

The pleasing virtues of Angela Merkel and Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer

It is gratifying that in Germany politicians who neither suck their honey from making other politicians look bad nor pay constant attention to their media image can still be successful.

In this post, I am not at all concerned with the question of how Mrs Merkel's policy is to be assessed, nor with what different policies the three candidates for the CDU presidency would have pursued or what political programmes they stand for. It still remains to be seen whether and when Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer will follow Mrs Merkel as Chancellor. Rather, I wish to make some observations about how Merkel and Kramp-Karrenbauer practice certain – in my opinion Christian – values in their dealings with others and how these can be passed on to the next generation of German political leadership.



No “dirty laundry” required

Angela Merkel has always refrained from attacking other politicians *ad personam* or airing their “dirty laundry”. She is being succeeded by a federal chairwoman, to whom the same has applied in her previous offices. This is an exceptional phenomenon worldwide.

No media chancellor

Angela Merkel is certainly not the chancellor of the media. Of course every top politician has to be attentive to the media, but it is well known how little she values her external appearance and how rarely she does things exclusively for the media. Showing off and bragging are far from her style. With Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, someone is following her who has behaved in the same way thus far.

Simple lifestyle

Angela Merkel lives a simple lifestyle, shows no interest in becoming personally enriched as a result of her public service, and has remained untainted by corruption. These features have helped to shape the image of Germany worldwide. With Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, these virtues are now being continued.

Just be a woman

Angela Merkel has never made the fact that she is a woman a subject of discussion or used it for election campaign purposes. She has neither played the role of a victim nor made any demands as to what she as a woman, or women in general, should be entitled to. She simply does her job. The same

applies to Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer in her career to date. Very rarely is a woman who holds such a high position followed by another woman. Their style could offer a hint as to how it can happen.

A fair chance for other candidates

Merkel and Kramp-Karrenbauer have taken an exemplary approach to the process of electing a new CDU federal chairman. The previous CDU president and the previous secretary-general could have done it differently, but they gave the other candidates a fair chance, as the high number of votes cast for Friedrich Merz proves. Here, too, there was no mud battle, no hereditary court fuss, but real restraint on the part of the most powerful women in Europe. Compare this with other German or European parties, which have great difficulty in finding and electing new chairmen. Certainly, behind the scenes, some things may have happened that we do not know about, but the overall picture is pleasing.

I personally believe that it was a great mistake by Horst Seehofer, the chair of Mrs Merkel's sister party CSU, to depart from the framework of such virtues, attacking Mrs Merkel and others personally and addressing his partners through the media. I believe that he lost many voters because of this behaviour. This observation is applicable irrespective of whether or not you endorse his objectives.