

Merkel's illustrious reign is at risk of being tarnished



German Chancellor Angela Merkel speeches during her meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin (not pictured) at Meseberg governmental house August 18, 2018 in Gransee, Germany. Mikhail Svetlov | Getty Images

Sakrileg, the German word for sacrilege: the violation or misuse of what is regarded as sacred.

I'm about to go there. Has German Chancellor Angela Merkel been a disaster for Europe, and is her prolonged tenure at the Federal Chancellery extending the region's problems rather than holding them back?

Now I know that is the kind of heresy that would get me put in the stocks in Brussels, but it's a question that has been nagging at me for a while now as I watch the dystopian nightmare that Europe has become during the nearly 14

years of her undisputed reign as Europe's "numero uno" politician.

"Mutti," as the Germans affectionately call her, is only the fourth German chancellor of the last 45 years, after Schmidt, Kohl and Schroder. The Germans like longevity in their leaders but she has presided over a tumultuous recent period, which for many, has left Europe on the brink.

The question that I am daring to ask is whether Europe has become a mess in spite of her best efforts or because of her actions and, in many cases, her inaction?

Let's look at one or two of the facts about Europe. Britain is still about to leave the EU. Britain was a natural ally for Germany within the European Union and to lose a net-contributing, like-minded northern colleague is an enormous blow for the future of the Union. Was the ham-fisted build up to the Brexit referendum really just former U.K. Prime Minister David Cameron's fault?

But it's not just Brexit, is it? Look at the break down of the Franco-German axis. Paris and Berlin don't appear to have a clue as to how to move forward with the quagmire that the EU has become. Differing visions seem to be on hold as Frau Merkel continues her long goodbye and all the while Europe lacks a way forward.

Look at the bloc's cohesion. Yep, what cohesion? The Italian problem, with its ludicrously high debts, may have preceded Mrs. Merkel's accession in 2005 but it has only got worse on her watch and that 2 trillion euro nightmare just keeps threatening to blow up the whole project. How can Germany not take a fair share of the blame for this omnipresent, existential threat?

And what about Germany itself? Yes, its mouth-watering trade surpluses keep grabbing President Donald Trump's attention, but they are failing to disguise the huge structural issue facing Germany from the horrendous woes of its banking heavyweights to an automobile sector, which is having to belatedly spend hundreds of billions of euros reinventing itself.

And let's not forget Germany's low carbon transformation, which seems to be based on dragging out coal consumption for as long as possible.

Is it that all of these and many other issues are of no fault of a brilliant and honest politician who has done her best for the country and the continent despite

everything? Or will history be harsher on the preeminent politician on the continent for the last decade and a half?

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