



## Analysis of Charismatic Deposits and the Staging of the President of Madrid's Speeches. A Case Study

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### Abstract

This paper analyzes the modern charismatic phenomenon which takes place in a personalization of politics paradigm that places political parties far from the political perceptions of society, whereas leaders look much closer to citizens.

The first part is structured as a theoretical discussion around charisma and the mass concept, considering Weber's definition of charisma as domination. The reader will find research about how Weber's concept resembles the actual one. In order to link this with the personalization of politics, we analyze the ancient and actual charismatic items hidden in speech.

The contextual and methodological frameworks are comprised in the following part, which consists of a constructivist inductive speech and the staging analysis of Isabel Díaz Ayuso, President of the Community of Madrid from 2019, when she almost lost her first election, to nowadays, when she recently got an absolute majority at Madrid's Assembly. The third part contains a discussion of the results obtained.

The last part is the conclusion, which shows Díaz Ayuso as a semi-pure charismatic leader inserted in a personalization of politics paradigm that has used media and drama as tools to maintain power and who has tried to de-routinize charisma through her most mediatic speeches.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Charismatic Deposits, Myth, Semi-Pure Leadership, Frames, Mass

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## Introduction

The personalization of politics and charismatic leadership share certain elements, such as the adoption of media logic for political action, the use of showmanship and dramatization to capture voters' attention, and the emphasis on individual personality. While the conceptions of charisma and personalization may appear to differ in many respects, even within academia, charisma and leadership have primarily been studied in the context of business and organizational dynamics (Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Hartog & Verburg, 1997; Jayakody, 2008; Yagil, 1998), while the personalization of politics has become a key focus of sociological research to understand political dynamics (Garzia, 2011, 2013, 2014; Holtz-Bacha et al., 2014; Rebolledo, 2017; Rico, 2009).

Political personalization is a phenomenon that has recently garnered greater attention from researchers in the fields of sociology, social psychology, and political psychology. It represents a substitution of traditional structures, such as political parties, in political and media dynamics through the individualization of the political actors.

Charismatic leadership was described by Weber (2002) as a combination of rhetoric and staging that allowed for the construction of highly irrational social and political dominations, which stands in contrast to bureaucratic and traditional forms of domination.

In this paper, we conduct a case study of the President of the Community of Madrid, Isabel Díaz Ayuso (PP), to analyze the charismatic paradigm in the present day. Through an examination of her discourse and staging, our objective is to understand how the candidate has shaped her political persona using a qualitative and inductive methodology through Grounded Theory. We aim to demonstrate that what may be considered a form of political personalization in today's context fits perfectly within the construction of pure charismatic leadership by Díaz Ayuso.

The paper is organized as follows: section two provides a literature review and conceptual overview of mass behavior in charismatic paradigms, leaders' discursive tools, mythology as a central element of discourse, and the relationship between charisma and the personalization of politics. In section three, the methodology employed to analyze the discourse and staging of Díaz Ayuso is described, while sections four and five are dedicated to presenting the analysis resulting from the methodology. Finally, section six contains the conclusions.

## Theoretical Framework

In order to understand charismatic leadership, as well as the personalization of politics, we must comprehend the social dynamics of individuals when immersed in social groups where emotions play a crucial role. To do so, we must begin with a definition of the "mass", understood as an aggregation of individuals in a group whose unity is based on an idea, ideology, or even a hobby.

Le Bon (2018) coined the term "psychological mass" to refer to individuals who, as part of a specific social group, create a *"kind of collective mind that makes them feel, think, and act in a manner quite different from how each individual would feel, think, and act if isolated"* (Le Bon, 2018; p. 27). Similarly, Gabriel Tarde described "the crowd" as an amorphous and heterogeneous group of people that spontaneously emerges and whose

behavior is characterized by being tumultuous (Tarde, 1986; p. 62).

Both authors concur in an exaggeration of individual feelings facilitated by rapid internal communication based on the later concept of “frames” (Goffman, 2006). This intra-group communication occurs through three consecutive actions: affirmation - of key concepts-, suggestion -belief in the message-, and contagion -transmission of the message-.

These authors acknowledge the existence of a “discrepant” element within these masses/crowds: mass leaders, conceived as individuals with great influence over others through their messages and rhetoric, who possess qualities that differentiate them from the rest of the individuals (Tarde, 1986), and to whom the masses voluntarily but irrationally entrust power (Le Bon, 2018). These leaders have the ability to manipulate the three aforementioned actions of message dispersion, which grants them “prestige”, defined as the “*kind of dominion exerted over our minds by an individual, a work, or an idea*” (Le Bon, 2018; p. 121).

According to Freud (2018), the crowd is characterized by its temporal instability but possesses strong emotional intensity, driven by an irrational component that compels individuals to renounce their selfish interests in favor of others. Freud theorizes that individuals experience a narcissistic restriction that leads them to identify primarily with the leader of the crowd (2018; p. 56). This phenomenon occurs due to a parallelism where the leader surpasses the mass and generates a unidirectional affect towards their person (2018; pp. 59-69).

Similarly, Ortega (2010) theorizes that individuals’ needs for socialization produce the aggregation of affective sentiments without feeling the responsibility of decision-making.

These theorizations lead us to contemporary theories of collective action in which individuals’ behavior is clustered around shared beliefs or common issues (Hardin, 2005; Olson, 2002; Ostrom, 2000). The difference lies in the predominant irrational component present in all of them, for which McPhail (2006) introduces a new concept: “collective behavior”. Through contact and ongoing dialogue, individuals motivated by their individuality in the pursuit of a collective spirit can aggregate themselves and act in the same direction. McPhail’s study of human behavior in crowds is based on the symbolic interactionism of Mead (1982) and Goffman (1977), which emphasizes the importance of communication and symbols perceived by society in constructing meaning and reality. According to Mead’s symbolic interactionism perspective, individuals can develop a sense of self through interaction with others.

The concepts of “dominance” and individuals’ behavior in crowds bring us to Max Weber (2002) who defines dominance in terms of the legitimacy vested in the power holder. Legitimacy lets us define dominance as the probability of finding obedience to a command without the need for coercive action. Among the different types of domination proposed by Weber, we find charismatic domination, whose source of legitimacy lies in emotions and affect towards the ruler. Charismatic domination is unstable, unable to endure over time, but highly adaptable to changes and crises. Weber describes leaders’ charisma as the ability to inspire and captivate others, often characterized by extraordinary qualities or exceptional achievements (Weber, 2002, p. 193).

Among its main characteristics, Weber (2002) considers charisma to be purely irrational, personal, critical -perceived by the followers through opposition to the status quo, imbued with fear-, theatrical -requires a staged performance to foster recognition from the followers-, revolutionary -needing to convey a change from the existing reality-, granted -an exercise of will, bestowed by the followers-, and emotive.

Pure charisma's most important characteristic is that it must be granted: individuals must recognize the charismatic leader as such. This gives rise to the leader's need for recognition, for which they will employ different strategies to acquire and maintain charisma. Over time, charismatic domination transitions from a pure type to a routinized type, which can adopt elements of other types of domination, such as traditional or bureaucratic, or a combination of both (Weber, 2002; p. 201).

When analyzing social modernity, Giddens (1994) alludes to the need to study leadership as a parallel phenomenon to political parties, which are central to modern democratic states. Charismatic leaders are necessary for democracies as they are capable of capturing mass votes within the usual democratic game (Giddens, 1994; p. 188). The most negative characteristic of these leaders is their tendency towards "Caesarism", which is necessarily corrected within parliamentary systems.

Berger and Luckmann (1994) also conceived of the figure of "heroes" who carry out deeds that become symbols and allow for the transmission of knowledge over time, legitimizing social constructs that later become social institutions (1994, p. 95). Above all, the individual must "*penetrate into specific areas of socially objectivated knowledge, not only in the narrow cognitive sense, but also in the 'knowledge' of norms, values, and even emotions*" (Berger & Luckmann, 1994, p. 101) for the survival of each role. Like Weber (2002), Berger and Luckmann also analyze legitimacy over time and encounter a similar problem. They coin the term "symbolic universes" as a way to distance individuals from everyday objectifiable reality, which constitutes a general, unobservable legitimation plane, deeply based on the abstract emotions of individuals where, as we have argued, charismatic leadership is framed and through which the masses identify.

In this regard, House (1976) theorizes about the need for charismatic leaders to represent common symbols capable of instrumentally representing collective consciousness to achieve recognition from the masses and thus shape their behavior (1976, pp. 10-15).

Subsequently, Yagil (1998) argues that charismatic leadership requires a social distance from followers to foster granted legitimacy but considering that proximity from leaders to their followers also generates trust. To address this potential contradiction, the self-concept theory developed by Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) suggests that leaders' self-perceptions can be transmitted to their followers to gain legitimacy. Followers must perceive the values and self-ideas that leaders have of themselves, which must motivate the masses, mainly through a leadership role that gives "*meaning and direction to their (followers) lives*" (Shamir et al., 1993, p. 584) and the frames (Goffman, 1986; Hartog & Verburg, 1997) implemented by leaders in their speeches to guide action towards specific goals.

As Weber stated, Shamir and colleagues also acknowledge the existence of a necessary paradigmatic situation that fosters the bestowal of charisma based on three characteristics:

the pursuit of dominant values -universal symbols (Berger & Luckmann, 1994)-, an adverse conjuncture for the achievement of goals and ideas, and extraordinary conditions that allow followers to place their self-conception onto the leader (Shamir et al., 1993; pp. 588-589).

Within the framework of the leader's perception by followers, Jayakody (2008) proposes five types of social constructs that the mass must be able to identify to bestow charisma. The first three, cognitive in nature, are based on the perception of extraordinariness -distancing from the ordinary-, the archetypes (Jung, 1970) considered the "*ideal representation of what the follower expects a leader to be*" (Jayakody, 2008; p. 839), and the leader prototype that can be built to reinforce and adapt these archetypes. The last two constructs are situated in an emotional-affective realm, consisting of respect/admiration and love/enthusiasm -constructed through the image of leaders' closeness with their followers- (Jayakody, 2008).

In addition to the followers' perception, Lindholm (2012) analyzes the behavior of charismatic leaders to achieve the desired perception from their target audience. Lindholm posits that there are socially constructed symbolic universes that represent widely accepted symbols in which charismatic deposits can reside, which leaders use in their speeches and actions to embody charisma. This way, discourse and behavior emerge as indispensable tools for charisma construction by leaders, but above all, as a means of perception by followers (Hartog and Verbug, 1997).

Willner (1984), in this line of thought, argues that myths are one of the most useful discursive tools for constructing charismatic leadership, described as symbolic constructions that serve to transmit shared values, culture, and traditions, reflecting the person who employs them. Myths are formed through "*symbols that imply more than their own meaning*" (Willner, 1984; p. 152). Therefore, symbolic language transports the individual to a parallel reality of significance (Berger & Luckmann, 1994; p. 59).

Barthes (2012) analyzes myths, with regard to this matter, as a discursive tool employed by charismatic leaders assuming that myths are the induction of a message through a series of images that allow the receiver to interpret what is being conveyed. Myths can express concepts in discourse without explicitly naming them through the implementation of rhetorical figures.

The emergence of strategies that allow followers to perceive charisma is mainly due to the diminishing importance of the "common" individual in different political systems. Their residual role has fostered a "professionalization of charisma" through political strategists who enable messages to reach societies. Thus, charismatic phenomena burst onto the political scene, especially to bring about changes in highly bureaucratized political systems mainly through media (Breuer, 1996; p. 184), which are closely interconnected with the economic field. Through the "*demagogy of spontaneity*" (Bourdieu, 1997; p. 69), media -especially with the advent of television- produce news imbued with particular opinions that shape viewers' opinions. In this sense, the economic field exerts pressure on the journalistic sphere through audience ratings, leading to the promotion of news with the greatest impact. As a result, the discourses of charismatic leaders, based on all these aforementioned characteristics, find space in the media (Breuer, 1996).

More recently, sociological research has addressed the personalization of politics as a consequence of the role of the media in political socialization (Balmas & Sheaffer, 2014; p. 992; Brants & Voltmer, 2011) and the weakening of ties between traditional political parties and voters (Garzia, 2013; Mair, 2005). From a social perspective, the personalization of politics is a shift in the orientations and affiliations of social groups toward increasingly individualized choices and preferences, with two essential aspects: an increase in the importance of individual political actors and a decrease in the importance of political parties, which take a backseat (Balmas & Sheaffer, 2014). From a political perspective, personalization is based on political leaders adopting the logic of the media to be present in political life (Garzia, 2014; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Sheaffer, 2008) which Manin (1998) named as “audience’s democracy”, and to gain legitimacy (Sheaffer, 2001).

In the case of Spain, we must consider the polarized pluralistic media model (Hallin & Mancini, 2008), characterized by a strong parallelism between the media and political power, attempts by economic agents to instrumentalize the media for political interference, and significant political interference in the media, with the state playing a major role as the main funder.

Political personalism must be accompanied by a series of characteristics attributed to media leaders, such as the appearance of showmanship/dramatization in their performances or attention to their personal traits (Farrell & Webb, 2003; Rebollo, 2017) and the use of rhetoric and care for discourse (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; p. 251). These characteristics align with those outlined for considering a leader as “charismatic” (Conger & Kanungo, 1987), as well as exposure to the media as a tool for seeking legitimacy (Breuer, 1996). Given this coincidence between the characteristics of both concepts, we have not been able to find many pieces of literature that empirically analyze the relationship. Viviani (2023) proposes a theoretical framework based on the process of personalization of populism, where the author establishes the differences between a populist and a charismatic leader. Other studies analyze the impact of personalized candidates’ communication over depersonalized ones (Meeks, 2017), or take into account the personalization and the dramatization of politics as different processes imbued in the mediatization of politics (Kissas, 2019). Furthermore, the relationship between charisma and personalization has not yet been clarified.

In addition, different studies have been conducted to understand the electoral success of our research object, Díaz Ayuso, and the effects of the personalization of politics in the Madrilenian case. Some papers analyze the impact of Díaz Ayuso on digital media news (Córdoba-Cabús et al., 2021), her political social media impact during different election campaigns (García-Beaudoux et al., 2023; Moret-Soler et al., 2022) or the way she created a digital discursive storytelling during the Covid-19 pandemic (García Santamaría, 2022). In addition, many media have addressed Díaz Ayuso as a “pop icon” (Bareño, 2021; Barriuso, 2021; Hernández-Morales, 2022) or as a “pop star” (La Sexta Columna, 2022; Minguito, 2021). Both concepts lead to Mazzoleni’s “pop politics” concept (Mazzoleni & Sfaridini, 2009) but we have not been able to find any academic source which demonstrates this assumption.

### Research Design and Methodology

Our research aims to deploy a new theoretical perspective for the analysis of the traditional concept of charisma through a qualitative methodological design. The main research question of this article is whether it is possible to obtain pure charismatic leadership in highly bureaucratized systems through the latent factor of political personalization present in our Spanish study context. To address this question, we have chosen to analyze the speeches of Isabel Díaz Ayuso, the current President of the Community of Madrid and president of Madrid's Partido Popular (PP), as the object of our investigation. The primary research objective is to analyze the construction of Isabel Díaz Ayuso's charismatic leadership through the critical analysis of her speeches in the context of ongoing political personalization. The secondary objectives of the research are to identify the elements that make up her speeches and to understand, from a holistic perspective, the logical sense they have when framed in their context, as well as why they are implemented.

To approach her charisma, we will employ Critical Discourse Analysis -CDA- (van Dijk, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2003) which serves to identify various dimensions of rhetoric and analyze Díaz Ayuso's staging in the selected speeches. We will use a constructivist inductive approach through Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glasser & Strauss, 1999), based on collecting data, codifying the speeches through indicators, and creating different dimensions. This analysis consists of a descriptive process with a three-time speech reading base. We use this methodology based on some of CDA's principles, such as discourse and society are linked by media, the discourse has an ideological effect on society, the power relations are essentially discursive, and the discourse analysis must be interpretative and explanatory (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; van Dijk, 2001).

For the speech selection, we will consider the candidate's television media exposure, defined as "the extent to which audience members have encountered specific messages or classes of messages/media content" (de Vreese & Neijens, 2016; Slater, 2004). In this way, we will approximately identify the different speeches given at the time of this exposure. The decision to use the media for the selection of speeches is based on their ability, as intermediaries, to generate frame alignments (Snow et al., 1986) between leaders and individuals, orienting the latter towards the values and objectives the leader wants to convey.

We will use the software "Verba Volant" (*Verba Volant*, n.d.-a) to select the speeches. The application transcribes the historical coverage of all news broadcasts from RTVE, particularly those from its channel "TVE1" since 2014. It allows searches of any word mentioned in the transcriptions, providing all the results from the historical series. In this case, we will use the term "Díaz Ayuso" to search for all results between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019 -the year she first ran for election- and June 27, 2023 -the present day-. During this period, the total number of the appearances of the term "Díaz Ayuso" amounts to 893.

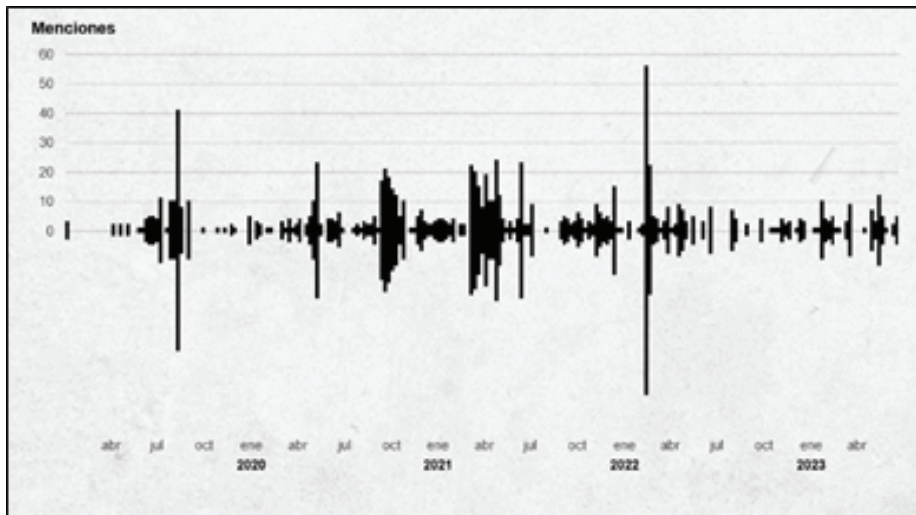
Based on Figure 1, we will implement a purposive sampling technique (Campbell et al., 2020; Palinkas et al., 2015). In this way, we can make sure that analyzed items can be reflected in our sample. We can also identify four periods in which the density and the number of Díaz Ayuso's appearances are higher than usual in TVE1 news broadcasts.



- May-September 2019. The main topic was the elections to the Madrid Assembly held on May 26.
- August-October 2020. The main topic was the management of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- March-June 2021. The main topic was Díaz Ayuso calling for early elections to the Assembly of the Community of Madrid and the results.
- January-May 2022. The main topic was the conflict between the leader of PP, Pablo Casado, and Díaz Ayuso.

To carry out the analysis, once the total appearances data provided by Verba Volant have been reviewed, we will select the speeches in which Díaz Ayuso has significant media exposure. The selected speeches are shown as follows:

- Díaz Ayuso's campaign kick-off speech in 2019<sup>1</sup>.\*
- Bilateral meeting between Díaz Ayuso and Pedro Sánchez, to discuss pandemic management (September 21, 2020).
- Díaz Ayuso's campaign closing speech in 2021 (May 2, 2021).
- Díaz Ayuso's press conference addressing the conflict with the party's leader (February 17, 2022).



*Figure 1.* Description of “Díaz Ayuso” frequencies from CIVIO  
Source: Verba Volant (2023). Civic Foundation CIVIO

We will establish a set of rhetorical dimensions commonly implemented by charismatic leaders to conduct the qualitative speech analysis. These dimensions will be accompanied by a series of codes that will be used to analyze the different speeches.

<sup>1</sup> \* Due to some audiovisual problems, we have not been allowed to access the kick-off speech during the 2019 campaign. The paper will include the second speech during this campaign, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019.



Table 1  
*Dimensions and Codes for Speech Analysis*

Dimension	Code	Attribute
Charismatic Deposits (Lindholm, 2012)	Consumption	Refers to consumption and similar activities, consumption proposals for society.
	Nation	Refers to national symbols, trying to put society together under these common symbols.
	Sport, culture and entertainment	Identification and references to prestigious people in these subjects, which implies a huge ideological and emotional deposit.
	Religion	References to religious motifs with emotional potential.
	Family-friendship	Emotions in references related to friends and family members.
	Love	Publicly expressed appreciation for others.
Mythology (Barthes, 2012)	'Vaccine'	References to small, bad situations so a bigger situation does not need to be mentioned.
	History deprivation	Delete history beyond a cited reality.
	Identification	Realities referenced are explained as an ad hominem fallacy, implying that things are a certain way merely because they might be so.
	Tautology	Definition of one reality by itself, so rational components can be stripped out of it.
	'Nini-ism'	Two opposite realities to the reality referenced are compared and defined as the same, so it is easy to deny both at the same time.
	Qualities' quantifications	A high number of realities are reduced to one quality.
	Verification	Use of proverbs and popular expressions related to a message given.
Rhetoric tools (Hartog & Verburg, 1997)	Metaphors	Symbolic references that might evoke some feelings or emotions in the public.
	Storytelling	Tells a story where the public can find the main moral values that the politician wants to transmit.
	Spins	References to limit or use frames in one or other way, depending on the intentionality.
	Contrast	Description of one reality through its opposite so emotion can be evoked.
	Puzzle options	A way to describe problems and give their solutions at the same time. Solutions must be as simple as possible.
	Positioning	References to simple subjects to show a firm opinion about them.
	Goals	Reference to distant and simple goals.
	Repetition	Continued references to simple concepts in order to frame them.

Source: own elaboration.

## Context

The selection of Díaz Ayuso's political figure is not arbitrary. Her profile fulfills an essential requirement in the analysis of charisma: in her first candidacy for the Presidency

in 2019, all media outlets echoed the fact that she was an unknown candidate, and she came close to losing the elections, yielding the worst results for PP in years.

We must consider that the Community of Madrid is a federal region in Spain where the nation's capital is located. PP has governed the Community of Madrid since 1995. In 2018, former Madrid President Cristina Cifuentes had to quit due to a corruption scandal (Aduriz & Pinheiro, 2019) and, at a national level, actual President Pedro Sánchez (PSOE) managed to carry out a motion of censure against former PP's national President Mariano Rajoy (Garea, 2018). This led to changes in the community and national level, where Pablo Casado was named National PP's President, and Díaz Ayuso -Casado's very closely related and confident person-, the new candidate for the Community of Madrid's federal elections.

The most important polls assumed that the left could govern the Community of Madrid (El País, 2018). In fact, PP was not the most-voted party, but due to an arrangement with Ciudadanos -liberal- and Vox -far right-, Díaz Ayuso managed to maintain the government in Madrid.

In 2021, she called for early elections and achieved results close to an absolute majority in the Madrid Assembly -only four deputies away from it-. More recently, in 2023, she managed to govern alone, obtaining more seats than the absolute majority in the Assembly of the Community of Madrid.

Díaz Ayuso has always been a very mediatic politician, known for her rough criticism of the Spanish national Government during the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular of President Pedro Sánchez, and for the victory she achieved during the internal power struggle in PP between herself and former PP President, Pablo Casado -who was still Díaz Ayuso's close friend-. This last struggle made Casado quit even when Díaz Ayuso was surrounded by a corruption scandal that implicated her brother and herself.

## Analysis

### General Analysis

In an initial analysis, we can observe the exact word match in the different speeches, excluding stop words and words with fewer than four letters to avoid irrelevant interpretations. Throughout the four selected speeches, the most frequently used words by Díaz Ayuso are "Spain", "Madrid", "Community", and "party" (Figure 2).

"Spain" is used as a specific reference to the Community of Madrid, with both elements – "Madrid" and "Spain"- being closely related. We can observe its terminological use in sentences, such as "Madrid is a Spain within Spain", "Madrid is Spain in Spain" (speech 2) or "we are moving Spain from these elections", "Madrid and Spain are watching us" (speech 3). While "Spain" is hardly mentioned in speeches 1 and 4, it is important to differentiate that in speech 2, Díaz Ayuso places the government of the Community and the State on equal footing, creating a paradigm in which any reference to Madrid is also an allusion to the nation, and vice versa.



We must also consider the symbolism of flags and nations employed during her speeches. On two occasions, she associates the flags of Spain and Latin American countries with events in Madrid. In speech 2, for example, she makes the following assertion:

*“When we see demonstrations, when we see images in Tel Aviv, one thinks of Israel, thinks of its President. When one sees demonstrations in Paris, one thinks of France, also thinks of its Government. The same happens with Madrid. Madrid is a Spain within Spain”.*

Another charismatic deposit she refers to is family and friendship. These allusions are framed, both positively and negatively, in relation to the cohesion of her own party. In a negative sense, she refers to internal conflicts with the national leadership and accusations of corruption against herself. In a positive sense, she emphasizes her own family and families in general as an ideological framework consistent with a conservative party like PP.

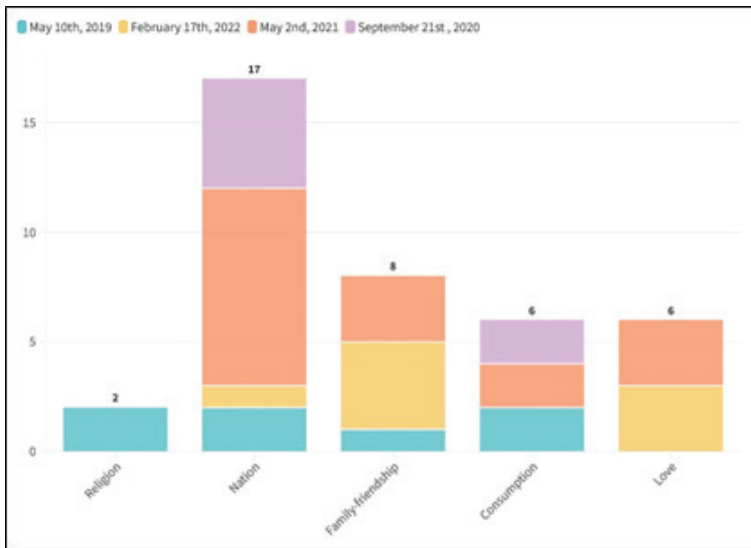


Figure 3. Distribution of allusions to charismatic deposits by speech

Source: Own elaboration

### Analysis of Mythology

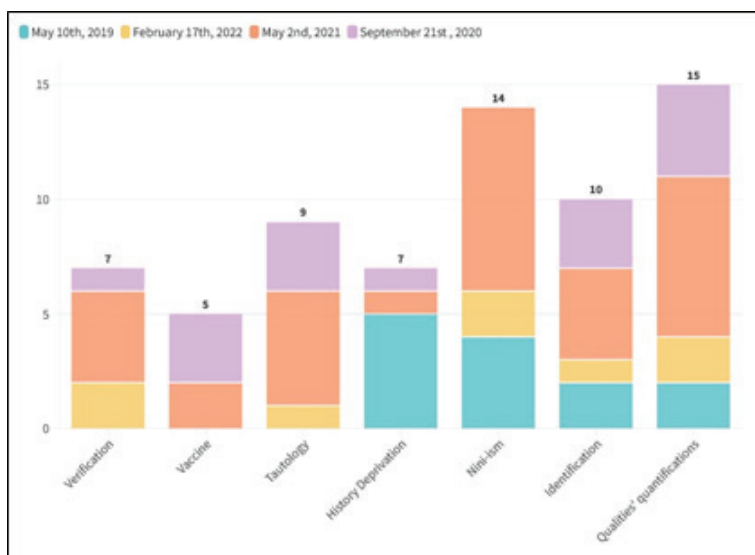
To analyze this dimension, we propose the identification and explanation of rhetorical figures proposed by Barthes (2012) that serve to compose myths. As we can observe (Figure 4), the figures that are most prevalent in Isabel Díaz Ayuso’s speeches are qualities’ quantifications and nini-isms.

Qualities’ quantifications are widely used in all speeches except one, with a significant impact on the closing campaign speech of 2021. Its usage is structured in a negative sense, to reduce the proposals of opponents to a conceptual approximation, as seen in speech 1:

*“...they have already warned us: they are going to close subsidized education, they are against special schools where parents with children with disabilities choose to study, they are against the freedom to open or close a store. They have already said it, no to the unified health area, no to educational freedom, no to subsidized education, no to special schools, no to buying when citizens want. What kind of Madrid do they intend to impose on us? But what kind of society does the left want to tell us about now?”.*

A similar discursive construction with similar components is used in speech 3. Through this rhetorical figure, Díaz Ayuso aims to portray the proposals of her opponents as something “bad” for the citizens of Madrid, opposing the formulated idea in the quote: “in freedom”. The enumeration of measures proposed by other parties is reduced to being “against freedom”; which implies “imposing”, as reflected in the conclusion of the quote. In the same speech, the candidate also employs this figure in a positive manner: she lists her own measures, reducing their quality to an unspecified number, defining the quality opposite to that of the political rival.

*“These are measures that provide freedom for each person to decide how they should act, instead of prohibiting, restraining, and fining, which is all the left knows how to do”.*



**Figure 4.** Distribution of rhetorical figures by speech.

*Source: own elaboration*

Throughout speech 2, we can find this rhetorical figure as part of a discursive strategy in which Díaz Ayuso attempts, first and foremost, to downplay the administrative management issues in the Community of Madrid that have been poorly perceived by the public, such as the lack of doctors -an autonomous competence- at the most critical moment of the pandemic in the region. This is done by quantifying the issue and reducing its significance in the overall context of the government’s actions during the pandemic. For example:

*“We closed schools, took a step forward in a very complicated situation, brought in planes, thousands of tons of supplies for our healthcare professionals, built IFEMA, converted new hotels into hospitals, and the new emergency hospital, Isabel Zendal. I would like you to be with us when we inaugurate it shortly because few capitals and few countries in the world can celebrate having a hospital and an airport together, on top of that, in the most generous healthcare system that exists; and that is the brand of Spain”.*

Lastly, speech 3 has the highest number of qualities’ quantifications and can be considered an extension of the rhetorical strategy in speech 1. In this case, the negative

sense is constructed by proposing that Pedro Sánchez is imposing his electoral program on the Community of Madrid, contrary to Díaz Ayuso's agenda. To achieve this, she enumerates all of Pedro Sánchez's measures and quantifies them in a way that leads to only one conclusion: "to obtain a majority to prevent the enumerated measures". A similar approach is applied to the allusion to pandemic protection measures, which concludes with the goal of obtaining a broad majority to avoid them.

Another rhetorical figure employed by Díaz Ayuso is nini-ism. During the first speech in the 2019 elections, the discursive strategy tends to contrast measures implemented by other parties in government with a lack of freedom or moral superiority. After mentioning the unemployment data managed by a left-wing government, for example, Díaz Ayuso concludes that they "always opposed us from continuing to grow in freedom and being a cutting-edge community and capital" (speech 1).

In speech 3, Díaz Ayuso follows a similar dynamic to the first one, but with a higher occurrence of nini-ism. The rhetorical strategy in this case is to compare the national government with communist dictatorships in other countries. She coins the term "sanchismo" in her discourse, referring to Pedro Sánchez, and compares it to communism, given the alliances formed with the political party Podemos. From this comparison emerges the slogan repeated throughout the campaign, "communism or freedom". Once the connection between communism and "sanchismo" is understood, Díaz Ayuso presents herself as the chosen reality: freedom, her campaign slogan.

In contrast, Díaz Ayuso adopts a victim stance in which she compares two realities in speech 4: the Spanish government and the left, on the one hand, as opposition that "attacks" her regional government and, on the other hand, the national leader of her party. In this way, faced with two realities that attack her, she positions herself as the victim of both, being the reality that, through the discourse, the citizen can perceive as better.

We must consider two figures that Díaz Ayuso puts into practice perfectly in speech 4: "vaccine" and "deprivation of history", accompanied by figures such as the nini-ism in a victim position, which generates an emotional impact on the listener.

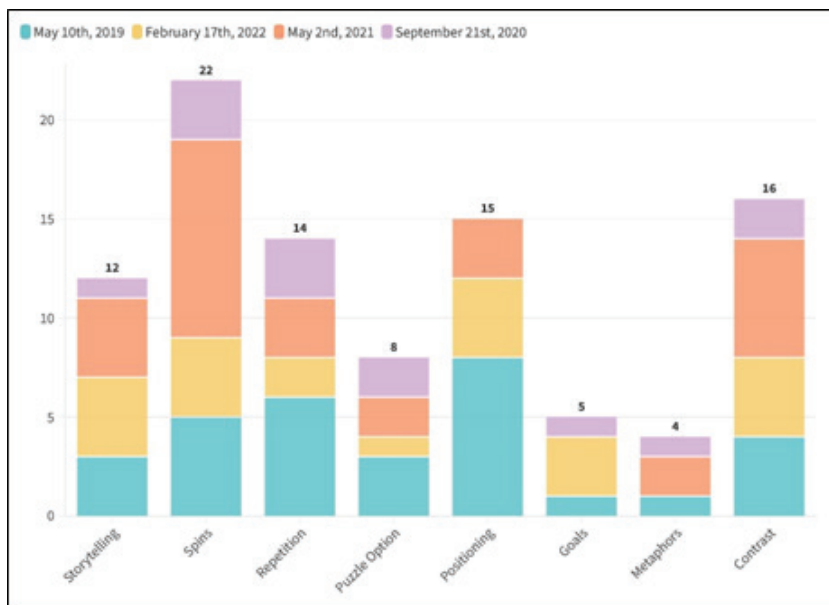
Speech 4 is a vaccine in itself since it conveys to the public a minimized idea about specific events. In particular, the conflict with the national leadership of PP arose during a COVID-19 pandemic corruption scandal that involved Díaz Ayuso and her brother. This scandal was aired as immoral by the national leader of the PP, Pablo Casado, which led to the construction of an internal conflict.

Likewise, the speech also presents itself as a "deprivation of history" since Díaz Ayuso constructs a history devoid of events that places her in the role of the victim of all the facts, proceeding to deny any plausible alternative.

#### *Analysis of rhetorical tools*

Through this dimension, our research aims to capture the role and use of different rhetorical tools (Figure 6) as proposed by Hartog and Verburg (1997).





*Figure 5.* Rhetorical Tools in each speech.  
*Source: own elaboration.*

The most used rhetorical tool is the spin technique to construct the message in a specific direction intended by the speaker.

The first identified frame is freedom, in a negative sense. In the first speech Díaz Ayuso constructs this frame by attacking the positions of political opponents, with references such as “people here do not want to be tutored or directed, they want opportunities, they want to lead their lives their own way” or “these are measures that provide freedom for everyone to decide how to move and not by prohibiting”. She also negatively frames a lack of freedom proposed by the left through phrases like “the constant rigidity of the left”.

In the second speech, the most prominent spin is “Madrid as a nation” equated with Spain. Díaz Ayuso even speaks of the Spanish public healthcare system, internationally recognized for its free and high-quality services, as the brand of Spain, comparing it to that of Madrid.

In the fourth speech, the spin revolves around the family, in two senses. First, she acknowledges that “family is the most important thing we have” and talks about the vital support she has received from her family. Then she refers to PP as a family with a negative spin. She believes that PP, which was her family, has failed and has not been loyal to her. She emphasizes that being a family in a positive sense implies loyalty.

The third speech could be considered a mixture of the previous spins. We can find clear references to her family as an essential part of her profession. She also mentions PP members and thanks them for their work on the campaign and for their loyalty. Then, she combines the remaining two spins: Madrid and freedom, with statements like “I am free

because I live in Madrid” or “I ask all Madrilenians to allow me to have a government in freedom”.

The next most frequently used rhetorical tool is contrast, through which she presents a serious problem and a simple solution. Contrasts are closely related to one of the spins: freedom.

In the first speech, Díaz Ayuso analyzes numerous problems in Madrid resulting from the Spanish government and offers freedom as a simple but applicable solution. The same occurs in the third speech, where freedom is the solution to Pedro Sánchez as the problem for Madrid.

### **Relation between Codes**

Through a coding matrix, we can examine which codes coincide with each other in our speech analysis. The most coinciding codifications are, firstly, tautologies and nation, due to the fact that Díaz Ayuso’s concept of nation involves identifying Madrid with Spain, and tautologies consist of defining reality by itself. Barthes (2012) states that through this procedure, the speaker can eliminate the rational parts of the discourse to transform it into a completely irrational message. The same occurs with the second equivalence between tautologies and spins. Díaz Ayuso employs the construction of tautologies to frame messages in a convenient sense.

The last significant equivalences between codifications are found between storytelling and nini-ism. Díaz Ayuso tends to juxtapose two realities that oppose hers, creating a story that concludes favorably for her intention while carrying out a discursive narrative.

### **Charisma Analysis**

As we have analyzed, all the tools, rhetorical figures, and references to charismatic deposits have been implemented by the President of the Community of Madrid, to varying degrees. This analysis led us to identify behaviors that coincide with the characteristics described by Weber (2002) that charismatic leadership should have.

Throughout speech 1, Díaz Ayuso attempts to articulate rhetoric that revolves around PP as an institution that has governed the Community of Madrid for a long period of time. Therefore, Díaz Ayuso presents herself as the successor to both the two previous Presidents (Esperanza Aguirre and Cristina Cifuentes) and the party leader, who had placed his trust in her. This procedure aligns with Weber’s description of the charismatic succession that must occur when the bearer of charisma disappears from the public scene (2002, p. 198). Consequently, we can understand that she does not possess any granted charisma but is in search of it.

Her discourse does not allow us to perceive her as a charismatic leader, but rather as someone who is part of an institutional ensemble, which contributes to identifying elements that call for stability. She does not oppose the established power or even criticize it. Rather than this, she focuses on making proposals against her political adversaries. Lastly, the discourse is not dramatic.

The characteristics of speech 2 remain similar to the previous one where rationality predominates. However, we can observe a more critical President that starts questioning

the status quo of reality, accusing the President of the Government of “neglect of duties”, for example.

In contrast, speech 3 presents significant differences from the previous two. On the one hand, we can find a highly personal rhetoric in which Díaz Ayuso assumes the protagonist role. There are surprising and irrational elements in the construction of the discourse, through which she showcases all the management successes achieved over the past two years. Ayuso positions herself as Madrid's heroine, stating that she has managed the pandemic by overcoming the challenges that came her way, including her main opponent, Pedro Sánchez.

On the other hand, Díaz Ayuso utilizes Pedro Sánchez to construct a revolutionary and anti-establishment narrative. She announces, in popular jargon, how she told Sánchez that she “didn't feel like” closing Madrid and the hospitality industry, and how she told her colleagues that “Madrid cannot be blackmailed”. She crafts a critical discourse against the policies carried out by the Government of the Nation.

Furthermore, Díaz Ayuso achieves a crucial discursive effect for charismatic leadership: she manages to give the appearance that charisma has already been bestowed upon her through an extensive enumeration of all the people who have worked for her during the campaign to ensure her presidency.

Finally, through speech 4, Isabel Díaz Ayuso fulfills all the Weber's charisma characteristics. In the previous speech, almost all these characteristics were already fulfilled, except for one: there was a higher leadership than hers, the national leader of the party. In fact, in speech 3, Díaz Ayuso assumes Casado's leadership.

Through speech 4, Díaz Ayuso becomes a fully charismatic leader. She no longer recognizes Casado's legitimacy, criticizing the work of the national leadership of PP and accusing them of not working in the interest of the party or the citizens.

After this, the PP's national headquarters in Madrid were filled with protesters calling for the resignation of Pablo Casado, and Díaz Ayuso emerged as a leader with bestowed charisma.



**Figure 6.** Protesters in 2022 at the national headquarters of PP.

Source: 20 Minutos (Sarriá, 2023). Retrieved on June 30, 2023 from <https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/5102148/0/la-semana-en-que-se-bloqueo-la-centralita-del-pp-un-tsunami-de-votantes-y-militantes-se-dieron-de-baja/>

## Conclusions

Isabel Díaz Ayuso has emerged as a charismatic leader in an era of increasing personalization of politics. The analyses conducted on her most impactful speeches reveal the construction of a charismatic leadership style. Both the use of rhetorical tools and the references to charismatic deposits with strong emotional appeal indicate that over time, the leader of the PP has acquired pure charismatic components aligned with her party's ideology (Christian democracy, conservative neoliberalism).

The charismatic deposits through which she has built her charisma primarily revolve around the notions of nation, consumption, and family. These deposits have been intertwined with various rhetorical figures, such as employing the nation as a tautology to eliminate rational considerations and construct a purely emotional discourse.

Furthermore, Díaz Ayuso's speeches were primarily focused on framing her own narrative, making her easily recognizable as a symbol of freedom associated with Madrid or Spain. Through these frames, she has employed spinning strategies to position the meanings associated with these concepts against her opponents, initially the left wing and subsequently Pedro Sánchez and Pablo Casado.

Among the charismatic characteristics, it can be argued that Díaz Ayuso has attempted to carry out a de-routinization of charisma. Routinized charisma exhibits characteristics opposite to those of pure charisma and often occurs in processes of institutionalization. In the paradigm of political personalization, Isabel Díaz Ayuso has gradually instrumentalized routinized charisma within her party in the Community of Madrid. Through discourse techniques and staging, she has approached what can be considered a semi-pure charisma, as described by Breuer (1996), who argues that in contemporary times, there is a fusion between legal-rational and charismatic domination.

The findings of this paper hold paramount importance within the realm of political communication, leadership studies, and the context of political personalization. They provide valuable insights into the intricate nature of political discourses as powerful instruments, wielding significant societal, political, and electoral repercussions. Charismatic leaders demonstrate their prowess in crafting speeches that effectively mobilize individuals, harnessing the potency of abstract symbolic elements deeply embedded in cultural and societal values.

### *Further research and limitations*

While the analysis presented here strongly suggests that Díaz Ayuso embodies a novel and purer form of charismatic leadership, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study. Given its inherently descriptive nature, future investigations into the realms of political personalization and charisma should take into account several critical aspects.

First and foremost, to enhance external validity, we recommend an examination of a more extensive array of speeches and media outlets. This should encompass electoral debates conducted during campaigns, a broader selection of public addresses or orations, as well as speeches preceding and succeeding the press conferences scrutinized herein. Such a comprehensive approach would facilitate a more profound comprehension of the evolving landscape of political communication inherent in the research subject.

Furthermore, future inquiries may endeavor to integrate this methodological framework with agenda-setting and framing methodologies. This holistic approach would yield a more comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay between media dynamics and the charismatic political discourses exhibited by specific candidates or party leaders.

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