

ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the concept of Europeanization and its profound impact on both EU member states and candidate countries. Europeanization defined as the transformative influence of the EU on integration processes, is examined in its internal and external dimensions. The institutional strengthening of the European Parliament necessitates adjustments within national political parties, affecting organizational structures and decision-making processes. Challenges arise from the division of the European Parliament into political factions based on party affiliations rather than national delegations. The formal organizational structure of political parties undergoes evolution, influenced by the emergence of ideologically aligned international parties within the European Parliament. MEPs, party leaders with national parliamentary experience, and experts in European integration play pivotal roles. The study delves into the complex interplay of domestic and European policy issues, emphasizing voters' considerations of parties' competence in these realms. A significant aspect is the political trajectory under Angela Merkel's leadership, particularly the transformation of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) into a centrist party. Merkel's policies contribute to the CDU's dominance and the emergence of right-wing populism, notably the Alternative for Germany (AfD), responding to her open-door policy during the 2015 migration crisis. The research underscores the dual impact of Merkel's leadership, positioning the CDU as a centrist force while fostering right-wing sentiments in German society. The research analyzing German parties' stances on European integration, a pro-European inclination is prevalent, with the exception of the Left Party, which advocates for a radical reorientation. Contradictions exist within parties, with liberals and the majority of CDU/CSU members favoring pro-European rhetoric, while the SPD and Greens emphasize the social aspect of a "social Europe". The study concludes by underscoring Germany's historical backing for European integration, highlighting its distinctive approach that values both deepening and widening processes. Germany's leadership role in the EU is credited to its ability to balance integration dynamics, maintaining demographic and political influence. This research aims to determine whether or not the ongoing process of European integration has influenced the Europeanization of German political parties. In essence, the research provides a comprehensive overview of the evolving political landscape in Germany, examining Europeanization, party dynamics, electoral shifts, and foreign policy considerations. The legacy of Angela Merkel's leadership and the challenges and opportunities confronting German politics are pivotal themes in this insightful analysis.