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# Idiosyncrasies of the European Leadership's Decision Regarding the European Green Deal

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*“Our leadership is not about self-serving propaganda. It is not about Europe First. It is about being the first to seriously answer the call when it matters.”*



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## **Introduction**

**T**HE IMPORTANCE of the decision-making process has increased significantly in recent years in several specialty areas, the psychological approach to this process offering new perspectives for understanding and explaining its complexity. Moreover, the implementation of foreign policy is conceptualized as a form of strategic and dialectical interaction between actors and the foreign policy environment, so that the success of any implementation of foreign policy depends not only on the clear definition of objectives and choice of instruments, but also on the interaction between the actor's strategy and the context in which it is positioned, or the actor's ability to adapt to unforeseen circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

A major question in the decision-making process is related to the direct influence of motivation in making a

decision or to the motivation that gives shape to behavior by processing information. Significant advances in research have been made showing how emotions influence choices. Some research suggests that people ignore the probability of success when under the influence of intense emotion.<sup>2</sup> Another research has focused on how emotions influence the perception of information.<sup>3</sup>

Foreign policy decisions are characterized by the stakes involved, high uncertainty and substantial risk.<sup>4</sup> This is where idiosyncrasies come into play—an important factor in foreign policy decisions. An actor may obtain a different result, depending on how the decision is made, and moreover, significant cognitive limitations distort information processing—some decisions are carefully calculated, while others are intuitive.<sup>5</sup>

Keller and Yang<sup>6</sup> mention four characteristics that guide the decision maker to the political context: accentuating the task or interpersonal relationships, and the need for power and faith in a person's ability to control events and self-monitoring. Leadership style analysis, also, helps us to understand why certain decisions are made by leaders.

This paper brings a new element into the study of international relations by analyzing idiosyncrasies that occur in decision-making at the individual level. The use of psychological methods in analyzing the foreign policy decision-making process proposes a necessary investigative pathway into the field of international relations. Decision-making in foreign policy is an important area of research because the way decisions are made can shape a possible choice. From this perspective, this paper aims to analyze the elements of subjectivity that influenced the decision makers involved in development of the European Green Deal and, at the same time, those who acted throughout the decision-making process, the political decision maker analyzed being the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen.

In this paper we opted for a qualitative analysis, in order to bring to light those novelty elements entailed by the proposed topic. The research started from the observation and analysis of the phenomena, so that later the results could be interpreted. It is an empirical approach based on the investigation of sources, such as the key documents adopted so far at national and European level, as well as of the idiosyncrasies operating on the implementation of the measures provided for in the EGD, also taking into account the dynamic changes operating in the decision-making process. Studies, reports of European and international institutions, as well as specialized volumes were also reviewed. In order to obtain relevant data regarding the object of the research, one of the techniques used has been discourse analysis, one of the “traditional” methods of qualitative research.<sup>7</sup> It has experienced impressive developments in the last decade.<sup>8</sup> The psychological approach to decision-making, through language study, will provide an iden-

tity to the decision maker, to the mental processes that occur, without ignoring the individual; his behavior will be contextualized.<sup>9</sup> This method has opened the way to the investigation of meanings and the way they are made. Every person, event or situation can be described in several manners, and taking into account the social context is the most important one.<sup>10</sup> As we have mentioned, the decision maker analyzed is the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and through discourse analysis (political/public speeches, media representations) we will identify the main elements of subjectivity which acted in the decision-making process. Another technique used is document analysis (*Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2019–2024*). Basically, in order to identify the main dimensions and characteristics of our study, through the analysis we will try to solve the problem of time retrieval.

This scientific approach aims to answer some research questions that we consider relevant to the chosen topic: Are there any elements of a political, cultural or social nature that have influenced the emergence of idiosyncrasies at the individual level, within the decision-making process? What kind of idiosyncrasies acted throughout the decision-making process?

Regarding the structure of the paper, in the first part we will focus on the social and educational elements and their impact on the political path of the decision maker. We will try to outline a system of beliefs, based on the identification of moral and social values: work, professionalism, responsibility, commitment, involvement, perseverance, dedication, evolution. Next, we will focus on the main idiosyncrasies that acted on Ursula von der Leyen's decisions. The research ends with the conclusions, which propose a discussion on the research results.

## Education and Political Career

**M**ARGARET HERMANN studied the personality characteristics of fifty-four prime ministers, claiming that factors such as leadership experience in foreign affairs, political style, political socialization and a broader view of the world must be taken into account in the decision-making process to truly understand how leaders conduct foreign policy.<sup>11</sup>

The foreign policy decision-making process may deepen the understanding of idiosyncrasies, motivations and perceptions that occur in making a decision, especially at the individual level. The elements of political, cultural or social nature can lead to the emergence of idiosyncrasies at the individual level in the decision-making process, and can also shape a decision.

Certainly, in the case of the analyzed political decision maker, we find these elements of influence, given the political path of Ursula von der Leyen. She is a

German politician, the first woman appointed minister of Defense in Germany (2013–2019), and since July 2019, the first woman who has been leading the European Commission. She is no stranger to the impact that such an important position can have on one's life. Her father, Ernst Albrecht, was a prominent politician in Germany and one of the first senior officials of the European Community. Later, Ernst Albrecht became minister of the Federal State of Lower Saxony. Ursula's mother was of German and American descent, had a doctorate, and actively encouraged her academic success. As a child, von der Leyen was enrolled in the European School, the institution where several children of community officials study in Brussels. In 1977 Ursula von der Leyen began her studies in economics at the University of Göttingen, but after a while she moved to Münster. Unfortunately, in those years the German terrorist group Red Army was committing assassinations against prominent politicians. To prevent a tragedy, her father sent her to London to protect her from a possible attack. There she studied at the School of Economics and Political Science under a false name, Rose Ladson, and she was protected by the Scotland Yard.<sup>12</sup> In 1980, Ursula von der Leyen decided to change her university career, refocusing on medicine at the Hanover School of Medicine, one of the best universities in Germany. In 1986, Ursula Albrecht married her colleague, Heiko von der Leyen, who belongs to an aristocratic family of silk industrialists. Heiko von der Leyen teaches medicine and is the executive director of a medical engineering company.<sup>13</sup>

In the late 1990s, Ursula von der Leyen chose to become involved in local politics in Hannover, as she had joined the Christian Democratic Union (CDU). From 1998 to 2002, Ursula von der Leyen was a member of the Department of Epidemiology, Social Medicine and Research of the Health System at the Medical College of Hannover. Due to her personal qualities and excellent family contacts, she quickly acquired new responsibilities, until she was appointed cabinet minister in the government of Lower Saxony in 2003. Ursula von der Leyen was part of a group set up by Angela Merkel with the aim of preparing a series of alternatives for the reform of the social system in Germany.<sup>14</sup>

In 2005, she left the local government and became minister of Seniors, Women and Youth in the German federal government. In this capacity, she introduced a law that allocated € 4.3 billion to the creation of new structures for childcare. She also introduced a paid parental leave, following the Scandinavian model, which grants two months for parents who make use of this benefit.<sup>15</sup>

In the post–2009 negotiations, the CDU/CSU party coalition was formed. Ursula von de Leyen was appointed minister of Labor and Social Affairs. During her tenure, she helped Angela Merkel bring the CDU to a central position in German politics. Ursula von der Leyen supported the increase in the number of kindergartens, the introduction of a quota for women in company

management positions, same-sex marriage, and a minimum wage across the country.<sup>16</sup>

In 2013, Ursula von der Leyen assumed the post of Defense minister. She was the first woman to be appointed minister of Defense in Germany. Ursula von der Leyen launched a € 100 million program to provide childcare for the soldiers' children. In addition, she managed to introduce regulations to match the movements of soldiers with school vacations. From her pro-European perspective, she argued that the creation of a European army would be a long-term objective. In 2015, she and her colleagues in France and Poland revitalized the cooperation agreement between the three EU member states that make up the so-called Weimar Triangle. Ursula von der Leyen served uninterruptedly as minister, in Angela Merkel's cabinet, since she assumed office in 2005.<sup>17</sup>

Following the European Parliament elections in May 2019, the European Council began the process of nominating who would be presented to Parliament to replace Jean-Claude Juncker as president of the European Commission. On July 2019, von der Leyen was proposed by the European Council as a candidate for the post of president of the European Commission. At the time of her nomination for president of the European Commission, von der Leyen was minister of Defense in Germany. This proposal came from the French President, Emmanuel Macron, according to the German newspaper *Die Welt*. Critics emerged immediately after the proposal, one of those who questioned the appointment being Jean-Claude Juncker himself, who said that the process of appointing of his successor had not been transparent and marked a violation of the practice of choosing someone according to the *Spitzenkandidat* procedure.

Speaking fluently in French, German and English in the speech and during the answers given to MEPS in a long four-hour session in Strasbourg, Ursula von der Leyen multiplied her chances of getting a minimum of 374 votes, while emphasizing the idea that “finally, a woman to run for president of the European Commission.” She focused on her priorities for the next five years, including the digital sector and the fight against climate change:

*If we do our job well, Europe by 2050 will be the first continent in the world neutral in terms of carbon emissions, will be a leading power in the digital field and it will remain the economy that has best managed to ensure the balance between the market and the social.*<sup>18</sup>

In order to impress and attract the attention of the deputies, she formulated her pleas and actions starting from the aspirations of the young people, emphasizing once again the fact that she is the mother of seven children, and therefore more familiar with the needs of future generations:

*For the generation of my children, Europe is a unique aspiration.*

*It is an aspiration of living in a natural and healthy continent. Of living in a society where you can be who you are, live where you like, love who you want and aim as high as you want.<sup>19</sup>*

Moreover, in trying to become the first woman to lead the European Commission, with full confidence, she sent a very clear message: “If elected, I will strengthen the links between people, nations and institutions. Between expectations and delivery. Between words and deeds.”<sup>20</sup>

Beyond the concrete measures proposed to build a pro-European majority around her, Ursula von der Leyen made multiple references to the common European history and the history of her family. She also said that whoever wanted to unite and strengthen Europe would find in her “a passionate fighter,” and anyone who wanted to weaken and divide Europe, moving it away from its values, would face a “hard opponent.”<sup>21</sup>

## **Idiosyncrasies and Their Influence in the Decision-Making Process**

**S**TUDYING THE decision-making process we can thus uncover the cognitive processes that lead to a decision, and “we enter the mind of leaders” who make decisions. We can also identify general behavioral patterns and individual decisions and can generate views on the leadership styles and personalities of leaders, which cannot be revealed through a systematic approach to foreign policy analysis.<sup>22</sup>

As we have mentioned, this scientific approach proposes an analysis of the elements of subjectivity that acted throughout the decision-making process on the political decision maker involved in the implementation of the European Green Deal, in our case, Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission.

The European Green Deal is considered an extremely courageous project, which the Commission is undertaking. It is the first time that authorities discuss about the fight against climate change and the determination of climate neutrality, starting with such a package of measures. In order to enshrine in the legislation the proposals on the EGD, von der Leyen promised to present, within 100 days, the first “EU climate law,” which has in fact happened given the political ambition of the Commission President. Referring to the EGD, she said:

*I want Europe to strive for more by being the first climate-neutral continent . . .  
Becoming the world's first climate-neutral continent is the greatest challenge*



*and opportunity of our times. It involves taking decisive action now. We will need to invest in innovation and research, redesign our economy and update our industrial policy.*<sup>23</sup>

The Address on the State of the Union is a point of reference in the political life of the European Union. Held in September each year in front of the European Parliament, it offers the president of the Commission a chance to perform a radiography of how the Union has evolved since the last speech, but also to present the vision of the way forward by presenting the Commission's legislative priorities. Her first speech on the State of the Union was very concrete at some points. It should be noted that this speech was given in extraordinary conditions. The pandemic marked the first part of it. Since the beginning of the pandemic, more than 150,000 European citizens had lost their lives to the virus, an unprecedented quarantine in European history was in place in most Member States for months on end, and the European economy experienced the strongest decline since World War II. Von der Leyen emphasized the way in which Member States regained their unity and solidarity after the first wave of the pandemic.

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has seriously tested the global ability to cope with major emergencies. The economic impact is more severe than the effects of the last financial crisis, so Member States' budgets have been seriously put to the test. In this situation, what happens with European Green Deal? "The *coronavirus pandemic* has shaken Europe and the world to the core. What began with isolated cases quickly turned into an emergency that affects every country, region and person."<sup>24</sup> With the pandemic, the continuity of the European Green Deal has been called into question, several member states asking the von der Leyen Commission to redirect to health and the economy a substantial part of the € 1 billion that the European Union intends to allocate for the Green Deal. But in the context of the implications of the Covid-19 crisis Ursula von der Leyen said that under the recovery package most of the Pillar I funds would be spent on financing public investment and key reforms, aligned with European priorities, which include the transition to climate neutrality. And "the great majority of public health mobility, tourism and economic measures have been designed to address the immediate public health crisis directly."<sup>25</sup>

"The recovery plan proposed by the Commission is unprecedented in its design and ambition. The Commission's *recovery plan for Europe* will repair the damage and secure the future for the next generation."<sup>26</sup> And this is where Next-GenerationEU will make a real difference, 37% of NextGenerationEU being spent directly on European Green Deal objectives. According to the President of the European Commission

*[the recovery plan] also takes green financing to the next level.*

*We are world leaders in green finance and the largest issuer of green bonds worldwide. We are leading the way in developing a reliable EU Green Bond Standard.*

*And I can today announce that we will set a target of 30% of NextGeneration-EU's 750 billion euro to be raised through green bonds.<sup>27</sup>*

As we very well know, March was hardest hit by the Covid-19 crisis, but we can still see many activities related to the EGD carried out during this month, which may show the importance given to environmental issues by the officials in Brussels. The work on the Commission's strategic priorities has never stopped, in spite of the pandemic. During this time, the Commission presented a comprehensive new biodiversity strategy to bring nature back into our lives, and a farm to fork strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system. The two strategies are mutually reinforcing, bringing together nature, farmers, businesses and consumers to work towards a competitively sustainable future. Also, the European Commission adopted the EU's strategies for energy system integration and hydrogen.

*The latter addresses how to transform the potential of the decarbonisation of industry, transport, power generation and buildings across Europe into reality, through investments, regulation, market creation, and research and innovation. The work to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 continues.<sup>28</sup>*

As we have mentioned, the speech presents the main ambitions of the European Commission, which outlines the trajectory that the EU will take in the next period. Foreign policy decisions are influenced by many factors, and many variables need to be taken into account when making a decision. The role of idiosyncrasies emphasizes the importance of the psychological approach to the decision-making process. Factors such as the personality and beliefs of leaders, leadership style, emotions, images, cognitive consistency, the use of analogies, intelligence, combine to influence decision-making and the expected results. The presence of these personal or social factors that influence decision-making can lead to new approaches to decision-making.

Thompson, Neal, and Sinaceur organize the psychological factors (idiosyncrasies) that influence the decision-making process (those that occur during a negotiation) in four categories: cognitive, social, motivational, and emotional idiosyncrasies.<sup>29</sup> In the case of Ursula von der Leyen, we will try to frame the idiosyncrasies in the same pattern. Those four categories of idiosyncrasies that acted in the analyzed case are cognitive, social, motivational and emotional perception. This fact was highlighted by the analysis applied to the address on



the State of the Union of the president of the European Commission, but also by the document analysis, and exemplified with excerpts from the investigated sources.

Several types have been identified in the category of cognitive idiosyncrasies. First of all, *framing*. Bazerman, Magliozzi, and Neale (1985) consider that decision makers/negotiators who frame a situation positively, present a greater risk aversion than those framing the situation negatively.<sup>30</sup> If we were to refer to the whole speech of Ursula von der Leyen, we notice that the leitmotif was the “crisis,” the crisis seen as a chance for Europe to be the engine of transition: “*from this fragility towards a new vitality*.”<sup>31</sup> In fact, von der Leyen clearly supports this idea, through the statement she makes in her speech: “To emerge stronger [from the crisis] by *creating opportunities* for the world of tomorrow and *not just building contingencies* for the world of yesterday.”<sup>32</sup> Referring to the EGD, in this case we discover the *framing*. Discussing about the increase in emission reductions, she admits that:

*I recognise that this increase from 40 to 55 is too much for some, and not enough for others.*

*But our impact assessment clearly shows that our economy and industry can manage this.*<sup>33</sup>

Secondly, during the speech we find the *anchoring*. According to Whyte and Sebenius (1997), anchoring effects are as large for a group as they are for individuals, because groups tend to adopt the majority rule or the consensus.<sup>34</sup> Referring to the EGD, von der Leyen argues that although there are many challenges to meeting the proposed targets, a consensus has been reached to achieve them, both for Member States and civil society: “We have more young people pushing for change. We have more proof that what is good for the climate is good for business and is good for us all.”<sup>35</sup>

Thirdly, referring to *availability*, Northcraft and Neale (1987) argued that more concrete information affects the decision-making during a negotiation,<sup>36</sup> which is also found in the analyzed discourse:

*We looked in-depth at every sector to see how fast we could go and how to do it in a responsible, evidence-based way.*

*We held a wide public consultation and conducted an extensive impact assessment.*

*On this basis, the European Commission is proposing to increase the 2030 target for emission reduction to at least 55%.*<sup>37</sup>

Looking at *perceptual/cognitive frames*, according to Pinkley (1990), negotiators can have one of the three different cognitive frames: based on relationships, emotional-intellectual, and compromise-win.<sup>38</sup> In our case, we are talking about the *emotional-intellectual framework*, which can be found in the case of other measures taken by the analyzed leader, and less in the case of the EGD. Talking about worker protection, based on previous experience, she promises to support them in the labor market:

*When I took office, I vowed to create an instrument to protect workers and businesses from external shocks.*

*Because I knew from my experience as a minister for Labour and Social Affairs that these schemes work. They keep people in jobs, skills in companies and SMEs in business. These SMEs are the motor of our economy and will be the engine of our recovery.*<sup>39</sup>

Another category of idiosyncrasies refers to *verbal style*, as developed by Weintraub.<sup>40</sup> The advantage of such an analysis is that these verbal structures, such as imagery and complexity, are not handled consciously, like the semantic content. According to this author, people can be identified as belonging fully or partially to a certain style.<sup>41</sup> During the speech we encounter the *use of explanations* (because, therefore, since), which suggest rationalization, points of view that are justified, explained: “Carbon must have its price—because nature cannot pay the price anymore,”<sup>42</sup> “While emissions dropped 25% since 1990, our economy grew by more than 60%.”<sup>43</sup> The mission of the European Green Deal involves much more than cutting emissions. It is about achieving a systemic modernization across economy, society and industry. It is about building a stronger world to live in. According to von der Leyen

*Our current levels of consumption of raw materials, energy, water, food and land use are not sustainable.*

*We need to change how we treat nature, how we produce and consume, live and work, eat and heat, travel and transport.*<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, there are adverbs that emphasize a statement or add more authority, *adverbial intensifiers*: “We will form *high ambition coalitions* on issues such as digital ethics or fighting deforestation—and develop partnerships with all like-minded partners.”<sup>45</sup> Last but not least, we find *direct references*. Using these words indicates a friendly or engaging behavior, and those who make few references are seen as being shy or detached.<sup>46</sup> Thus, throughout the speech we find formulas such as “Honourable Members.”<sup>47</sup>

Taking a look at the way events are presented, we identify the *optimistic explanatory style*, von der Leyen being in the category of those who see positive events as being caused by internal, global, stable factors:

*We are on track to meet our ambitious Paris Agreement goals and 2030 targets. But we need to go further and faster if we are serious about climate neutrality in 2050.*

*We currently have a goal of 40% emissions reduction by 2030. But we have to be more ambitious. Carbon emissions must have a price. Every person and every sector will have to contribute,<sup>48</sup>*

and negative events caused by external, unstable, and specific factors:

*Today's world feels ever more unsettled. Existing powers are going down new paths alone. New powers are emerging and consolidating. Changes in climate, technology and demography are transforming our societies and way of life. This has left a feeling of unease and anxiety in many communities across Europe.<sup>49</sup>*

Von der Leyen sees the NextGenerationEU as a tool that helps us to get out of the pandemic, a tool that helps us

*shaping the world we want to live in.*

*A world served by an economy that cuts emissions, boosts competitiveness, reduces energy poverty, creates rewarding jobs and improves quality of life.*

*A world where we use digital technologies to build a healthier, greener society.*

*This can only be achieved if we all do it together and I will insist that recovery plans don't just bring us out the crisis but also help us propel Europe forward to the world of tomorrow.<sup>50</sup>*

The *idiosyncrasies of social perception* differ from the cognitive ones regarding the nature of the influence, which is centered on the perception of social objects, events and people.<sup>51</sup> In this category were identified idiosyncrasies focused on themselves and others, also exemplified with excerpts from the speeches given. A factor specific to the idiosyncrasies of social perceptions is *transparency* (focused on oneself and others). Keysar, Ginzler, and Bazerman (1995) think that the decision makers' tendency is to behave as if others knew their inner states.<sup>52</sup> Referring to von der Leyen, not only in the State of the Union Address, but also in other interviews, and even in her *Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2019–2024*, she speaks about transparency as a defining factor of her own work, but also of the institution she leads: "I believe this will make

the institution more agile and flexible, as well as more transparent in the way it works.”<sup>53</sup> If we refer to speech, the fact that it presents both facets of a problem denotes transparency:

*I am fully aware that many of our partners are far away from that . . . But for us, the 2030 target is ambitious, achievable, and beneficial for Europe. We can do it. We have already shown we can do it.*<sup>54</sup>

Regarding the *perspective approach (self-centered)*, according to Neale and Bazerman (1983) the decision makers with an open perspective will have greater success in creating integral arrangements than those with fewer perspectives.<sup>55</sup> We also identify this in the case of the analyzed statements. The way in which von der Leyen presents the trajectory that the European Commission will take shows precisely this openness of the leader to cooperate with all stakeholders:

*If elected, I will strengthen the links between people, nations and institutions. Between expectations and delivery. Between words and deeds. My Commission will listen to the people of Europe and be bold where it makes sense for us to act, leaving national, regional and local actors to deliver where they are best placed to do so.*<sup>56</sup>

Regarding *motivational idiosyncrasies*, two categories were identified, *cooperation* (future interactions, common guidelines) and *responsibility*. If we look at the chapter on cooperation, future interactions exist. According to Axelrod (2015), an indefinite time horizon creates incentives for cooperation.<sup>57</sup> An example would be the pandemic, and in this context the president of the Commission assures that there have been and will be interactions, in order to provide aid:

*The pandemic has simultaneously shown both the fragility of the global system and the importance of cooperation to tackle collective challenges. . . . Europe chooses to reach out.*

*Our leadership is not about self-serving propaganda. It is not about Europe First. It is about being the first to seriously answer the call when it matters.*<sup>58</sup>

Our generational challenges (both the green and the digital transitions) have become even more urgent now than they were before the crisis began.

*The time for the green transition is now. The investment wave that we are about to unleash will have the **European Green Deal** as its compass. Likewise, the coronavirus crisis and subsequent lockdowns have shown that access to **digital solutions** is essential for people and businesses alike—and that the lack thereof can turn into a source of new inequalities.*<sup>59</sup>

Looking globally, von der Leyen also spoke about the relationship with the great global powers, the United States and China: “We might not always agree with recent decisions by the White House. But we will always *cherish the transatlantic alliance*,”<sup>60</sup> about China, she indicated that, although the Asian state is a negotiating partner, it is also a “systemic rival.”<sup>61</sup>

With regard to the *common orientation*, it is clear that both in her speech and in her work program, the European leader is transposing initiatives from the civil society. An eloquent example would be the intervention of environmental activists, and in particular Greta Thunberg, who tries to influence the Commission’s activities, to “speed up” actions to combat climate change: “The EU must lead the way. You have the moral obligation to do so and you have a unique economic and political opportunity to become a real climate leader.”<sup>62</sup>

Von der Leyen clearly states in her work program that a common direction is needed, and that the wishes of European citizens must be put into practice:

*I have been inspired by the passion, conviction and energy of the millions of our young people making their voice heard on our streets and in our hearts. They are standing up for their future and it is our generational duty to deliver for them.*<sup>63</sup>

Beyond the implications of environmental activists, von der Leyen announces in her speech that, based on both public consultations and requests from representatives of SMES, she has decided that the target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions should be increased to at least 55% by 2030: “Just yesterday, 170 business leaders and investors—from SMES to some of the world’s biggest companies—wrote to me calling on Europe to set a target of at least 55%.”<sup>64</sup>

Von der Leyen considers herself *responsible* for the results of every action which the European Commission takes. As a result, in her speech and in other public appearances, she said that each legislative proposal is accompanied by a wide analysis of the impact that such a measure could have in one area or another. Regarding the Green Deal she explained that:

*Our impact assessment clearly shows that meeting this target would put the EU firmly on track for climate neutrality by 2050 and for meeting our Paris Agreement obligations.*<sup>65</sup>

Regarding the recovery plan proposed by the Commission, the NextGeneration-EU instrument should invest in lighthouse European projects with the biggest impact: hydrogen, renovation, and 1 million electric charging points. Von der Leyen claims that any plan is accompanied by extensive analyses:

*Allow me to explain how this could work:*

*Two weeks ago in Sweden, a unique fossil-free steel pilot began test operations. It will replace coal with hydrogen to produce clean steel.*

*This shows the potential of hydrogen to support our industry with a new, clean, license to operate.<sup>66</sup>*

*Emotional or affective* idiosyncrasies refer to the misperceptions of one person or more. These may, in turn, address more inconsistencies or connections between feelings and actions, feelings and reasoning, or feelings and different stages of negotiation.<sup>67</sup> Looking at emotional idiosyncrasies were identified both *positive* and *negative* emotions. Carnevale and Isen (1986)<sup>68</sup> argued that happy individuals exchange information more easily and can be creative in negotiations. In the case of positive emotion we discover joy, desire, hope, proud, optimism:

*It is the lesson behind it. About not allowing obstacles stand in your way, about not letting conventions hold you back, about seizing the moment.<sup>69</sup>*

*I am proud to live in Europe, in this open society of values and diversity.<sup>70</sup>*

In terms of *leadership style*, Ursula von der Leyen could be considered a *strategic leader*. The strategic leader faces constraints, but is open to information. This type of leader knows what she wants and seeks relevant information to achieve her goals. She is bold, but informed when it comes to quality in these ambitious aspirations. The president of the Commission has shown in many ways this leadership style by highlighting the values, vision and mission of the European Union—from restoring the values enshrined in the four freedoms, to the vision of a circular and fair economy, to the EU's role in stimulating health, encouraging sustainable investment and protecting human and social rights.

## Conclusions

IT CAN be seen that the elements of subjectivism, the idiosyncrasies, influence the choice of a certain solution to the existing problems. The categories of idiosyncrasies identified, but especially the beliefs and motivations, are those that outline the vision of the decider. It can be stated that Ursula von der Leyen is a good connoisseur of the realities in the field of international relations, which is probably due to the experience gained from the ministerial positions she held.

The course of the policies is shaped by the decisions of leaders. The actions undertaken in foreign policy decision-making can refer to the motivations, be-



liefs, intentions or calculations of the opponents. The foreign policy decision-making has models and theories that can help us understand how bias, error, uncertainty or internal policies may determine decisions. We can improve in this way the manner in which decisions are taken and, by applying different models in the analysis of the decisions, we can predict, more accurately, future actions and their consequence on the international stage. This is also true for the European Green Deal, its evolution being determined by the decisions taken by the president of the European Commission.

Following a multiplicity of topics, the EGD adopted a holistic approach, reaffirming the interconnection between challenges and the need for policy coherence. Through the European Green Deal, Europe puts sustainability at the center of its scientific, social or economic development, and this fact should be seen not as an idea, but as a solid opportunity to promote a new economic and social system.

Despite the pandemic, the measures regarding the EGD proposed in the work program of the president of the Commission (*Political Guidelines for the Next European Commission 2019–2024*), and moreover, reiterated in the State of the Union address will continue, the Commission's legislative priorities for the next period focusing on boosting the green transition. The Covid-19 pandemic reaffirmed the importance of investing in sustainable projects that strengthen economies, while having minimal impact on biodiversity and climate. We also need investments to help us achieve the goals set by the Green Deal. All consolidated financial assistance at European level is allocated for the period 2021–2027, so forecasts for the economic recovery outline a medium and long-term recovery. Also, the allocation will finance both health and medical efforts and economic recovery, but in compliance with the conditions imposed by the Green Deal.

This scientific approach has tried to provide answers to some research questions that we consider relevant to the proposed topic, namely: Are there elements of a political, cultural or social nature that have influenced the emergence of idiosyncrasies at the individual level in the decision-making process? What kind of idiosyncrasies operated during the whole decision-making process?

In the paper, both questions were answered in the affirmative. The political, cultural or social experience determined the appearance of idiosyncrasies in the case of the analyzed decision maker. Both in the analyzed speech and in her work program were found elements related to the previous experience of the decision maker, such as the guidelines in the social field (she served as minister of Labor and Social Affairs), the guidelines in the field of defense and security (being minister of Defense) or concerns about the health of European citizens (influenced by a medical career). In other words, all the elements in the internal and external environment influence her and influence the decisions that the decision maker

takes, from the professional to the everyday ones. Regarding the second question, in the case of Ursula von der Leyen, the four types of idiosyncrasies—cognitive, social perceptions, motivational, and emotional—could be found, each of them leaving a mark on the way in which the European leader outlined her work program. These are specific to the action(s) presented. It can be seen that their occurrence depends on the domestic or international context and on the action of other factors such as subjective ones, so in the case of other decisions it will be possible to outline either the same idiosyncrasies or more or fewer of them.

Knowing the types of idiosyncrasies and especially their identification at the level of the decision maker facilitates the anticipation of the solution that will be chosen, but also the shaping of an image of the strategies that will have to be approached.

As we begin to plan for a gradual return to work and intend to invest billions of euro to revive the economy, we should avoid returning to old, polluting habits. Instead, we should get out of the pandemic in a better situation. The climate crisis also exists during an epidemiological crisis, therefore, the response of the president of the European Commission seems to be in line with the environmental issue in the strategies built for post-pandemic economic restructuring. The integration of an environmental strategy in the rebirth of the post-pandemic European community, the integration of the EGD in the post-pandemic economic recovery programs, can be the method that will ensure the prosperity and sustainability of European states.

□

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## Abstract

### Idiosyncrasies of the European Leadership’s Decision Regarding the European Green Deal

The implementation of foreign policy is a form of strategic and dialectical interaction between actors and the foreign policy environment, the success of any implementation of foreign policy depending not only on clearly-defined objectives or the choice of instruments, but also on the interaction between the actor and the context in which the strategy is positioned or the actor’s ability to adapt to unforeseen circumstances. The way decisions are made can give one form or another to a possible choice. From this perspective, this paper aims to analyze the elements of subjectivity that influenced the decision makers involved in the design of the European Green Deal and, at the same time, those who acted throughout the decision-making process, the analyzed political decision maker being the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. To this end, we have resorted to qualitative methodology instruments such as document analysis and discourse analysis. Foreign policy decisions are characterized by the stakes involved, high uncertainty and substantial risk. To decipher these actions, it is useful to know what is behind a decision, what drives the action and the event. This is where idiosyncrasies come into play—an important factor that acts in foreign policy decisions. An actor can come up with a different outcome depending on how the decision is made—some decisions are carefully calculated, while others are intuitive.

## Keywords

idiosyncrasies, leadership, foreign policy, decision-making process, European Green Deal