

## GERMANY: EUROPE'S LATEST OBSESSION

Angela Merkel, the recently re-elected chancellor of Germany, holds the future of Europe in her cold, visionless, austerity-enforcing hands... at least that is how a large part of the international community is portraying her. The media, overanalyzing and critiquing her every movement, refers to her as either a savior or a dictator, magnifying the significance of the results of the German election. The phrases “economic power” and “political stability” are uttered often, almost carelessly, during discussions of Germany’s new centrality, entrusting in Merkel both the influence and the responsibility to direct Europe’s economic and political fate. This European obsession with Germany is a direct result of a transfer of other European countries’ national responsibilities to Merkel, forcing her to either take the credit, or fall, for Europe. However uncomfortable this concentration of uncontested German power may make Europe feel, it allows the other nations to be free from the burden of making tough policy choices, instead only having to *react* to Merkel’s decisions.

Although Europe has forcefully bestowed this responsibility on Germany by way of economic and political mismanagement, it critiques everything Merkel does. Member states of the Eurozone need to stop pointing fingers at the only country left unscathed by the crisis, take responsibility for their faux pas and for Europe’s future. The harsh critiques from other countries could just be attempts to redirect the people’s concerns and worries to Germany, and not to their own nation and leaders. Of course Germany is going to affect the future of Europe; the question on everyone’s minds is whether the end result is going to be good or bad. But the more interesting question is how Germany, a country that has historically had political and economic restraints placed on it, has become the new ring leader of Europe.

Europe should recognize that Merkel’s reelection will impact the recovery process, but instead of scrutinizing her every move, Europe should focus on developing policies to recover and to prevent future crises. And if that’s too much to ask, Europe should at a minimum respect Germany’s leadership in a time where countries are looking inward. Germany may be the “bad cop” in Europe right now, but I’d rather have one cop than none at all.