

The self-perception of the EU executive

A qualitative idea-analysis of the European Commissions'
Presidents Political Guidelines 2009-2019



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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to describe the self-perception of the European Commission in terms of ideas portrayed in text of Political Guidelines formulated by three different Presidencies. The thesis analyses the Political Guidelines as formulated by three different European Commission Presidents; José Manuel Barroso, Jean-Claude Juncker and Ursula von der Leyen. It uses a qualitative idea-analysis in order identify and describe ideas held by each President. The thesis then analyses how the different Commissions adhere to values relating to one hand, a technocratic ideal, on the other hand a political ideal. I have used theories of European integration, namely the theory of neofunctionalism as stated by Ernst B. Haas, the theory of The Normalized Executive by Anchrit Wille and the theory of Liberal Intergovernmentalism as stated by Andrew Moravcsik to explain how the ideas found in the analysis can be connected to wider theoretical school of thought. By creating triads consisting of statements of values, descriptive statement and prescriptive statements the analysis of the thesis has concluded that the three Commissions have had different ideas relating to the European Commissions role within the European Union, as well as describing a shift in ideas relating to the self-perception of the institution they are leading.

Keywords: The European Commission, Technocratic, Politicized, Qualitive idea-analysis, Institutional self-perception.

*Wordcount:*10433

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1 Introduction

Ever since the first steps towards European integration in the 1950s there has always been some form of executive power encapsulated in the form of supranational institution. Since the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, this executive branch is known as the European Commission (EC). Even though this institution has existed for the better part of the 20th century scholars still debate how we should view how the Commission operates or , how it should operate. This discussion can roughly be split in two different approaches: intergovernmentalism and supranationalism.¹ It seems that the EC is shaped by the societal context, the presidency within the institution, and the powers of the EC's joint European institutions. Arguably, the changes in these factors can bring about change in how the EC acts and perceives itself in relation to the society that is a part of. The discussion has to this day not completely been settled and, because of this, many are still unsure about the exact role of the EC in EU-policy. On the one hand, the Commission is described as a technocratic mediator serving the Member States interest. In the treaties of the European Union, which some argue functions as the constitution of the Union, we see a clear division in the EU institutions and the Member States power that functions as a form of checks and balances. On the other hand, the Commission is portrayed as a political institution that strives to achieve its own interests. Several scholars have observed changes in how the EC constructs and handle issues on the European agenda. It seems as if the leadership of the Commission leaves a strong imprint on which policies are prioritized, and how they are handled at the EU level. The institutional power balance within the EU has shifted with the succeeding treaties, changes in EU policy, and by Commission's leadership.² Based on this, this thesis set out to describe how the changes affect the language the EC president uses in order to describe itself. In doing so, I outline changes within the self-perception of the EC. This leads to questions of a more empirical nature: Does the Commission perceive itself to have a political agenda, or does it see itself as a more technocratic actor following member states' interests?

¹ Hix & Hoyland. *The Political System of the European Union*. Palgrave Macmillan 2011. Third Edition. P. 16-18

² Hix & Hoyland. *The Political System of the European Union*. P. 27-32, Kassim, Peterson, Bauer, Connolly, Dehousse, Hooghe and Thompson. *The European Commission of the Twenty-first Century*. P.157-158

So where can one find relevant information that tells us how the Commission perceives its own goals and the nature under which it operates?

The EU's overall priorities are stated by two main actors: The European Council and The European Commission. *"The European Commission has defined a set of priorities, in line with core European Union values. Commissioners need to respect these values in their work"*³

In formulating the Commission's priorities, the President of each Commission, outlines an overall political strategy. Before every five-year term the President of the Commission issues a draft of the Commission's so called "Political Guidelines".⁴ In these guidelines one can read the overarching goals of the Commission for its five-year term. But it also a document in which the President describes what kind of Commission it will lead in terms of its relation to other EU institutions and what structure dictates the EC's work during the coming mandate period. The President views is thus interesting to analyse in order to understand what scholars describe as a self-ambiguity of the EC. The ideas portrayed by the President can function as a tool of understanding the how the EC perceives its role within the European Union.

I will utilize thee different Presidents' political guidelines as a tool for trying to identify what values the Commission is guided by, what descriptive measures that affect the values, and what tools they are planning on using to reach the desired outcome. Since the guidelines are presented by the President, they can also function as the basis of an analysis in how the self-perception of the Commission and how it may shift in accordance with the Commission Presidency.

Based on this, I believe that I can utilize these texts to describe changes of how self-perception of the EC shifts in accordance with its Presidency.

1.1 Deposition of the paper

The paper starts by presenting the more precise research question that the analysis will attempt to answer. Then, it outlines what theoretical approaches will be considered for the

³ The European Commission. *Priorities and Goals*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-and-goals_en. Accessed 22-12-2019.

analysis. The section that follows presents the method and the research design which the thesis will follow. After this, the material that will be analyzed by the chosen method is presented, which is followed by the analysis. Finally, a section a summarizing and analytical discussion will be presented.

1.2 Previous research

There is rich literature dealing with the European institutions and more specifically the European Commission. While different theoretical perspectives abound, one of the most re-occurring juxtapositions in the literature is the image of the Commission as a political actor versus the image of the Commission as a technocratic actor. The political view describing the EC as a self-realizing institution striving for its own interest, and the technocratic view as a institutions that mediates between Member States by aiming to secure the most effective and efficient outcomes for the EU as a whole.

For instance, Nugent and Richard argue that we have seen a political development during the Juncker presidency due to changes in ideological agenda-setting and politicized organizational structure.⁵ Others, argues that the EC is a more technocratic institutions. Technocracy can be understood as the prioritization of bureaucracy in an organization's operations. It is, however, much more than a set of operating procedures. *“Technocracy amounts to a belief system, that is mainstreamed and internalized to the extent that the privileging of bureaucratic systems and justifications is axiomatic.”*⁶

Hooghe and Marks have published an article in where the authors compare the three competing “grand theories of European integration”.⁷ In this work the conclude that neofunctionalism, intergovernmentalism and post functionalism premises lead to separate descriptions of reality, focuses on inherently different key actors and explain causal mechanisms in different ways.⁸ This conceptual ambiguity about the role of the EU and the

⁴ The European Commission. *How priorities are set*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-and-goals/how-priorities-are-set_en. Accessed 22-12-2019

⁵ Nugent & Rhinard. *The political roles of the European Commission*, *Journal of European Integration*, 41:2, 203-220, DOI: 10.1080/07036337.2019.1572135. P. 15-16

⁶ Mac Ginty. *The limits of technocracy and local encounters: The European Union and peacebuilding*, *Contemporary Security Policy*, 39:1, 166-179, DOI: 10.1080/13523260.2017.1407191. P. 8

⁷ Hooghe & Marks. *Grand theories of European integration in the twenty-first century*. *Journal of European Public Policy* 2019. P. 1–21.

⁸ Hooghe & Marks. *Grand theories of European integration in the twenty-first century*. P. 17

role of its institutions is a central aspect in why I decided to write this thesis. Since there does not seem to be one clear cut way in how to view the Commission the question of how the institution itself views itself according to the grand schools of thought becomes very relevant. Since the EC is the sole executive power within the EU institutions, this self-perception in the second leg becomes a central aspect from which we can draw conclusions from which perspective of reality the executive power is being steered. I have yet to find research conducted based on ideas portrayed by the commission itself. The research I have found deals with empirical evidence of policy outcomes the structural division of the European institutions. Therefore, I want to contribute to new aspect of research on the EU, an idea-analysis of the language used by the Europeans Unions executive institution.

2 Research Question

This thesis analyses how the European Commission perceives itself in light of the Political Guidelines stated before they are approved as presidents. The thesis will analyse three text on Political Guidelines and compare them in relation to the values held in the text and, in the discussion, relate these values to theories of European Integration. This is done in to describe the self-perception of the EC in the context of its Presidency. The guidelines are collected by order of each of the Commissions. In order they are: The Political Guidelines of the José Manuel Barroso Commission of 2009, The Political Guidelines of the Jean Claude Juncker Commission of 2014 and lastly The Political Guidelines of the Ursula Van Der Leyen Commission of 2019.⁹ By the analysis I will try to outline the fundamental values that are related in relation to concrete programs of action that each of the Commission argues for. I have chosen to analyze the EC as an institution because there are several theories arguing different approaches on how you can view it. Some researchers argue that it is mainly a technocratic mediator that functions as a platform for member state policy.¹⁰ Others argue that Commission itself has a political will and agenda.¹¹

By analysing the texts at hand, I hope to describe how the Commissions perceives itself in terms of defined value-statements, descriptive-statements and prescriptive-statements, which are explained in the method section. I have chosen the EC as the main actor of analysis based on its executive role within the European institutions and its agenda setting power of the direction of the EU.

⁹ The European Commission. Political Guidelines for the next Commission by Jose Manuel Barroso. https://sbe.org.gr/newsletters/eflashnews/2009_21/Barroso_Political_Guidelines_2009.pdf. Accessed 2019-11-15. The European Commission. Political Guidelines for the next European Commission, by Jean-Claude Juncker. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/juncker-political-guidelines-speech_en.pdf. Accessed 2019-11-15, The European Commission. Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024 by Ursula Van der Leyen. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf. Accessed 2019-11-15,

¹⁰ Bache, George, Bulmer. *Politics in the European Union*. Oxford University Press 2011. Third Edition. P. 262-263

¹¹ Bache, George, Bulmer. *Politics in the European Union*. P.263-264

In regard to this question my main research question is the following

How did the European Commission perceive its own role within the EU context in the Political Guidelines as formulated by the president of the European Commission between 2009-2019?

I will also try to answer a sub question that follows:

Can we witness a shift in the self-perception of the European Commission in terms of its Presidency?

3 Theory

In this part, I outline the theories that are used to inform my analytical framework for identifying the values that are expressed by the EC president in the analysed texts. This section will outline two basic theories, namely neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism. These theories are used to sketch the dichotomy that exists within theories of European Integration. In turn, this separation underlines my analytical framework to identify and understand ideas proclaimed in the Political Guidelines. The theories will include the assumptions of neofunctionalism by Ernst B. Haas, a summary of Achrit Wille's study '*The Normalization of the executive*' and the theory of *Liberal Intergovernmentalism* as formulated by the professor of economics Andrew Moravcsik. I will also bring in relevant literature on the subject in order to strengthen the claims made by the theories. This is done by referencing other authors on the subject in relation to the main authors.

3.1 Neofunctionalism

Neo-functionalism is one of the most recognized theories of European integration. It has been developed by a variety of scientist. In this thesis I will mainly focus on the framework laid out by one of the founders: Ernst B. Haas. Haas's model of the theory seeks to explain why states establish international or supranational organizations and explain the process of regional integration. The theory has been used as tool to explain the enlarged powers within the EC and the creation of the single market which has incrementally increased the EU's mandate.¹² The core assumptions of Haas's version of Neo-functionalism are:

1. Relevant actors are rational beings, which attitudes are based on interests. These interests can be transferred to a new center of loyalty, transforming beliefs and values.
2. Decisions lead to spill-over of unintentional consequences. More often than not leading to new decisions in previously unintended policy fields.

¹² Saurugger, Sabine, *Theoretical Approaches to European Integration*, p.34

3. Institutions that follows the above assumptions take a life of their own. They are not only secretariats in the service of Member state preferences, but become independent actors pursuing their own agenda. The EC influences the interests and beliefs according to this own agenda, as a part of the integration process.¹³

The theory puts interest groups and the EC central to its analysis. It describes that economically driven organized interests push the European integration processes by aligning with the EC. The EC in turn uses this loyalty to increase their owns and EC's mandate¹⁴. This transfer of loyalty thus becomes a way for the EC to grow its executive position as it solves issues on a lowest common denominator.¹⁵ Neo-functionalists claims that this in turn leads to a communication between national interest groups and nation states bureaucrats, which in a later stage leads to support of the problem-solving capacities of the EC and in addition leads to further EU integration from the nation states part.¹⁶ This brokering of agreements leads to an increase in mandate for the supranational institutions and can lead to supranational policies taking a life of the their own.¹⁷

The core assumptions also need to be further explained in the central mechanism of spill-over. The notion of spill-over is a way of explaining the expansion of EU mandate on policies. It is defined as “*a situation in which a given action, related of a specific goal, creates a situation in which the original goal can be assured only by taking further actions, which in turn create a further condition a need for more action and so forth*”.¹⁸ Neofunctionalists claim that this effect must be implemented by a transnational authority, which in the case of the EU cooperation becomes the EC. This spill-over effect in turn creates mutually reinforcing processes that increase attachment towards supranational institutions and create a foundation for a wider independence of these institutions, thus creating a situation of stronger supranational agencies.¹⁹

and that EU integration can face a so called “spill-back”. These notions deal with terms such as the presence of opposing ideology, changes in actors' preferences, external environment of integration and massive transformations in domestic societies.²⁰

¹³ Saurugger, Sabine, *Theoretical Approaches to European Integration*, Palgrave macmillan 2014, First edition, p.37

¹⁴ Hartlapp, Metz, Rauh. *Which policy for Europe? Power and conflict inside the European Commission*. P. 298-299

¹⁵ Saurugger, Sabine, *Theoretical Approaches to European Integration*. P. 42-43, 49-50

¹⁶ Saurugger, Sabine, *Theoretical Approaches to European Integration*. P 37-39

¹⁷ Hooghe & Marks. *Grand theories of European integration in the twenty-first century*. P. 4

¹⁸ Lindeberg. *The Political dynamics of European Integration*. Stanford 1963. First Edition. P. 10

¹⁹ Hooghe & Marks. *Grand theories of European integration in the twenty-first century*. P. 3

²⁰ Saurugger, Sabine, *Theoretical Approaches to European Integration*, p.41

Based on the theoretical outline, I argue that neo-functionalism is in line with supranational side of the dichotomy, where the European Commission is conceived of pushing the European integration forwards – and, if possible – in line with its preferences. This is based on the notions of spill-over, transferring of loyalty to a supranational structure and the theoretical claims that a clear executive structure is needed in the supranational setting.

3.2 The Normalized Executive

Wille's book is an empirical argument on how we can now view the EC as a more normalized executive institution comparable to a national executive government which has to be accountable towards the legislative institutions in the same political system. This normalization entails that we now see more political EC with its own political mandate in the European institutional setting.

“The European Commission started out in the 1950's as a technocratic international organization. Today it has acquired many of the organizational features and behavioral patterns that are highly typical of the 'normal' executive in national settings.”²¹

Wille argues that the EC is now more of a political institution that, like most national executives, bases its mandate on: political control, accountability and legitimacy.²²

She bases her argument on the observation that the EC now rests on two separate pillars of politics and bureaucracy, rather than only focusing on the administrative aspects of governance.

Her book lays out arguments that the development of global issues have demanded that the Commission adopts a more political approach to its governance. Since broad global issues demands a broader political reach, - the EC's modus operandi has now gone from “policy without politics” to becoming more political, converging an extended array of policy areas and sharing a function together with other EU institutions in almost every aspect of EU governance. In doing this the EC needed to increase its legitimacy in order to strengthen its agenda-setting powers and to further implement its policy leadership. This need for legitimacy has created a demand from the other institutions, such as the EP, which in its

²¹ Wille, Anchrit. *The Normalization of the European Commission*. Oxford University Press 2013, First edition

nature is a political institution. In order to achieve further legitimacy, the EC has thus evolved from a purely technocratic entity to a more political body.²³

She puts forth a framework from which one can understand the trend towards normalization of the EC. For the purpose of this thesis I will focus on the first three aspects and the last of her framework.

1. Rules and responsibilities.

The model for executive accountability has been modernized by the creation of new forums and instruments that have resulted in political and bureaucratic accountability. New accountability mechanisms have increased the possibilities for holding Commission officials accountable. This has led to a system of checks and balances that can be viewed in other normalized executives in the domestic setting. EP control of the EC have also increased the relationship with the legislative institutions.²⁴

2. Relationship with the European parliament.

Expansion of the EP's power to appoint the Commission creates a tighter link between the two institutions. In terms of accountability, the EP has gained more control over the EC. This has led to a more politicized appointment procedure of the College of Commissioners that has been accepted the EP. Growing EP powers have thus contributed to a political accountable Commission.²⁵

3. Top-down perspective

Recent reforms have given the Commission mandate to be political directed. Centralization of resources to the core of the Commission (secretariat general) have contributed to the strength of the presidential seat within the institution. The EP now selects the president of the EC which creates a situation where political will is taken to account more. A Five-year guideline mandated by the treaty of Lisbon now defines the political mission of the EC. Commissioners expected to responsible and answerable to the EP based on treaty reforms in the Lisbon treaty. Greater cooperation between different institutions rather than alone entity.²⁶

²² Wille, Anchrit. *The Normalization of the European Commission*, p. 3

²³ Wille, Anchrit. *The Normalization of the European Commission*, p.188-189

²⁴ Wille, Anchrit. *The Normalization of the European Commission*, p. 190

²⁵ Ibid, Schmidt. *The new EU governance: New Intergovernmentalism, New Supranationalism and New Parliamentarism*. IAI 2016. P. 6-7

²⁶ Wille, Anchrit. *The Normalization of the European Commission*, p.191

6. The political selection of Commissioners.

Changes in organizational design shifted role expectation. Commissioners expected to take a clear policy role due to scrutiny of EP. The EC now need to publish Political Guidelines and policy agenda.

The Commission now cooperates with the EP to wider extent both externally and internally. “The original design of a technocratic character has diminished due to this demand that brought new reform of political and administrative governance which gave way to new norms.”²⁷

As stated by Wille, the key of understanding this new EC lies in the separation of political-bureaucratic roles and the subordination of administrators to politics.

Wille’s study concludes that the executive branch in the EU is being transformed profoundly, and that role the Commission plays, as a result of political and administrative reforms, is progressively becoming that of a normalized executive.²⁸

In line with this argument, the EC is thus its own being in comparison to other international organizations, because of its autonomous political leadership. It has its own political leadership that can be separated from the bureaucracy. Apart from other international organizations, this leadership is not based on nationality, but on non-territorial criteria.²⁹ Political and administrative reforms are linked and should be viewed as such.

“*Normalization was realized by a replacement of old rules by new ones, and by adding new rules alongside existing ones, the so-called layering or thickening of arrangements*”.³⁰

Accountability not only deepens how public organizations are controlled, but also, on how executive officials have internalized accountability values. If new accountability arrangements are introduced these reforms need to be translated into collective practices, which are based on definitions of appropriate behavior.³¹

²⁷ Hartlapp, Metz, Rauh. *Which policy for Europe? Power and conflict inside the European Commission*. P. 297-298

²⁸ Wille, Anchrit. *The Normalization of the European Commission*, p. 196

²⁹ Wille, Anchrit. *The Normalization of the European Commission*, p. 198-199

³⁰ Wille, Anchrit. *The Normalization of the European Commission*, p. 190

³¹ Wille, Anchrit. *The Normalization of the European Commission*, p. 202

3.3 Liberal Intergovernmentalism

Moravcsik argues that governments are the most fundamental actors in regional integration and that they act in a rational fashion. Therefore, the formation of preferences analytically precedes bargaining, which in turn precedes delegation. He states that cooperation comes about by consensus-driven deliberation which is based on mutual national interest sets. He follows an idea that states are economically driven rational actors who cooperate in order to gain mutually beneficial interests. One can understand Moravcsik by understanding the process of negotiation.

*“Negotiation is the process of collective choice through which conflicting interest are reconciled”.*³²

The argument lies in that negotiations create value by facilitating mutually beneficial exchanges. However, excessive costs of identifying, negotiating and enforcing bargains may obstruct co-operation. Therefore, international institutions work as tool for proposing potential agreements, providing rules for decision-making and the resolution of disputes.

What is always present is a calculus of costs and benefits for national governments. A non-coercive unanimity-based voting system creates a voluntary basis for states to co-operate. On the basis of information sharing structures, the incentive to co-operate is elevated. Facilitating these negotiations is therefore central to the EU.³³

*“In the intergovernmentalistic view the unique institutional structure of the EC is acceptable to national governments only insofar as it strengthens, rather than weakens, their control of domestic affairs, permitting them to attain goals otherwise unachievable.”*³⁴

Moravcsik argues that the EU institutions can provide this positive co-operation effect in two ways:

1. Increasing the efficiency of interstate bargaining: EU institutions provide a common negotiating forum, offer decision-making procedures, and reduce certain costs, for instance by monitoring compliance. This means that it must include delegation and pooling of

³² Moravcsik Andrew. Journal of Common Market Studies Volume 31. No. 4 December 1993. *Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist approach*. P. 497

³³ Moravcsik. *Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist approach*. P. 474

³⁴ Moravcsik, *Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist approach*. P. 507

sovereignty.

2. Increasing the autonomy of national leaders within their domestic policy: augmenting the legitimacy and credibility of common policies, increasing domestic agenda-setting power.³⁵

He states that this is based in functional regime theory;

*“EC institutions serve as a passive structure, providing a contractual environment conducive to efficient intergovernmental bargaining”*³⁶

This quote highlights how Moravcsik perceives the role of the Commission, i.e. as the facilitator of negotiations between nation-states.

The EC³⁷ differs in the way it handles the pooling of sovereignty by qualified majority voting and by delegating sovereign powers to semi-autonomous central institutions.³⁸ He argues that the EU functions as a proposing, mediating, implementing, interpreting and enforcing agent by the behalf of national governments. Therefore, he claims that efficiency in co-operation is key to understanding why this pooling of sovereignty happens. This entails that the EC functions as a technocratic actor with a clear focus on problem solving on the member states behalf.³⁹

He also suggests that the EU should act as a neutral agent, or at be least perceived as it. This includes a close monitoring and oversight by nation-states over the EU agenda. Nation-states can thus grant agenda-setting power to the Commission on questions where a large consensus is held in the nation sphere.

*“In the European Community delegating the power of proposal to the Commission provides a means of setting the agenda, thereby avoiding time-consuming or inconclusive ‘cycling’ between difficult proposals or an arbitrary means of proposal selection”*⁴⁰

According to this view, EU institutions thus functions as a means to assist national governments in overcoming domestic opposition, in both its structure of negotiation platform member states by also facilitating the members states in reaching consensus by decreasing overarching issues that are seen in the national setting.⁴¹ This further amplifies the Commissions role as the technocratic broker of negotiations.

In achieving this, Moravcsik proposes a two-level strategy in how the EU helps national

³⁵ *ibid*

³⁶ Moravcsik, *Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist approach*, P.508

³⁷ refers to the European Community, a predecessor of the EU

³⁸ Moravcsik, *Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist approach*, P.509

³⁹ Hartlapp, Metz, Rauh. *Which policy for Europe? Power and conflict inside the European Commission*, P.300

⁴⁰ Moravcsik. *Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist approach*, P.512

⁴¹ Hartlapp, Metz, Rauh. *Which policy for Europe? Power and conflict inside the European Commission*. P. 301-302

governments to overcome domestic opposition.

1. Granting national governments greater domestic political legitimacy. This is done by giving EU support to national policy

2. Granting greater domestic agenda-setting power. This is done by giving EU support to domestic initiatives and in connecting them to the EU policies.⁴²

Delegation also functions to minimize risk of delay and unfair decisions. The national governments can use the Commission as a way of decreasing the prisoner's dilemma and decrease tension between national governments.⁴³ In this way, national governments can put the responsibility on the EU rather than on their own national government, and create a scapegoat in the European institutions domestically unpopular policies.

⁴² Moravcsik *Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist approach*, P.515

⁴³ *ibid*

4 Method

In this part, - I will first present the research design. This part includes my reasoning following the choice of the method and criticism of my approach. Following this, I present the methodological approach as presented by political science professor Mats Lindberg. I then continue to present the analytical framework for that is used for analysis.

4.1 Research design

The thesis will use a deductive approach to the chosen material. This is done in order to minimize the risk of a impartial selection of the material as well as letting the material guide the work rather than me guiding the research guiding the material. This complies with guidelines dictated in literature on the chosen method.⁴⁴ By applying a clear focus to the research question I will also decrease the risk of casting a too wide net, which the descriptive approach the research also limits. This also functions as way of basing my analysis in a sound method.⁴⁵ Since the goal in its nature is a descriptive one, rather than an explanatory, I will not attempt to bring forth explanations about why we see certain developments. Rather, I uncover how ideas are concretely formulated in the texts, and how, with these ideas, one can identify the Commission's self-understanding. The choice of studying the EC as the prime actor also comes from the methodological literature. By conducting an actor-based analysis, in this case the President of the EC, I apply the method to the same single actor in all cases. This makes the research more capable in answering the questions at hand, rather than saying something more general about the context.⁴⁶

The chosen texts have the same origin, since they are published by the same institution. They are also set in the same institutional context, which decreases the chances of misinterpretation of the meaning and contextual setting. Since the selection is made on these premises it also

⁴⁴ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Wängnerud. *Metodpraktikan; konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad*. Nordstedts Juridik AB 2012. Fourth Edition. P. 217.

⁴⁵ Ibid

complies for a more structured interpretation of the guidelines for the systematic use of data.⁴⁷ Since the method demands that you in reality use your own interpretation of a certain text and then use the data to create the schematic models according to the V-D-P triad, described in the qualitative analysis of ideas, a self-reflective position on how this interpretation is affecting the intersubjectivity in the thesis is certainly needed. Ideas is by nature a very multi-faceted conjecture that opens for a variety of interpretations. Therefore, the analysis demands both a structured operationalization of the dimensions used in the analysis. The method at hand structures these in an organized matter with the use of the three separations as well as the two-level analysis.⁴⁸ The separation assists the reader to in a concise matter understand under which perimeters the analysis is done within. By beforehand describing in what way the analysis will identify types of ideas, as based on the methodological framework described in the next section, I thus create a more valid fundament which can be reproduced by other researchers. The texts are also chosen on the premises that they are of the same characteristics, which minimizes the risk of misplaced interpretations of what character the chosen texts are within. I will also conduct the interpretations based of methodological standpoint, in referring the analysis back to framework presented in the following section.

4.2 Qualitative analysis of ideas and ideological content

The chosen method is borrowed from the professor in political science at Örebro University, Mats Lindberg. He has worked for three decades in teaching and does research on history of political ideas and political theory.⁴⁹ His method, the qualitative idea analysis, aims to map consistent and stable constructions of ideas of chosen texts. Lindberg states that the flow of information presented by institutional actors displays “various kinds of action-orienting and action-motivating thoughts”.⁵⁰ This is what he operationalizes as *ideas*. These ideas are combined into belief systems which all have an inherent common structure and composition.

⁴⁶ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Wängnerud. *Metodpraktikan*; P.219

⁴⁷ Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Wängnerud. *Metodpraktikan*; P. 220–223

⁴⁸ Boréus, Bergström. *Analyzing text and discourse; Eight approaches for the Social Sciences*. SAGE publications Ltd London 2017, First Edition. P.105

⁴⁹ Boréus, Bergström. *Analyzing text and discourse; Eight approaches for the Social Sciences*. In About the Contributors on Mats Lindberg.

⁵⁰ Boréus, Bergström. *Analyzing text and discourse; Eight approaches for the Social Sciences*. P. 87

By looking at the internal structure of these system, Lindberg thus means that based on three dimensions we can create a model for understanding pattern communicative interaction in societal contexts.⁵¹ Lindberg refers to these systems of belief systems as ideal types In which the structure is comparable regardless of idea content within it. By these ideal types the carrier of the idea describes, explain and interpret the world differently. The common structure that Lindberg uses is build up by the three following dimensions; 1. Moral and philosophical views of man, nature and society. 2. General descriptions, criticisms, analysis, accounts and judgements of the time and situation, and 3. General principles and prescriptions for action.

Lindberg then continues to entail what these dimensions are constituted of in order to create the fore mentioned model, which he describes as the V-D-P triad. Whit the basis of this triad Lindberg then continues further in presenting a two-level analytic scheme which can be uses as analysis of ideas in established thought patterns.⁵² The dimensions which this thesis will use in it's analysis, which are borrowed from Lindberg is thus the following.

Value-statements (V) – expressed in various ways; ideals, goals, preferences, interests or desired end-states.

Descriptive statements (D)– expressed in various ways; narrative accounts, descriptive assertions, situational analyses, evaluative assessments, explanations or judgements of agents, ideas, issues, solutions or processes.

Prescriptive statements (P) – expressed in various ways; normative or practical conclusions, policy suggestions, recommendations, imperatives, order, norms or rules.⁵³

So, how do these dimensions help us to identify the two competing images of the Commission (political vs. technocratic) in the texts? As stated, the thesis will use the V-D-P triad as a way to explaining the EC's self-perception. Based on the structured theories, I will distinguish characteristics that the different EC Precedencies may proclaim in the three dimensions.

V: An clear-cut focus on the European integration and a will to increase/decrease its mandate towards the nation-states. Based on the decrease or increase this can be seen either as the technocratic or the political perception. An ideal that portrays that the Commission should

⁵¹ Boréus, Bergström. *Analyzing text and discourse; Eight approaches for the Social Sciences*. P. 89, Friedrich, C.J. *Man and his Government: An Empirical Theory of Politics*. McGraw-Hill. New York 1963.

⁵² Ibid

launch a more multileveled policy mandate, where spill-over is seen as functioning tool. This would in that case correlate to the political perception of the EC.

D: A description about how the nations states are acting that impedes or facilitates further integration, which be align with the political or the technocratic ideal. In which case a lack of criticism launched towards the Member states thereof could be seen as technocratic perception. Which issues the EC faces in terms of concrete action needed to be taken to strengthen integration. What concrete programs the EC is launching for solving issues that it sees on the European arena.

P: The conclusions the different Presidents come to after accessing the role of the EC in relation to other institutions and/or the members states. And concrete policy suggestions in relation to the President's view of what challenges the EC faces.

The analysis will be done in the following way: By analysing the texts and separating the content into these separate dimensions, the goal of the thesis is to outline what value-statements (V) are being expressed in the text, to connect them to descriptive statements (D) regarding of function of the EC and ,finally, in turn leads to the prescriptive statements (P) regarding general principles or rules, norms and scripts that the EC takes for granted in the description.

By distinguishing these dimensions, the method then aims to create schemes of correlation. By connecting values-descriptions-prescriptions the method aims to create a scheme from which you can understand reasoning behind ideas in the chosen text. In doing this you can create a concise framework from which you can derive analysis and discuss your finding in a rational and systematic way.⁵⁴

This methodological framework is in its nature a descriptive approach of mapping ideas that create the foundation for understanding an idea that laid the foundation for the chosen material. ⁵⁵By connecting the ideas to theories that work as an explanatory factor for the position taken by each of the presidencies of the EC, this thesis moves beyond the purely descriptive approach. The analytical aspect of the thesis comes in play in the discussion where I plan to connect the schematic outline done by the methodological approach to accepted

⁵³ Boréus, Bergström., *Analyzing text and discourse; Eight approaches for the Social Sciences*. P. 91-92

⁵⁴ Boréus, Bergström., *Analyzing text and discourse; Eight approaches for the Social Sciences*. P. 119

theories of European integration. This becomes relevant for the thesis since the reasoning and function of the EC is extremely complex due to the many factors affecting the reasoning and actions of the institution.

By breaking down values, descriptions of reality and prescriptive measures, as the method sets out, I hope to connect ideas to theories in order to paint a picture in how the EC perceives itself in accordance to theoretical approaches of European integration and the role of the institution. The method thus helps the researcher in laying out the “argumentative inner skeleton” of a text and can function as matter of viewing ideas held by the author of the text.⁵⁶

The thesis will use an actor-based perspective of analysis. This means that the focal point of the analysis will be on the EC and not the wider discourse of the EU as a whole. This means that the thesis limits its claim regarding the wider political landscape and its effect on the standpoints proclaimed in the chosen texts. By applying this approach to the thesis, I hope to single out only the self-understanding of the Commission as based on its Political Guidelines rather than how others may understand the Commission’s role in a wider political spectrum of ideas. I also argue that since the analysis will be done on the EC in the context of its different Presidencies, the actor perspective will become relevant in order to find sound descriptive elements of the possible shift in self-perception of the EC.

It is necessary to mention both that in some cases of the analysis there will not be a clear-cut triad in how V connects to D and P. This means that the triad will in some cases will be incomplete, but still contribute to the analysis in the matter of it helping to answering the research question.

In line with the V-D-P triad used in the methodological framework the thesis will thus use the below model in the analysis. I will create several models for each of the texts, as seen above, to create a sound foundation which I can use for a comparison to conclude how the different Commissions have presented their ideas that relates to the research question.

V^x (value premise)

D^x (descriptive premise)

P^x (practical conclusion)⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Boréus, Bergström., *Analyzing text and discourse; Eight approaches for the Social Sciences*. Table 4.1 Five types of investigation and analysis in the study of ideas. P. 95

⁵⁶ Bergström, Boréus, *Textens mening och makt*, page 84–89, 146

⁵⁷ Boréus, Bergström., *Analyzing text and discourse; Eight approaches for the Social Sciences*. Figure 4.1; A formal model of simple practical reasoning. P. 100

5 Material

In this section of the thesis I outline the materials used in terms of the texts that are used for the analyzation. I will also argue for the selection of said material and outline how this material can answer the research question.

5.1 Selection of the material

In order to answer the research question at hand, the material required to be of a comparative nature. This is a logical assumption as the research question's nature is comparing two different types of self-perception to each other. This comparison could have been achieved in a variety of ways but because of my previous skill sets and knowledge, I chose to use qualitative research. This means that I have chosen a fewer number that will be studied from an intense approach rather than an extensive approach where a higher number of policy documents or political texts would be analysed. By choosing the intense approach of studying the text I believe that I will be able to find out something generally telling of the three different EC presidencies. Due to this fact, I chose three texts that function as a medium for analysing each of the President's approach. The guidelines are each treated as a tool for understanding how each presidency views itself in the European institutional context. It is crucial to mention that the nature of the texts have a political nature, therefore the analysis comes down to creating V-D-P triads of the arguments in the text and then connecting them to the theories mentioned in the theory chapter. I am aware that the context of each text have shifted due to circumstances in the world, but since the goal of the analysis is to in an descriptive matter break down ideas held by each of the Presidencies in the text, I will not discuss circumstances that could explain the shift of ideas, merely laying them out in a matter of the chosen method.

5.2 The Political Guidelines

The chosen texts are collected from the EC official website and have been transcribed by EU officials.⁵⁸ In accordance to this I will treat them as the main material in the analysis.

1. Political Guidelines for the next Commission. José Manuel Barroso. 2009.⁵⁹
2. Political Guidelines for the next European Commission. Jean-Claude Juncker. 2014 ⁶⁰
3. Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024. Ursula Von Der Leyen. 2019 ⁶¹

⁵⁸The European Commission, Publications, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications_en, Accessed 2019-11-14

⁵⁹ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next Commission by Jose Manuel Barroso*. https://sbe.org.gr/newsletters/eflashnews/2009_21/Barroso_Political_Guidelines_2009.pdf. Accessed 2019-11-15.

⁶⁰ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission*, by Jean-Claude Juncker. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/juncker-political-guidelines-speech_en.pdf. Accessed 2019-11-15.

⁶¹ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024*, by Ursula Van der Leyen. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en.pdf. Accessed 2019-11-15.

6 Analysis

In this section I will present the result of the analysis on the speeches according to the V-D-P triad. I will study each speech separately and create a schematic model for each of them. For each speech I will create a number of V-D-P triads according to arguments held in each of the texts. This is done due to limits in both space and time in this paper, and thus a more exhaustive analysis is not possible in this paper. Since the goal of the thesis lies in analyzing the self-perception of the EC as stated in the speeches, I will focus on the text relating to the structure and ideas portrayed in the speeches, rather than going in to detail in empirical matters on policy areas. This means that I will not discuss to priorities in relation to the policy amendments, nor will the analysis go into detail in each of the policy propositions. This is done due to the descriptive characteristic of the thesis. This is also done on the premises on the research question, in where the thesis only sets out to answer how the EC perceives itself in context of the EU context. The analysis will go through each text from the start to finish, in that order, thus the analysis will follow the same design regarding each separate text.

6.1 The José Manuel Barroso Commission

Barroso's main standpoint in his guidelines that he returns to time and time again lies in his vision of a Europe of freedom and solidarity.⁶² This seems to be the main underlying value that his Commission will work to achieve. He writes how he see how he views that the EU should work: The EC as the engine of the European project, a partnership for progress, subsidiarity and special partnership between the EC and the EP.⁶³

Barroso seems to advocate a European dimension in politics, proclaiming the need for European cooperation on an institutional scale. His call for a transformative agenda is also

⁶² The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next Commission*, Jose Manuel Barosso. P. 6

⁶³ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next Commission*, Jose Manuel Barosso. P 10

telling that he want the EC to be a frontrunner in the institutional change needed for the EU. This transformative agenda is declared to be the EU 2020 goal.⁶⁴

V¹: What needs to be recognized is that the European dimension, the European spirit, the European culture in decision making at all levels. More than ever this requires a strong European Union.

D¹: The world is at a turning point. So is Europe. But let me be clear: this does not mean more centralization of power in Brussels. We face a choice: either we collectively shape the new order, or Europe will become irrelevant.

P¹: This is not the time for business as usual or for routine- what we need is a transformative agenda.⁶⁵

In his political guideline he also portrays a clear sentiment towards further European integration, and points towards the need for further European cooperation, in relation to what he sees as the unions main purpose lies in empowering Europeans. To able to fulfill this goal, a supranational setting is needed. Here there is not a cleacut prescription connected to the value and the description, but it is telling in how Barroso views the future of the EC within the European context.

V²: Europe's raison d'être⁶⁶ is to empower Europeans, to protect their rights and to foster social progress.

D². In the ages of globalization, these tasks can no longer be fulfilled solely by national governments.

Barroso puts fourth an idea that the EC is the main institution driving the European agenda. He does this by pointing at the technical expertise, it's role towards the members states and its role as the guardian of the treaties. He bases this view on his own conceptions as well, which makes this a good example of how the self-perception of the EC is molded by its presidency.

V³: The European Commission is the engine of the European project.

D³: "The last five years as head of the European Commission have reinforced my strong conviction that The European Commission is indispensable as the driving force for the

⁶⁴ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next Commission*, José Manuel Barosso. P 5

⁶⁵ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next Commission*, José Manuel Barosso. P 4-6, P.13

⁶⁶ Defined as meaning or purpose according to the Cambridge dictionary.

European project.

*P*³: Only the Commission has the authority, the administrative capacity and the technical expertise to make proposals that take the interests of all members states into account. Only the Commission has the authority and the independence to ensure equal treatment of all Member States in the enforcement of treaty obligations and legislation.”⁶⁷

Barroso’s guidelines are then continued with a reality description and how the EC and its joint institutions must work together in order to solve the issues facing it. He proclaims that the EC cannot function alone, but only together with other institutions and other parts of society can the EC function in the matter it was intended. He calls this a need for “partnership in progress” which is based on the idea of the Community Method. This method refers to that specific European interests are the center of policymaking, that transparent, democratic accountable decisions are taken and to safeguard the equality of the member states.⁶⁸

*V*⁴: The EC cannot power the Union alone. Progress in the European comes when the different players involved share a common vision.

*D*⁴: To tackle the complex challenges we face; we need to mobilize all sectors of society. Working in partnership allows the EU’s democratic core, its different national interests and the European interest to come together and to make a real difference.

*P*⁴: We need a “partnership for progress” based on the Community method.⁶⁹

José Manuel Barroso’s presidency is according to the data I have analyzed in the political guidelines the presidency that adheres most to technocratic values, as stated mainly by the theory on Liberal Intergovernmentalism. According to the ideas that I have managed to model according to the V-D-P triad, Barroso had a more focus aligning with the perception that the EC functions as a technocratic broker between nation-states. This can be seen clearly in triad 3, where Barroso states that the EC has the role of brokering deals based on its technical expertise. This also correlates directly to the perception of the EC according to the Liberal Intergovernmentalist approach as seeing the Commission as a mediator between nation states. This view can also be seen in triad 1, where Barroso states “This does not mean a centralization of power in Brussels”. My interpretation of this leads to Barroso putting fourth

⁶⁷ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next Commission*, José Manuel Barroso. P 39

⁶⁸ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next Commission*, José Manuel Barroso. P 40.

⁶⁹ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next Commission*, José Manuel Barroso. P.40.

the importance of the Member States as the central pieces of European governance, thereby adhering to the notion that national actors are central in European integration.

While we see this position that aligns with the Liberal Intergovernmentalistic theory, Barroso still champions views more in line with Neo-functionalistic approaches to European Integration. In both triads 2 and 4 this becomes apparent. The ideas that Barroso here gives mandate for correlates with the neo-functionalistic theory as states by Ernst B Haas's core assumptions of European integration and the assumption of transfer of loyalty to European institutions. In triad 4 was also see an argument following the theory of spill-over where Barroso argues for a wider approach where sectors of society come together in order to solve the issues at hand.

6.2 The Jean-Claude Juncker Commission

The political guidelines of the Juncker Commission is far mor exhaustive in its ideas surrounding the function of the EC in relation to the EU as a whole and therefore, this part of the analysis will include more of the V-D-P triads than the other parts of the analysis. Juncker begins his text with a statement that the entails that the European Union is experiencing low figures when it comes to democratic legitimacy and that its ill-prepared for the challenges global challenges facing it. Therefore, Juncker want a transformed EC that can handle these issues. He makes this argument based on a Europe that suffered from an economic crisis and needs to rebuild its institutions and its structure.

V^l: We need to restore European citizens confidence for the European project. I see it as my key task to rebuild bridges in Europe after the crisis.

D^l: In many countries, trust in the European project is at a historic low. Democratic legitimacy suffered as many new instruments had to be created outside the legal framework of the European Union. Europe is finding it often ill-prepared for the global challenges ahead.

P^l: The time has come for a new approach. Focus policies of key challenges, strengthen democratic legitimacy on the basis of the community model.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission*, Jean-Claude Juncker. P.3

Juncker continues to talk about the institutional formation and the effect the relationship between the EP and the EC can contribute to the Union as a whole. He points as this relationship as a key of solving the issues he sees facing the EU. Juncker point to the opinion that through cooperation of the institutions many problems can be solved.

V^2 : A direct link between EP and EC has the potential to insert a necessary additional dose of democratic legitimacy to the EU.

D^2 : A direct link has been established between the outcome of EP election and the proposal of the president of the EC.⁷¹

P^2 : An agenda for jobs, growth, fairness and democratic change built on a broad consensus across the EU institutions.⁷²

Juncker argues for an approach of viewing the European project as a ideological project where it also based on shared values. He proclaims that this project requires the EU to act in a coordinated matter, in accordance to these shared values. This, according to Juncker, dictates that national divergencies and policies are harmonized towards a common European policy. These opinions can be seen in two separate V-D-P triads. These triads are both collected from the sections in the text relating to the judiciary and the asylum policies of the EU.

V^3 : Our European Union is more than a big common market. It is also a Union of shared values. Discrimination must have no place in our union.

D^3 : The values are spelled out in the Treaties and the Character of Fundamental Rights. Citizens expect their governments to provide justice, protection and fairness.

P^3 : I intend to make use of prerogatives of the Commission to uphold, within our field of competence, our shared values and fundamental rights. I will maintain the proposal a directive in this field and seek to convince national governments to give up their current resistance in the council.⁷³

⁷¹ Juncker refers to the so called “Spitzen Candidate” process here which entails that a candidate from the party groups in EP are considered for president of the EC.

⁷² The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission*, Jean-Claude Juncker. P.4

⁷³ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission*, Jean-Claude Juncker. P. 9-10

*V*⁴: On the basis of our common values, we need to protect those in need by a common asylum policy.

*D*⁴: The recent terrible events in the Mediterranean has shown us that Europe need to manage migration better, in all aspects.

*P*⁴: The newly agreed common asylum system has to be fully implemented, and divergences in national implementation removed.⁷⁴

Juncker's text is concluded by him discussing the institutional relationship and its effects on the Union's future and its governance. According to the V-D-P triad logical reasoning he argues from a standpoint that more cooperation is to be strived for, with a special relationship to the EP as the main goal of the EC. This relationship, as said by Juncker himself, should be based on political agenda rather than a technocratic relationship. This is shown in two separate V-D-P triads, both relating to the structural ambition of the Juncker Commission.

*V*⁵: I want to have a political dialogue with the European Parliament, not a technocratic one.

*D*⁵: The proposal and election of the EC in the light of the EP election is important, but only a first step in making the EU more democratic.

*P*⁵: The EC under my leadership will be committed to filling the special partnership with the EP, as laid down in the Framework agreement of 2010, with new life.⁷⁵

*V*⁶: I believe that Europe's policy agenda must be shaped in close partnership between the EC and the EP, and in cooperation with Member States.

*D*⁶: Political prioritization as the basis for a better more focused Union will only work if its done in partnership between the Unions institutions and the Member States.

*P*⁶: We have to utilize the Community Method.⁷⁶

The data collected from the Juncker's political guidelines points towards a collective picture of a EC more in line with the theories on the normalized executive that contains ideas found in Hass's definition of neo-functionalism. Juncker seem advocate a broader, European based Commission that adheres more to common European values and a larger cooperation between

⁷⁴ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission*, Jean-Claude Juncker. P. 10

⁷⁵ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission*, Jean-Claude Juncker. P. 12

⁷⁶ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission*, Jean-Claude Juncker. P. 13

its joint institutions, while wanting to decrease Member states influence on the European politics.

Triad 1 shows us how the EC under the Juncker presidency launches a solution to the issues facing the union in increasing the mandate of the EC by creating more framework within the EU sphere, rather than outside it. This correlates to assumptions in above mentioned theories both regarding the aspect of an increase in political control, and the joint governance by several institutions, as stated by the will of using the community method. This leads me to the aspect that Juncker proclaims ideas closely related to the neofunctionalistic approach of a cohesive union, rather than separate Member States, as the main focus for European integration.

Juncker argues to wide degree for an increase in the joint mandate shared by the EC and the EP. This becomes apparent in triad 2, 5 and 6. He clearly states in triad 5 that he wished for the shared mandate to be based on politics rather technocratic problem solving. In triad 2 he expressed a clear idea that cooperation between the two institutions is for benefit for the Union, which he characterizes as growth in democratic legitimacy. In triad 6 he spells out a clear idea that political governance is to be strived towards and can only be achieved by implementing a clear relationship between the EC and the EP.

All of this relates clearly to first, second and third assumptions found in the framework for the normalized executive. This led to me make the interpretation that Juncker's presidency complies to a more normalized executive, which bases in mandate on more political means, rather than a technocratic broker between the Member states.

As seen by triads 3 and 4 Juncker hold internal values to a high degree when it comes to the future of EU integration. This follows a neofunctionalistic approach, especially in terms of Haas third assumption. It seems as Juncker acting as president of the EC was pushing for a wider transfer of loyalty towards the European institutions, with the claim that we need a common European ideal to guide the common policies taken by the Union. In these triads one can also read a concrete criticism launched towards the Member States divergence on policy questions. This also correlates to a neofunctionalistic approach to European integration, and also showcases a critic view of the Member States involvement, thereby also criticizing the intergovernmentalistic approach of European integration.

6.3 The Ursula von der Leyen Commission

Von der Leyen guidelines is a pragmatic text where she discusses very concrete protocols of actions based on issues that the EU need to tackle during her term. Therefore, this part of the analysis will collect the V-D-P triads in relation to real world issues that Von der Leyen describes. Nonetheless, many ideas can be distinguished clearly by use of the V-D-P triad. Von der Leyen portrays a need for the EC to account into account the results of the EP elections and therefore act drastically on issues that were important. By doing this she shows that she a focus on the joint institutions in her work as EC president. In these ideas Von der Leyen also shows that she wants the EC to cooperate more and leave more to other European actors. Both the following triads showcase this idea from Von der Leyen.

V¹: We must rediscover our unity and inner strength.

D¹: The people of Europe made their aspirations heard in record number at this year's EP elections.

P¹: 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. ⁷⁷

V²: I want to strengthen the Commissions partnership with the EP, the voice of citizens.

D²: I have inspired myself from my discussions with the political groups of the EP, as well as from the European Councils strategic agenda for 2019-2024.

P²: The political guidelines draw on the common ideas and priorities that unite us. ⁷⁸

Von der Leyen has a very clear focus on that the EC need to consolidate more of a regional focus in its work. She bases this both on economic and democratic premises. Both aspects can be showcased by the following two triads. The first one she portrays in her argument for a sustainable environment, the second in her argument for strengthening the Unions economy.

⁷⁷ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024*, Ursula von der Leyen. P. 3

⁷⁸ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024*, Ursula von der Leyen. P. 4

V³: We need a just transition for all. The European way is to leave nobody behind.

D³: Cohesion funds plays a crucial role in supporting our regions and rural areas from East to West, from South to North.

P³: We will support the people and regions most affected through a Just Transition Fund.⁷⁹

V⁴: The diversity of landscapes, culture and heritage is one of Europe's most defining and remarkable features.

D⁴: Our rural areas are the fabric of our society and the heartbeat of our economy.

P⁴: We will cherish and preserve our rural areas and invest in their future.⁸⁰

In the section on Justice and Law, von der Leyen showcases an idea related to the role of the EC in relation to joint institutions and its Members States. The section also reveals in part how she views the role of the EU.

V⁵: A Europe that protects must also stand up for Justice and for values. Our European Community is a Community of Law.

D⁵: This community is the foundation of everything we have achieved and everything we still have to do.

P⁵: Ensuring the respect of the rule of law is a primary responsibility of each member state.

Strengthening the rule of law is a shared responsibility for all EU institutions and all Member states.⁸¹

Von der Leyen also describes a her ideal of a strong union, based on the cooperation of European actors, not only based on the European institutions. Based on the results of the 2019 EP elections she proclaims that there is a further need for integration of domestic actors.

V⁶: I want Europe to strive for more in nurturing, protecting and strengthening our democracy.

D⁶: Our Unions democratic system is unique, bring together directly elected parliaments at

⁷⁹ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024*, Ursula von der Leyen. P. 5-6

⁸⁰ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024* Ursula von der Leyen. P. 7

⁸¹ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024* Ursula von der Leyen. P. 14

local, regional, national and European levels with elected Heads of State or Government. The record-high turnout in the 2019 EP elections shows the vibrancy of our democracy.

P⁶: We must respond to that call by giving Europeans a stronger role in decisions-making.⁸²

Von der Leyen concludes her text with an idea portraying the need for further cooperation with the EP, which she states is the voice of the European people. In this idea she states that she is willing to share the right of initiative with the EP.

V⁷: I want to strengthen the partnership between the EC and the EP. I believe we should give a stronger role to the voice of the people.

D⁷: The voice of the people is the EP.

P⁷: The Union must use the full potential set out in the treaties. I support a right of initiative for the EP. We need to move towards co-decision power for the EP.⁸³

The data gathered from the Political Guidelines formulated by Ursula von der Leyen reveals that her Commission follows both intergovernmentalistic approaches, but also adheres to ideas that can be found in the theory on the normalized executive, and to a small degree also neofunctionalistic approaches.

Ideas related to the intergovernmentalistic approach can clearly be seen in triads 1 and 5. In these triads the method have shown that she portrays ideas related to the importance of the Member States in order to achieve a sound European integration. She refers to the rights of each Member States and declares that they hold sovereign rights when it come to the judiciary and leave them to deal with issues that they see as their own. This both follows the liberal intergovernmentalistic approach of a technocratic Commission, and brakes from the neofunctionalistic ideal of a broad Commission that uses its transfer of loyalty and the aspect of spill-over to achieve their own mandate.

At the same time that we can see these ideas held by von der Leyen we also see a very regional focus, which correlates with a neofunctionalistic approach of European integration. This can be seen in triads 3 and 4 in a clear way. This idea can be found in the

⁸² The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024* Ursula von der Leyen. P. 19

⁸³ The European Commission. *Political Guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024*, Ursula von der Leyen p.20

neofunctionalistic approach of integrating interest into the European sphere, thereby increasing the mandate of EU institutions.

There is also data found in her Political Guidelines that point towards ideas relating to the theory on the normalized executive. This can mainly be seen in her ideas that relate to the strengthening of the EP and the willingness to increase its mandate in the EU. These ideas can be found in triads 2, 6 and 7. Here she clearly proclaims ideas relating to Wille's assumptions of the characteristics of the development towards a normalized executive. The idea that the EC need to work more in junction with the EP relates both to new demands for political accountability and a wider transparency towards the judiciary institutions.

7 Analytical discussion

This section presents a comparative view of the data found in the analysis. By comparing the data, found by the methodological framework used on the Political Guidelines for each Presidency, I can draw conclusion about how each Commission perceived itself in relation to the others. I then present the conclusion of the research question this thesis has aimed to answer.

Based on the data collected from the use of the method, and the connection to the chosen theories at hand, I make the interpretation that the three different Commission, led by individual Presidents indeed have shifted when it comes to ideas portrayed in their Political Guidelines. The Barroso Commission had a much clearer technocratic focus, where the Political Guidelines expressed ideas relating to the impartial technocratic aspect of the EC. The Barroso Commission also seems less inclined to launch criticism towards Members States roles within the EU system and seems to be more in line with the aspect that the EC functions as a mediator for the Members States, rather than possessing an own political agenda. The Juncker Commission on the other hand seems to have been based on ideas more related to neofunctionalistic ideal and adheres to the aspects of a more normalized executive institution. This is based on ideas more relating to accountability, joint governance together with especially the EP. Juncker also clearly states ideas relating to a more political steering of the EC, that in cooperation with the EP can function as a way of handling larger issues and solving problems that the EU faces.

The von der Leyen Commission seems to be more a mix of the two aspects. She proclaims clear ideas relating to the Members States stature in the EU system, but at the same time lays forward ideas relating to both neofunctionalistic ideals and aspects relating to a more normalized executive institution. I make this interpretation on the basis of ideas relating to aspect in all theories that this thesis has used for the basis of analytical discussions.

Albeit there are similarities between all Commissions. All three of them seem to follow an idea portraying the need for further EU integration, according to inherent European values and the idea of the European Community ideal. This means that a conclusion is that there are no clear cut way of seeing the self-perception of the EC, only in more or less inclined aspects relating to theories of European integration.

7.1 Conclusion

How did the European Commission perceive its own role within the EU context in the Political Guidelines as formulated by the president of the European Commission between 2009-2019?

The EC under its different Presidencies seem to have had different self-perceptions. The Barroso Commission was more inclined to adhere to a technocratic role , the Juncker Commission was more inclined to adhere to political role and the von der Leyen Commission adhering to a mix between the both.

Can we witness a shift in the self-perception of the European Commission in terms of its Presidency?

According to the ideas found by the methodological framework used on the Political Guidelines of three separate Commissions, I have come to the conclusion that we indeed can see a shift in the self-perception of the EC in terms of its Presidency.

8 Further research

As mentioned, I have chosen to apply a descriptive analysis of the chosen material. This research could thus be further developed by applying an explanatory approach in order to understand the shift in ideas that I have concluded exists. This research would be more exhaustive and therefore require more time, space and resources to conduct. This research could be done with a more historical approach, identifying the factors that contributed to the shifts that we can witness in each of the presidencies. An explanatory text of this nature would also gain from conducting interviews with relevant personnel in each of the analysed Commissions.

There are also factors that point towards discourse analysis to further develop this research. By conducting a similar thesis but by using discourse analysis as the analytical tool instead, the research could show how shifts of ideas within the European sphere of political thinking have affected the conduct of the EC. This research would add to the explanatory character of this research and could be used as way of understanding the shifts of ideas held by the EC presidencies. The research would also gain from further study of the change of policies and amendments which may have contributed to the shifts in ideas.

I also see a use for similar research but with a focus on the other joint institutions of the EU, mainly the EP and the European Council. If research on these institutions were conducted, one could combine this paper with those to lay out a broader and more complex pattern from who one could derive interesting conclusions in how the institutions cooperate or compete in leading the EU agenda. It is also important to take into account the wide array of theories existing on this subject. In this thesis, due to restrictions in both time and space, I was forced to choose which theories I felt could work best to describe the ideas held in the political guidelines. This aspect can be further developed by taking into account a wider array of theories, or completely different ones in order to describe the ideas held by each of the presidents. I feel that from an intersubjective point of view that this aspect of research on the EC can always be further developed.

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