der Europa sich befindet' (Europe is at a critical juncture, and it is up to us to take the right path to master the existential crisis in which Europe finds itself).
31. 17/42: 'Das ist unsere historische Aufgabe; denn scheitert der Euro, dann scheitert Europa' (This is our historical task; if the Euro fails, Europe fails).
32. 17/42: 'Es geht deslb um nicht mehr und nicht weniger als um die Bewahrung und Bewährung der europäischen Idee' (What is at stake to preserve and prove the viability of the European idea).
33. 'Noch klarer wird die uns auferlegte Verantwortung, wenn wir uns vor Augen führen: Europa schaut heute auf Deutschland' (The responsibility imposed on us becomes even clearer if we realise that today, all eyes in Europe are on Germany).
34. 17/186: 'Deutschland ist Wirtschaftsmotor und Stabilitätsanker in Europa' (Germany is the economic powerhouse and stability anchor in Europe).
35. A. Newman, 'Flight from Risk: Unified Germany and the Role of Beliefs in the European Response to the Financial Crisis', in J. Anderson and E. Langenbacher (eds), *From the Bonn to the Berlin Republic. Germany at the Twentieth Anniversary of Unification* (New York: Berghahn, 2010), pp.306–20.
36. 17/160: 'Als Bundeskanzlerin der Bundesrepublik Deutschland soll und muss ich zuweilen Risiken eingehen; Abenteuer darf ich aber nicht eingehen: Das verbietet mein Amtseid'.
37. 17/39: 'Ein guter Europäer ist vielmehr der, der die europäischen Verträge und das jeweilige nationale Recht achtet und so dazu beiträgt, dass die Stabilität der Euro-Zone und der ganzen Europäischen Union keinen Schaden nimmt'.
38. 17/42:

Deutschland tritt für dauerhafte Stabilität in Europa ein. Das war so bei der Gründung der Wirtschafts- und Währungsunion, und das ist auch heute so und wird in Zukunft so sein. Niemandem in Europa werden wir das ersparen. Ich sage: Im Kern der Auseinandersetzung, die wir um jedes Detail führen, geht es um genau diese Stabilitätskultur.
39. 17/42, 'Gesine Löttsch: Regierungsfähig heisst, dass man in der Lage ist und den Willen hat, die Interessen der menschen in einem Land mit demokratischen Mitteln in praktische Politik umzusetzen. Doch Sie als Regierung kämpfen unur mit Ihrer inneren Zerrissenheit und Orientierungslosigkeit'.

40. 17/42, Gesine Löttsch: 'Regierungsfähig heisst, dass man in der Lage ist und den Willen hat, die Interessen der Menschen in einem Land mit demokratischen Mitteln in praktische Politik umzusetzen. Doch Sie als Regierung kämpfen nur mit Ihrer inneren Zerrissenheit und Orientierungslosigkeit'.
41. 17/188, Sahra Wagenknecht: 'Sie handeln wie Marionetten. Die Puppenspieler sind die Banker, und heraus kommen Verträge, um ... das Spielcasino Finanzmarkt am Laufen zu halten' (You are acting like puppets on a string. The puppeteers are bankers, and the result are treaties that keep the casino of financial markets running).
42. 17/186, Gregor Gysi:
 Sie sind alle Sozialistinnen und Sozialisten. ... Sozialismus ehisst, man will vergemeinschaften. Was Sie vergemeinschaften, sind die Schulden der Banken und Hedgefonds. ... Wir sind die einzigen, die zugeben, Sozialistinnen und Sozialisten zu sein. Aber wir wollen gerne die Banken vergesellschaften und damit den Profit vergemeinschaften. Das ist der gravierende Unterschied zwischen Ihren und unseren Sozialismusvorstellungen.
43. 17/188, Sahra Wagenknecht: 'Europa – ich darf das in Erinnerung rufen – sollte mal ein Projekt des Friedens, der Demokratie und der Sozialstaatlichkeit sein, eine Lehre aus Jahrhunderten brutaler Kriege [...] Das heutige Europa, das Sie jetzt mit dem zweiten riesigen Bankenrettungsschirm und dem Fiskalpakt besiegeln wollen, ist das genaue Gegenteil davon. Dieses Europa ist ein Projekt der Zerstörung von Demokratie und sozialer Gerechtigkeit'.
44. 17/42, Gesine Löttsch: 'Die reale Gefahr besteht darin, dass für die Rettung des Euro jetzt alles aufgegeben werden soll, was Europa nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg erreicht hat'.
45. 'Die Sieger des Zweiten Weltkrieges . gerade im Westen – waren viel klüger und beschloesen ... den Marshallplan zum Aufbau. Sie machen bei Griechenland Versailles. Die Griechen brauchen aber Marshall. ... Genau das findet nicht statt' (The victors of the Second World War – especially those in the West – were much smarter and adopted the Marshall Plan for reconstruction. You subject Greece to (the Treaty of) Versailles. However the Greeks need Marshall ... Exactly that is not taking place).
46. 17/188, Sahra Wagenknecht:
 Dann seien Sie wenigstens so ehrlich und sagen das den Bürgern. Sagen Sie ihnen, dass sich der soziale Bundesstaat, den das Grundgesetz festschreibt, mit den vor- liegenden Verträgen erledigt hat. Sagen Sie ihnen, dass sie in Zukunft auch in Deutschland ein Parlament wählen dürfen, das nicht mehr viel zu sagen haben wird [...] Sagen Sie den Menschen, dass das ein kalter Putsch gegen das Grundgesetz ist.
 (At least you must be so honest to admit to citizens that the social federal state prescribed by the Basic Law becomes obsolete with this treaty. Admit to them that in the future they can elect a parliament in Germany that will have little left to say. [...] Tell the citizens that this is a cold-hearted coup against the Basic Law).
47. S. Harnisch, 'The Politics of Domestication: A New Paradigm in German Foreign Policy', *German Politics* 18/4 (2009), pp.455–68.

APPENDIX: LIST OF PLENARY DEBATES IN THE BUNDESTAG REVIEWED FOR THIS ANALYSIS (IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

Source: DIP (Dokumentations- und Informationssystem für Parlamentarische Vorgänge), URL: <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/dip21.web/bt> (accessed 10 September 2015)

Negotiation and ratification of the Lisbon Treaty

- 16/35: Abgabe einer Erklärung durch die Bundeskanzlerin zur Europapolitik, BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/35, 11 May 2006, pp.2889B–2911 C
- 16/82: Abgabe einer Erklärung durch die Bundeskanzlerin zum Europäischen Rat in Brüssel am 8./9. März 2007, BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/82, pp.8197B–8220 A
- 16/103: Abgabe einer Erklärung durch die Bundeskanzlerin: Vorschau auf den Europäischen Rat am 21./22. Juni 2007, BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/103, 14 June 2007, pp.10565B–10582 D

- 16/132: Abgabe einer Regierungserklärung durch die Bundeskanzlerin: Unterzeichnung des Vertrages von Lissabon am 13. Dezember und zum Europäischen Rat am 14. Dezember 2007, BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/132, 12 December 2007, pp.13797B–13189 D
- 16/157: Zweite Beratung und Schlussabstimmung des von der Bundesregierung eingebrachten Entwurfs eines Gesetzes zum Vertrag von Lissabon vom 13. Dezember 2007, BT-Plenarprotokoll 16/157, 24 April 2008, pp.16451 D–16482 D

Management of the Eurozone crisis

- 17/39: Erste Beratung des von den Fraktionen der CDU/CSU und der FDP eingebrachten Entwurfs eines Gesetzes zur Übernahme von Gewährleistungen zum Erhalt der für die Finanzstabilität in der Währungsunion erforderlichen Zahlungsfähigkeit der Hellenischen Republik (Währungsunion-Finanzstabilitätsgesetz – WFSStG), BT-Plenarprotokoll 17/39, 5 May 2010, pp.3721B–3745A
- 17/42: Abgabe einer Regierungserklärung durch die Bundeskanzlerin zu den Massnahmen zur Stabilisierung des Euro, BT-Plenarprotokoll 17/42, 19 May 2010, 4125B–4155A
- 17/160: Abgabe einer Regierungserklärung durch die Bundeskanzlerin: Finanzhilfen für Griechenland und Europäischer Rat am 1./2. März 2012 in Brüssel, BT-Plenarprotokoll 17/160, 27 February 2012, pp.19077 B–19111 A
- 17/186: Abgabe einer Regierungserklärung durch die Bundeskanzlerin zum Europäischen Rat am 28./29. Juni 2012 in Brüssel, BT-Plenarprotokoll 17/186, 27 June 2012, pp.22221 C–22244 B
- 17/188: Abgabe einer Regierungserklärung durch die Bundeskanzlerin zur Schaffung einer Stabilitätsunion, BT-Plenarprotokoll 17/188, 29 June 2012, pp.22697 B–22747 B