

Captain Merkel – A Leader by Necessity

By Philip Arbaugh

Angela Merkel is captain of an unstable vessel called Eurozone and not everybody is happy about her leadership. Her recent election suggests that powerful Germany, with its growing economy, balanced budget, and low unemployment, will continue to be the unwanted European leader. Trepidation about her captains' skills is stalling the EU's ability to respond to the crisis. Other EU member dislike of austerity policies combined with historically engrained fears of a German hegemon drives this criticism. Yet it is Merkel's insistence on staying the course that has stabilized the Eurozone. Those critical of Merkel's policies need to recognize that her election wins will be good for all Europeans in the long run. Her re-election means that there will be continued German support for the EU. Merkel has demonstrated support for a stable Euro and thus a strong EU. She stated in a 2012 BBC interview that "It would be a huge political mistake to allow Greece to leave [the Eurozone]." She's right. Austerity or not, weathering crises as a unified continent will increase integration over the long term; a positive trend that will with time improve the standard of living across Europe. EU members are allowing fears of German dominance to cloud effective leadership, but the problems that the EU is confronting now require strong and confident economic management. EU members should lay off criticisms of Merkel and be grateful that they have a captain at all.