

PROPAGANDA DISCOURSE OF FEAR: STRATEGIES OF SPANISH POLITICAL LEADERS IN X TO INFLUENCE THE MEDIA AGENDA (2015–2023)

Sara Rebollo-Bueno

Departamento de Comunicación y Educación, Universidad Loyola, Seville, Spain
Conceptualisation, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, project administration, software, resources, supervision, validation, visualisation, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing

Adrián Tarín-Sanz

Universidad Intercultural de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos Indígenas Amawtay Wasi, Quito, Ecuador
Data curation, formal analysis, investigation, resources, writing – original draft, writing – review & editing

ABSTRACT

In a society shaped by a culture of fear and characterised by the dynamics of the risk society, political parties increasingly employ fear as a communicative instrument to capture public attention. This article examines how Spain's major political parties utilise their official accounts on X (formerly Twitter) to influence the media agenda through messages that frame political issues as imminent threats. Drawing on a content analysis of posts published between 2015 and 2023, the study identifies both the rhetorical strategies deployed and the threats most frequently invoked — chiefly the economic crisis and separatist movements. The analysis focuses on posts containing interviews or excerpts from interviews shared by the six State-level political parties represented in the Spanish Congress of Deputies, resulting in a *corpus* of 968 units of analysis. A coding scheme based on established methodological guidelines was developed to identify the presence of fear triggers, the types of threats invoked, the thematic focus of the messages, and the propagandistic objectives. Findings reveal that the salience ascribed to particular threats varies by ideological orientation, underscoring the strategic deployment of fear in partisan communication. The study concludes that such messaging not only perpetuates a culture of fear and reshapes perceptions of security but also contributes to the fragmentation of public discourse. By adapting their rhetoric to resonate with prevailing anxieties, political parties consolidate their media visibility, reinforce ideological narratives, and shape the contours of collective concern.

KEYWORDS

fear, media agenda, propaganda, politics, X

DISCURSO DO MEDO NA PROPAGANDA: ESTRATÉGIAS DOS LÍDERES POLÍTICOS ESPANHÓIS NO X PARA INFLUENCIAR A AGENDA MEDIÁTICA (2015–2023)

RESUMO

Numa sociedade moldada por uma cultura do medo e caracterizada pelas dinâmicas da sociedade de risco, os partidos políticos recorrem cada vez mais ao medo enquanto instrumento de comunicação para captar a atenção do público. Este artigo examina como os principais partidos políticos espanhóis utilizam as suas contas oficiais no X (anteriormente Twitter) para

influenciar a agenda mediática através de mensagens que enquadram questões políticas como ameaças iminentes. Com base numa análise de conteúdo de publicações entre 2015 e 2023, o estudo identifica tanto as estratégias retóricas mobilizadas como as ameaças mais frequentemente invocadas — sobretudo a crise económica e os movimentos separatistas. A análise incide sobre publicações que contêm entrevistas ou excertos de entrevistas partilhadas pelos seis partidos políticos de âmbito estatal representados no Congresso dos Deputados de Espanha, resultando num *corpus* de 968 unidades de análise. Foi desenvolvido um esquema de codificação fundamentado em critérios metodológicos estabelecidos para identificar a presença de desencadeadores do medo, os tipos de ameaças mencionadas, o foco temático das mensagens e os objetivos de natureza propagandística. Os resultados revelam que a relevância atribuída a determinadas ameaças varia em função da orientação ideológica, sublinhando a utilização estratégica do medo na comunicação partidária. Conclui-se que este tipo de mensagens não só perpetua uma cultura do medo e molda as perceções de segurança, como também contribui para a fragmentação do discurso público. Ao adaptar a sua retórica de modo a mobilizar as ansiedades dominantes, os partidos políticos consolidam a sua visibilidade mediática, reforçam narrativas ideológicas e reconfiguram os contornos da preocupação coletiva.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

medo, agenda mediática, propaganda, política, X

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the proliferation of fear has become increasingly significant within the field of communication studies (e.g., Doona, 2021; McCrow-Young & Mortensen, 2021). The media, in particular, are frequently identified as central agents in disseminating this emotion (Rincón & Rey, 2008). Fear possesses distinct qualities that enhance its capacity to capture attention, which, in turn, makes it a valuable asset for media outlets in structuring their news coverage (Furedi, 2018). Through this process, the media can concentrate on and prioritise specific topics and content on their agendas, often in alignment with institutional or commercial interests (McCombs, 2004/2006; Saperas, 1987). A recent study by Young and Watson (2024) further demonstrates that the combined use of sensationalist crime reporting heightens public fear of victimisation, thereby eliciting favourable attitudes towards figures perceived as capable of neutralising the threat.

Scholars from various disciplines have identified a range of factors that help explain the enduring, mutually reinforcing relationship between the media and fear, extending the analytical focus to encompass broader structural dimensions. Beyond the confines of the media sphere, Western societies are increasingly shaped by what Beck (1999/2006) terms the “risk society” and what Furedi (2018) describes as a “culture of fear” — that is, a social climate characterised by pervasive uncertainty and perceived vulnerability, in which individuals are continually confronted by the spectre of imminent and often indeterminate threats (Altheide, 2017).

Within this context, and given the mobilising potential of potent emotions such as fear (Meana, 2008), political actors have likewise strategically instrumentalised it (Hill et

al., 2021). In the Spanish context, existing literature has highlighted how the far-right has successfully capitalised on fear (e.g., Bretones & Domínguez-Martí, 2023; Rebollo-Bueno, 2022), with some studies suggesting that this approach has, at times, translated into electoral gains (González-Castro, 2023).

This study explores how the leaders of Spain's principal political parties have deployed fear within their propaganda strategies across the past five general elections. It assesses their efforts to cultivate an atmosphere of alarm and to embed their narratives within the media agenda. In doing so, it offers comparative insights into how fear is mobilised by different political formations, shedding light on the emotional undercurrents of contemporary political communication.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. THE PROFITABILITY OF FEAR IN POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

The phenomenon of propaganda has been examined from a range of theoretical perspectives (e.g., Herreros Arconada, 1989; Tarín-Sanz, 2018). This study, however, adopts the framework proposed by Pineda (2006), who defines propaganda as a communicative process through which an ideological message is transmitted with the aim of “gain[ing], maintain[ing], or reinforc[ing] a position of power” (p. 228). This conceptualisation aligns with a broader tradition that views propaganda as inherently persuasive (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2015; Qualter, 1962), recognising emotions as instrumental tools in furthering its objectives (Pratkanis & Aronson, 1992/1994). At first glance, the strategic deployment of fear — often classified as a negative emotion — might appear counter-intuitive within persuasive communication aimed at eliciting positive outcomes. Yet, its persuasive potential lies precisely in the motivation it generates: the desire to overcome fear by neutralising the threat or mitigating its anticipated consequences.

People do want to be “saved” and “freed”, but they want to be saved and freed from fear (...). This is what makes the messages of fear so compelling and important for public policy and the fabric of our social life. (Altheide, 2017, pp. 15–16)

Fear is, in fact, a primary emotion integral to human survival (Sarráis Oteo, 2014), grounded in a fundamental “human need” to remain alert to potential threats to protect oneself. It is precisely this evolutionary function that renders fear a valuable asset in propaganda strategies (López Zapico & Moreno Cantano, 2016). The nexus between fear and propaganda is operationalised through a range of communicative techniques, one of the most prominent being polarisation (Huici Módenes, 2017). This approach seeks to impose a Manichaeian worldview, sharply dividing reality into antagonistic camps — an “us” versus “them”, or a “virtuous in-group” pitted against a “malevolent out-group” (Bauman, 2006/2007; Brown, 1963/1995).

Closely related is the technique of enemy construction, which emphasises the threatening attributes of opponents to fabricate a distorted, often dehumanising image of political adversaries or broader social groups targeted by the sender (Bisquerra, 2017). A further technique is the “saviour” strategy, wherein the propagandist positions themselves as the sole credible actor capable of shielding the public from imminent threats (Charaudeau, 1997/2003; Eggs, 2011).

Nevertheless, not all phenomena possess equal potential to evoke politically mobilising fear. Audiences are heterogeneous, and what instils fear in one segment of the population may leave another largely unaffected. Drawing on a Bourdieusian perspective, propagandists often “structure the structured” — that is, they amplify pre-existing anxieties embedded in social experience. In this way, fear of the unknown may be harnessed to legitimise xenophobic political agendas (Haner et al., 2019) or used to escalate panic during events such as pandemics, thereby justifying heightened social control or reinforcing geopolitical antagonisms (Nguyet & Striphas, 2021).

2.2. X: THE POLITICAL SOCIAL NETWORK PAR EXCELLENCE. INTERACTION AS FEAR FEEDBACK

Although numerous studies have examined the use of fear-based strategies in political propaganda, this research focuses specifically on their digital transmission — namely, through social media platforms, particularly X (formerly Twitter). This platform is widely regarded as the “political social network par excellence” (Fernández-Gómez et al., 2018, p. 20), not least because it hosts the majority of political leaders and parties as active users.

One key reason for its widespread political adoption is its ability to shape both the media agenda and public discourse. X stands out for its rapid dissemination of information, making it an ideal amplifier of political messaging (Vázquez-Barrio & Campos-Zabala, 2020). For this reason, Herrero and Römer (2014) regard it as “fundamental for understanding the dynamics of the public agenda and predicting the topics with the greatest impact on the media agenda” (p. 93).

While academic debate continues over whether traditional or digital media exert greater influence over agenda-setting (Carrasco-Hermida, 2024), the reciprocal dynamic between the two is increasingly evident. In practice, journalists often source trending topics from X, just as discourse on X is frequently shaped by coverage in legacy media (Martínez-Fresneda Osorio & Sánchez-Rodríguez, 2022).

Beyond this debate, the rationale for prioritising X in this study is grounded in recent research linking the political efficacy of fear to the affordances of social media. Thorbjørnsrud and Figenschou (2022), for example, attribute the public’s growing reliance on social platforms to a broader crisis of trust in traditional media. This has led segments of the population to prefer social media for “informing” themselves about migration flows, under the belief that mainstream outlets obscure the truth about the perceived threat of population replacement. Nor and Gale (2021) have noted a parallel trend regarding the so-called “Islamisation”. Finally, Güler and Piazza (2024) conclude

that conspiracy thinking and fear are more likely to spread via media that foster high levels of user interaction — such as digital social networks (Bustos-Díaz, 2024; Chaves-Montero, 2023).

2.3. X's PLATFORM AFFORDANCES AND THE DISSEMINATION OF FEAR-BASED DISCOURSE

The concept of “affordance” makes it possible to understand how the design of digital platforms conditions the circulation of particular discourses, as it refers to digital spaces in which we coexist and which are created to steer users’ behaviour in specific ways (e.g., Bras Ruiz, 2024; Davisson & Leone, 2018). The concept was first employed by Gibson (1979) to describe animal ecosystems, but was later transferred to the field of new technologies. In digital political communication, this approach emphasises that platforms are not neutral spaces but socio-technical environments whose structural characteristics shape the production, visibility, and dissemination of content.

X exhibits a set of affordances that are particularly conducive to the spread of fear-based discourses — as well as other negative emotions, such as anger (Cook et al., 2012; García-Gavilanes et al., 2017). The speed with which messages can be published and re-distributed, the public visibility of interactions, and an algorithmic logic oriented toward engagement tend to privilege brief, emotionally intense content (e.g., Uğur et al., 2025). These dynamics reinforce messages that invoke threat, risk, or urgency, facilitating their amplification in highly polarised political contexts.

On highly interactive platforms like X, these dynamics create feedback loops that extend the reach of alarmist discourses and embed them more deeply in public debate, making the platform a central site for analysing fear as a communicative strategy. Considering the above, the general objective of this study is to determine which threats are part of the digital conversation initiated by the leaders of Spain’s main political parties. This general objective is complemented by specific objectives (SO):

- SO1: identify which leaders make the most use of fear in the new multiparty political landscape;
- SO2: identify which threats and/or dangers are most used by each political leader.

Additionally, given that fear is a contextual emotion (Rimé, 2009/2011), the following research question is posed: are electoral/non-electoral periods determining factors for the instrumentalisation of threats by Spanish political leaders?

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1. DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH TOOL

To address the research objectives and questions, a quantitative methodology, specifically content analysis, was employed. A coding sheet was developed in accordance with the guidelines of Krippendorff (1980/1990) and Bardin (1977/1996), enabling systematic

data collection and classification. Six variables were operationalised and organised into two analytical blocks: (a) the presence of fear and (b) the theme and propagandistic objective.

Given the inherent complexity of quantifying emotions, fear triggers were categorised with reference to psychological frameworks, placing particular emphasis on the sender's communicative intent. Accordingly, the identification of a fear-inducing trigger was taken as indicative of the strategic use of fear. The analytical variables applied in this study have been employed for similar purposes in prior research (e.g., Rebollo-Bueno, 2025). Specifically, the first set of variables aims to quantify the use of fear and how propagandists reference it. The second set of variables, in turn, allows the coding sheet to identify the themes and propaganda objectives of the source. This approach enables the discernment of the fear strategies employed by each of the political parties under analysis, thereby enabling systematic comparisons between them. The variables are clustered into analyses of the presence of emotion and of the theme and propagandistic objective.

Analysis of the presence of emotion:

- Triggers of fear (Martín-Díaz, 2011): (a) perception of danger, (b) intense negative stimuli, (c) notable and new stimuli, (d) special evolutionary dangers¹, (e) preceding stimuli from social interactions, (f) conditioned frightening stimuli, (g) none, (h) undetermined, or (i) other/s (open field);
- Is fear used in the piece?: (a) yes, (b) no, or (c) undetermined;
- Danger/threat used to generate fear (De-Castella & McGarty, 2011): (a) terrorism, (b) unemployment, (c) immigration/migration, (d) economic crisis/recession, (e) climate change, (f) undetermined, or (g) other/s (open field).

Analysis of the theme and propagandistic objective:

- Theme (e.g., Aladro-Vico & Requeijo-Rey, 2020): (a) animal rights, (b) human/civil rights, (c) judicial processes or crimes, (d) economy and business, (e) education, (f) culture, (g) environment, (h) Europe, (i) government, (j) health/social welfare, (k) immigration, (l) defense/military, (m) religion, (n) science and technology, (o) conflicts/wars, (p) world news, (q) national news, (r) infrastructure, (s) campaigns and/or political parties, (t) norms/values, (u) corruption, (v) media, (w) Spanish nationalism/patriotism, (x) Catalan nationalism/independence/separatism, (y) Basque nationalism/independence/separatism, (z) other non-Spanish nationalism/independence/separatism, (aa) gender issues/feminism, (ab) none, (ac) undetermined, and (ad) other/s;
- Function/objective of the message (e.g., Bustos-Díaz & Ruiz-del-Olmo, 2016): (a) reflects a news story, (b) stance/position of an individual politician, (c) stance/position of a political party, (d) criticise/discuss a topic, (e) request public opinion, (f) give advice/help, (g) give recognition/thanks, (h) personal matter, (i) humor, (j) highlight achievements, (k) none, (l) undetermined, and (m) other;
- Medium of communication: open variable.

To verify the instrument's reliability, an intercoder reliability test was conducted using Krippendorff's (1980/1990) alpha, yielding $\alpha = 0.87$, corresponding to an estimated raw agreement of approximately 92%, indicating strong and consistent coding across all variables. The coding process was carried out by the authors of the article, with both acting as coders. To ensure accurate and reliable coding, and in accordance with Krippendorff's recommendations, the coding sheet and the underlying codebook were tested by three

¹ Special evolutionary dangers are those that emerge as humans evolve as a species and are elicited by novel stimuli that arise over time. For instance, the prospect of death or infection due to COVID-19 was inconceivable only a few years ago, yet it has now become a concern in everyday life.

individuals external to the study, and by the authors themselves. Based on the preliminary test results, discrepancies were analysed and discussed, and the codebook was refined accordingly to ensure a shared and unambiguous understanding among the coders. As a result, optimal agreement was achieved in the initial test, as measured by Krippendorff's parameters, largely due to the clarity and robustness of the codebook. For data analysis, Excel 16.65 and IBM SPSS Statistics 26 were employed, facilitating frequency analysis and the application of the Pearson chi-square test, a non-parametric statistical procedure. The latter was used to assess whether statistically significant relationships existed between variables.

4. SAMPLE

The content analysis was conducted on posts published on X by the six State-level political parties with representation in the Spanish Congress of Deputies: Partido Popular (PP), Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), Ciudadanos (Cs), Unidas Podemos (UP), Vox, and Sumar. Although Cs currently holds no parliamentary representation and Sumar was only founded in 2023, their inclusion is justified by the temporal scope of the study, which begins in 2014 — the onset of Spain's new multiparty landscape (Simón, 2018) — and concludes with the most recent general election held in July 2023.

Only posts containing interviews and/or excerpts from interviews were considered, as this journalistic genre allows political actors to actively shape both the political process and the media agenda (McNair, 2003). Each full interview and/or excerpt was treated as a single unit of analysis.

The study specifically focuses on the five general elections held since 2014: (a) 20 December 2015, (b) 26 June 2016, (c) 28 April 2019, (d) 10 November 2019, and (e) 23 July 2023. To gather samples from the electoral period, 15 days of the campaign and 15 days of the pre-campaign were selected. For the non-electoral period, the sample comprised 15 days before the official call for elections as published in the Official State Gazette, and 15 days following the election date. Each period, therefore, comprises 30 days. The final *corpus* comprises 968 units of analysis (see Table 1).

	CIUDADANOS	UNIDAS PODEMOS	PARTIDO POPULAR	PARTIDO SOCIALISTA OBRERO ESPAÑOL	SUMAR	VOX	TOTAL
20 December 2015	21	0	0	0	-	6	27
26 June 2016	15	0	0	0	-	3	18
28 April 2019	85	113	62	16	-	51	327
10 November 2019	131	181	61	46	-	46	465
23 July 2023	-	-	17	32	112	114	275
Total	222	294	140	94	112	220	968

Table 1. Units of analysis by party and elections

5. RESULTS

The analysis reveals that fear is present in 29.64% of the sample, indicating that while its instrumentalisation is not predominant, it remains a notable feature. Moreover, as illustrated in Table 2, its use has followed an upward trajectory, rising from 1.4% during the 2015 general election to 48.8% in 2023. The parties that most frequently employ fear-based rhetoric are Vox (43.2%), followed by the PP (38.6%), PSOE (36.2%), and Sumar (34.8%). This is particularly striking given that Sumar surpassed both Cs and UP in its first and only electoral participation (2023).

		CIUDADANOS	UNIDAS PODEMOS	PARTIDO POPULAR	PARTIDO SOCIALISTA OBRERO ESPAÑOL	SUMAR	VOX	TOTAL
Use of fear	20 December 2015	2.6	-	-	-	-	3.2	1.4
	26 June 2016	5.3	-	-	-	-	3.2	1.7
	28 April 2019	29.0	25.9	33.3	8.8	-	12.6	17.8
	10 November 2019	63.2	74.1	40.7	23.5	-	13.7	30.3
	23 July 2023	-	-	25.9	67.6	100.0	67.4	48.8
Total use of fear		17.1	9.1	38.6	36.2	34.8	43.2	29.64 (287)
No use of fear		82.9	90.9	61.4	63.8	65.2	56.8	70.36
Total		22.9	30.37	14.5	9.7	11.6	22.7	100.0 (968)

Table 2. Frequency (%) of the use of fear in interviews or excerpts

Furthermore, although the aggregate data show a quantitatively balanced and cross-cutting use of fear across the ideological spectrum, the temporal analysis reveals that the Socialist Party incorporated this strategy later than the right-wing parties. This pattern is particularly evident in the most recent electoral contest, where its adoption intensifies significantly. The following excerpt, featuring Santiago Abascal (Vox) on esRadio, serves as an illustrative example of the strategic use of fear:

it cannot be that in Catalonia, in the morning, Carlos Sastre, a murderer, leads demonstrations, in the afternoon Otegi is interviewed on TV3, and at night, only what happened can happen, which is that Barcelona burns again and is once again taken over by street terrorism. (Vox [@Vox], October 29, 2019; https://x.com/vox_es/status/1189133102716739585)

Concerning the comparative data between the electoral and non-electoral periods, there is a quantitative imbalance in the number of interviews: 21.2% of the sample pertains to the latter period. This suggests that political parties show less interest in disseminating such discursive content during the non-electoral period, and, consequently, that the use of fear as a rhetorical tool is less prevalent (10.5%). In this context, Cs (15.8%) and Vox (13.7%) are the parties most likely to capitalise on fear during that period.

According to the screening variable, the predominant fear triggers are “perception of harm/danger” (76.3%) and “intense negative stimuli” (36.2%), both of which are used by all parties (Table 3).

	CIUDADANOS	UNIDAS PODEMOS	PARTIDO POPULAR	PARTIDO SOCIALISTA OBRERO ESPAÑOL	SUMAR	Vox	TOTAL*
Perception of harm/danger	100.0	100.0	87.0	85.0	56.4	58.9	76.3
Intense stimuli	26.3	7.4	42.6	14.7	43.6	49.5	36.2
Conditioned fear stimuli	0.0	3.7	16.7	5.9	0.0	2.1	4.9
New and notable stimuli	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.9	0.0	2.1	1.4
Evolutionary dangers	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.9	0.0	0.0	0.7
Total	13.2 (38)	9.4 (27)	18.8 (54)	11.8 (34)	13.6 (39)	33.2 (95)	100.0 (287)

Table 3. Frequency (%) of fear triggers

Note. *The sum of the totals is greater than the sample because more than one category could be marked per variable. From now on, this will be indicated with an asterisk.

In fact, the Pearson chi-square test reveals significant relationships with both triggers: $\chi^2(5) = 49.514$; $p < .001$ and $\chi^2(5) = 27.213$; $p < .001$, respectively, suggesting a frequent combined use of both triggers. An example of this is a fragment from an RTVE interview with Pedro Sánchez (PSOE), in which he warns about the damage caused to Spanish society by his political rivals:

Vox was a creature of Aznar. Vox was created by Aznar to weaken Mariano Rajoy's political project. And it has got out of hand for the Partido Popular. Right now, we are seeing a Partido Popular that is unable to stop, and that also doesn't want to stop, the far-right. (PSOE [@PSOE], November 8, 2019; <https://twitter.com/PSOE/status/1192728149349535744>)

Regarding the third variable, the dangers/threats identified by the political parties (Table 4), it is important to note that the "other" category is subdivided into additional options when an unforeseen threat is mentioned in more than five units of analysis. The most frequent threats include the "economic crisis" (19.2%) and "independence/separatism" (13.6%). In the latter case, the data reveal an ideological pattern: the most left-leaning parties (UP and Sumar) never framed the territorial issue as a threat.

	CIUDADANOS	UNIDAS PODEMOS	PARTIDO POPULAR	PARTIDO SOCIALISTA OBRERO ESPAÑOL	SUMAR	Vox	TOTAL*
Economic crisis	2.6	48.1	27.8	11.8	17.9	15.8	19.2
Separatism	13.2	0.0	27.8	5.9	0.0	17.9	13.6
Independence movement	0.0	0.0	5.6	0.0	0.0	31.6	11.5
Immigration	7.9	0.0	16.7	0.0	0.0	21.1	11.1
Terrorism	0.0	0.0	0.0	36.4	41.0	0.0	9.8
Machismo	15.8	0.0	18.5	5.9	7.7	4.2	8.7
Unemployment	0.0	0.0	1.9	0.0	0.0	25.3	8.7
Gender policies	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.2	7.7
Globalism	0.0	0.0	9.3	0.0	0.0	16.8	7.3
Communism	31.6	0.0	16.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.3

Violence	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	48.7	0.0	6.6
Neoliberalism	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.6	28.2	0.0	6.3
Far-right	0.0	3.7	5.6	8.8	12.8	3.2	5.2
Corruption	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.6	23.1	0.0	5.2
Homophobia	10.5	0.0	5.6	0.0	0.0	5.3	4.2
Coup d'état	15.8	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.2	3.8
Destruction of the State	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.5	3.5
Pedophilia	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	20.5	0.0	2.8
Drug trafficking	0.0	0.0	3.8	5.9	5.1	0.0	2.1
Climate change	0.0	7.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.7
Austerity cuts	21.1	48.1	5.6	20.6	5.1	18.9	17.8
Others	0.0	0.0	0.0	23.5	5.1	0.0	3.5
Total	13.2 (38)	9.4 (27)	18.8 (54)	11.8 (34)	13.6 (39)	33.2 (95)	100.0 (287)

Table 4. Frequency (%) of threats/dangers

“Immigration” — mentioned by Vox (31.6%) and the PP (5.6%) — and “terrorism” — discussed by Vox (21.1%), PP (16.7%), and Cs (7.9%) — are also issues that the conservative spectrum usually utilises to stir fear among their audiences. Conversely, except for UP², progressive parties tend to associate the possible victory of their opponents with a regression to far-right — Sumar (28.2%) and PSOE (20.6%) — and misogynistic — Sumar (41.0%) and PSOE (36.4%) — positions. This ideological stratification underscores the political battle over narrative construction, with parties seeking to shape the media agenda through differentiated associations tailored to their target electorates. And also how different conjunctures and prospects of governance affect the selection of these frames: for example, at times when the traditional right could win elections on its own, left-wing parties (such as UP) more often resorted to the “economic crisis” or “austerity cuts” as threats (economic issues), whereas when the far-right could enter government, this discourse shifted toward dangers related to the rollback of rights (identity-related issues).

Regarding the most frequently mentioned and ideologically transversal threat — the economic crisis — there is a significant relationship with the parties ($\chi^2(5) = 25.870$; $p < .001$). This is exemplified in Yolanda Díaz’s (Sumar) statement on La Sexta: “Feijóo’s proposal, with his electoral programme of a widespread tax cut, will bankrupt our country, driving us into a recession” (Sumar [@sumar], 18 July 2023; <https://x.com/sumar/status/1681197653307080704>).

In the temporal evolution of these threats (Figure 1), a growing trend in fear-based rhetoric is evident, alongside an increasing diversity of perceived threats; only the “economic crisis” and “violence” have seen a decrease in mentions in the most recent elections. This may be due to the economic crisis being more distant in time, and the focus on violence during the 2019 elections, when independence/separatism was a key issue linked to violent acts. Furthermore, no significant differences in threat types were observed between the electoral and non-electoral periods.

² This may be because in the elections in which the far-right had the greatest chance of coming to power (2023), UP had already been electorally incorporated into Sumar.

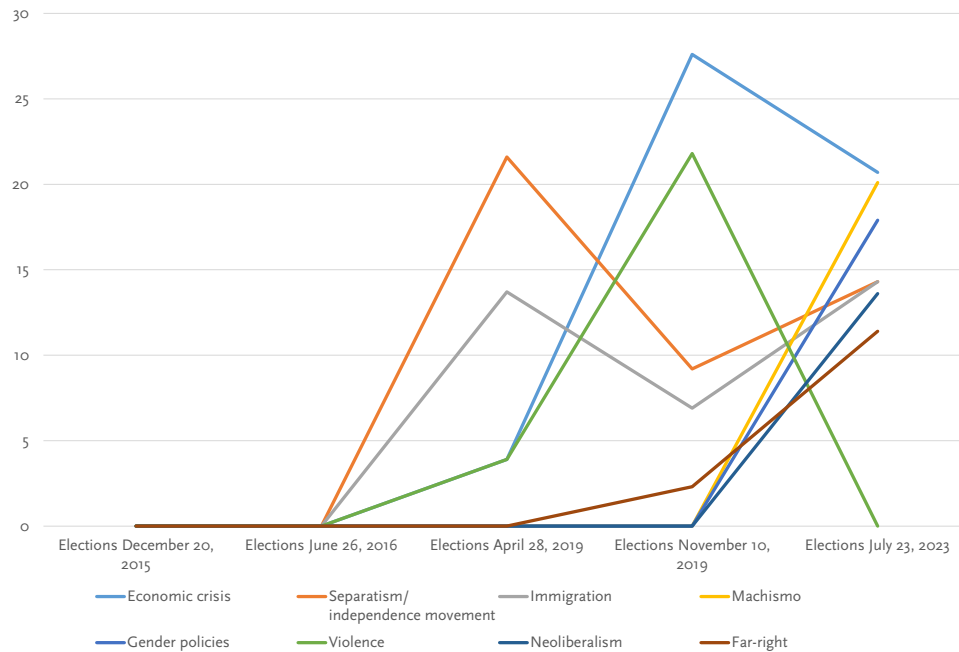


Figure 1. Evolution of the use of threats/dangers in different elections (>25% in any of the parties)

Regarding the topics (Table 5), there is a clear correspondence with the identified threats (Table 4). Thus, “economy and business” (27.4%) — with a significant relationship ($\chi^2(5) = 36.629$; $p < .001$) — and “Catalan separatism” (23.7%) dominate public discourse. These are followed by gender issues (20.2%), and not by immigration. This discrepancy may be because feminism, as a topic, is also used as a pretext to problematise phenomena such as immigration — or example, by criminalising foreigners who are allegedly responsible for more cases of gender-based violence — as well as due to the distinction between “machismo” and “gender policies”, both framed under feminism but perceived as threats depending on the sender’s ideology.

	CIUDADANOS	UNIDAS PODEMOS	PARTIDO POPULAR	PARTIDO SOCIALISTA OBRERO ESPAÑOL	SUMAR	Vox	TOTAL*
Economy and business	7.9	37.0	29.6	27.3	61.5	17.0	27.4
Catalan nationalism/independence	63.2	0.0	40.7	8.8	0.0	20.0	23.7
Gender issues/feminism	0.0	0.0	1.9	35.3	48.7	27.4	20.2
Government	18.4	33.3	20.4	2.9	0.0	3.2	10.8
Campaigns and/or political parties	2.6	3.7	7.4	29.4	17.9	7.4	10.5
Immigration	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.1	7.3
Corruption	0.0	14.8	3.7	8.8	12.8	2.1	5.6
Europe	0.0	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	12.6	4.9
Spanish nationalism/patriotism	0.0	0.0	3.7	0.0	2.6	11.6	4.9
Norms/values	2.6	0.0	1.9	8.8	0.0	8.4	4.5
Environment	0.0	3.7	0.0	2.9	5.1	5.3	3.5
Judicial processes/crimes	0.0	0.0	1.9	0.0	15.4	2.1	3.1

Basque nationalism/independence	0.0	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	6.3	2.8
Conflicts/wars	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.9	0.0	1.1	1.0
Total	13.2 (38)	9.4 (27)	18.8 (54)	11.8 (34)	13.6 (39)	33.2 (95)	100.0 (287)

Table 5. Frequency (%) of the topics

Furthermore, the analysed pieces usually serve the function (Table 6) of “criticising/discussing an issue” (70%), with a significant relationship across all parties ($\chi^2(5) = 23.292$; $p < .001$); that is, parties usually use other formats to explain their official positions on any given issue (probably press conferences or official statements), just as political leaders do not usually express their personal positions and instead limit themselves to using interviews to comment, from a party-centered logic, on the issues raised by journalists. The journalistic genre used to obtain the data can indeed shape the results in relation to the piece’s purposes. An example of this is the following excerpt from Pablo Casado (PP) on Antena 3: “since Pedro Sánchez has been in office, there are 126,000 more unemployed people (...). The same thing happened in the 2008 campaign — what happened? Three and a half million unemployed and a recession that left us with a bailout tied with a bow” (PP [@ppopular], 2 April 2019; <https://twitter.com/ppopular/status/1113183077306474496>).

	CIUDADANOS	UNIDAS PODEMOS	PARTIDO POPULAR	PARTIDO SOCIALISTA OBRERO ESPAÑOL	SUMAR	Vox	TOTAL*
Criticise/discuss an issue	60.5	48.1	57.4	76.5	92.3	75.8	70.0
Party positioning	34.2	48.1	46.3	26.5	0.0	16.8	26.5
Individual politician positioning	5.3	0.0	1.9	0.0	28.2	40.0	18.1
Report a news item	0.0	3.7	1.9	8.8	0.0	0.0	1.7
Total	13.2 (38)	9.4 (27)	18.8 (54)	11.8 (34)	13.6 (39)	33.2 (95)	100.0 (287)

Table 6. Function/purpose of the piece

Lastly, although the interviews were granted across various programmes, Informativos Telecinco (Mediaset) is the most frequently used (8.1%). Only UP deviates from this trend, with data even more dispersed. The predominance of Informativos Telecinco — albeit below 10% — could be due to its media group’s aim to be cross-cutting, without showing a clear ideological stance (Ramírez-Dueñas & Vinuesa-Tejero, 2020).

However, ideology resists being irrelevant in party decision-making, and choosing the most “appropriate” outlet to disseminate a narrative is undoubtedly a political matter. Thus, Cs shows a preference for Cope, the PP for TreceTV, and Vox for OkDiario. These outlets have clearly aligned themselves with conservative positions (Masip et al., 2020; Niñoles-Galván & Ortega-Giménez, 2020). Regarding Vox, the party also engages influencers such as InfoVlogger and Wallstreet Wolverine. Its extensive use of social media (Bustos-Díaz, 2024) aligns with its strategy of presenting itself as a victim of traditional media, which, according to the party, distorts its discourse and denies it visibility

(Hernández & Fernández, 2019). For its part, Sumar favours La Sexta, a progressive network owned by Atresmedia, which seeks to appeal to a broad and moderate ideological spectrum (Humanes et al., 2021).

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Western political systems are based on pluralist democracy — that is, the belief that citizens will organise themselves to represent the diversity of society. However, electoral and governance logics can methodologically homogenise party competition, smoothing out some of their ideological differences. One such convergence concerns the use of fear (e.g., Furedi, 2018). Over the last five general elections, all State-level parties with parliamentary representation have employed this tool for mobilisation purposes — SO1 (Meana, 2008) —, even if its quantitative presence has been limited. While it is true that the conservative spectrum is more inclined to use it — Vox (43.2%), PP (38.6%) —, the gap with progressive parties is narrow — PSOE (36.2%), Sumar (34.8%). Only Cs and UP, which did not participate in the most recent elections, made minimal use of it. These results broaden the scope of studies on the propagandistic use of fear in European parliamentary politics, since literature on this issue has often focused on so-called “populist” parties, rather than treating it as an inherent feature of electoral competition (Bonansinga, 2022; Hloušek et al., 2024; Özer & Kaçar Aşçı, 2021). Only in the Italian case is a plurality of political parties taken into account, leading to the conclusion that fear-based discourse is a strategy more frequently used by the far-right (Martella & Bracciale, 2022).

Similarly, regarding the mentioned threats and the themes within which they are framed, there is also an apparent consensus: the risk of an economic crisis (SO2) — in a country still suffering the aftermath of the 2008 recession — features prominently in the analysed interviews. However, when it comes to how these fears are leveraged, ideological differences do emerge. One illustrative example is feminism, one of the most widely discussed topics across the board. This issue, which appears frequently in the analysed content, is used by conservative parties to frame gender policies as a threat, whereas their progressive counterparts identify machismo as the real danger.

In this way, both the economy and feminism were topics addressed by all parties. It could be argued that they were included in the media agendas imperatively, as matters of general interest that, whether desired or not, could not be omitted. However, we find threats that are more frequently discussed and predominantly included in the public discourse by right-wing parties, such as independence (13.6%), immigration (11.5%), or terrorism (11.1%). The left, with less success, attempted to include neoliberalism (6.6%), the far-right (6.3%), and homophobia (5.2%) on the agenda.

Results suggest that the use of fear does not contribute to the construction of a shared agenda, but rather to the formation of parallel agendas that fragment the public debate. As shown in Table 4 and Table 5, each party prioritises different threats and issues, thereby constructing divergent diagnoses of social reality that converge only sparingly.

Whereas conservative and far-right parties emphasise threats such as immigration, terrorism, or territorial disintegration, progressive parties focus their fear-based rhetoric on risks associated with the rollback of rights, the rise of the far-right, or gender inequalities. This differentiation reinforces audience segmentation and hinders the existence of a shared deliberative space, thereby contributing to the fragmentation of the public sphere.

Results also provide a negative answer to the research question: although fewer interviews are aired outside the electoral campaign, there are no significant differences between the electoral and non-electoral periods regarding the exploitation of fear. The only factor that distinguishes their uses is ideology. This aligns with the idea that identities can be constructed through fear (Farré-Coma, 2005), in this case, through political issues.

In short, the main political leaders find in fear — an emotion that is part of the recipients' reality — a formula to attempt to set the agenda, in a cycle of overexposure that could feed what has been termed the “society of risk”. Thus, the exploitation of fear for political purposes has been classified as undemocratic (Furedi, 2018), both for its capacity to control and for its skill in monopolising the audience's thoughts (Ekman, 2007).

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has methodological limitations that should be acknowledged. Analysis was restricted to interviews to explore the role of political propaganda in both party strategies and in shaping the media agenda. Nevertheless, examining other types of material, such as social media posts or campaign spots, could offer additional insights, for example, into how political actors construct messages independently of media intermediaries. Similarly, the visual dimension of communication was not considered, which might provide a deeper understanding of how interviewees position themselves within the broader media context; the present study, however, focuses exclusively on textual content. Quantifying emotions remains inherently challenging, and while this approach allows for the systematic examination of message content, it does not capture the actual effects these messages may have on audiences.

REFERENCES

- Aladro-Vico, E., & Requeijo-Rey, P. (2020). Discurso, estrategias e interacciones de Vox en su cuenta oficial de Instagram en las elecciones del 28-A. Derecha radical y redes sociales. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, (77), 203–229. <https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2020-1455>
- Altheide, D. (2017). *Creating fear: News and the construction of crisis*. Routledge.
- Bardin, L. (1996). *Análisis de contenido* (C. Suárez, Trans.). Akal. (Original work published 1977)
- Bauman, Z. (2007). *Miedo líquido: La sociedad contemporánea y sus temores* (A. S. Mosquera, Trans.). Paidós. (Original work published 2006)
- Beck, U. (2006). *La sociedad del riesgo mundial* (J. Navarro Pérez, D. Jiménez Sánchez, & M. Rosa Borrás, Trans.). Paidós. (Original work published 1999)

- Bisquerra, R. (2017). *Política y emoción. Aplicaciones de las emociones a la política*. Pirámide.
- Bonansinga, D. (2022). Insecurity narratives and implicit emotional appeals in French competing populisms. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 35(1), 86–106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2021.1964349>
- Bras Ruiz, I. I. (2024). Sociedad, cultura digital y affordance. *IE: Revista de Investigación Educativa de la Rediech*, 15, Article e1915. https://doi.org/10.33010/ie_rie_rediech.v15i0.1915
- Bretones, M., & Domínguez-Martí, M. (2023). La presencia del miedo y la construcción de enemigos en el discurso de Vox en 2019. *Anuario del Conflicto Social*, (14), 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1344/ACS2022.14.8>
- Brown, J. (1995). *Técnicas de persuasión* (R. Mazarrasa, Trans.). Alianza. (Original work published 1963)
- Bustos-Díaz, J. (2024). Una campaña audiovisual: Análisis de las elecciones generales del año 2023 en redes sociales. *Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 70, 37–57. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/analisi.3690>
- Bustos-Díaz, J., & Ruiz-del-Olmo, F. (2016). La imagen en Twitter como nuevo eje de la comunicación política. *Opción*, 32(7), 271–290.
- Carrasco-Hermida, S. (2024). Análisis comparativo de las agendas ciudadanas y mediáticas en Ecuador durante el primer año de mandato del presidente Guillermo Lasso. *Obra Digital*, (25), 149–167. <https://doi.org/10.25029/od.2024.405.25>
- Charaudeau, P. (2003). *El discurso de la información* (I. Rodríguez, Trans.). Gedisa. (Original work published 1997)
- Chaves-Montero, A. (2023). Social services and Twitter: Analysis of socio-political discourse in Spain from 2015 to 2019. *Sustainability*, 15(4), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043177>
- Cook, J., Das Sarma, A., Fabrikant, A., & Tomkins, A. (2012). Your two weeks of fame and your grandmother's. In A. Mille, F. Gandon, J. Misselis, M. Rabinovich, & S. Staab (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 21st International Conference on World Wide Web* (pp. 919–928). Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2187836.2187959>
- Davisson, A., & Leone, A. (2018). From coercion to community building. In A. Hussy & A. Davisson (Eds.), *Theorizing digital rhetoric* (pp. 85–97). Routledge.
- De-Castella, K., & McGarty, C. (2011). Two leaders, two wars: A psychological analysis of fear and anger content in political rhetoric about terrorism. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 11(1), 180–200. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1530-2415.2011.01243.x>
- Doona, J. (2021). Civic stage fright: Motivation and news satire engagement. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 24(4), 850–868. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494211033290>
- Eggs, E. (2011). La producción de emociones en el discurso político. Las técnicas retóricas de Bush y Obama. *Versión: Estudios de Comunicación y Política*, (26), 67–76.
- Ekman, P. (2007). *Emotions revealed*. St. Martins Griffin.
- Farré-Coma, J. (2005). Comunicación de riesgo y espirales del miedo. *Comunicación y Sociedad*, (3), 95–119. <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.voi3.4209>
- Fernández-Gómez, J., Hernández-Santaolalla, V., & Sanz-Marcos, P. (2018). Influencers, marca personal e ideología política en Twitter. *Cuadernos.info*, (42), 19–37. <https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.42.1348>

- Furedi, F. (2018). *How fear works: Culture of fear in the 21st century*. Bloomsbury Continuum.
- García-Gavilanes, R., Mollgaard, A., Tsvetkova, M., & Yasseri, T. (2017). The memory remains: Understanding collective memory in the digital age. *Science Advances*, 3(4), Article e1602368. <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.1602368>
- Gibson, J. (1979). The theory of affordances. In J. Gibson (Ed.). *The ecological approach to visual perception* (pp. 127–137). Houghton Mifflin.
- González-Castro, J. (2023). La comunicación del miedo en la política de Vox. Elecciones en Castilla y León y Andalucía 2022. *ICONO 14: Revista de Comunicación y Tecnologías Emergentes*, 21(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v21i1.1912>
- Güler, A., & Piazza, J. (2024). Online and social media news usage, conspiratorial attitudes and fear of terrorism. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2024.2336131>
- Haner, M., Sloan, M., Cullen, F. T., Kulig, T. C., & Jonson, C. (2019). Public concern about terrorism: Fear, worry, and support for anti-Muslim policies. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 5, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023119856825>
- Hernández, M., & Fernández, M. (2019). Partidos emergentes de la ultraderecha: ¿Fake news, fake outsiders? Vox y la web Caso Aislado en las elecciones andaluzas de 2018. *Teknokultura: Revista de Cultura Digital y Movimientos Sociales*, 16(1), 33–53. <https://doi.org/10.5209/TEKN.63113>
- Herrero, J., & Römer, M. (2014). *Comunicación en campaña. Dirección de campañas electorales y marketing político*. Pearson.
- Herreros Arconada, M. (1989). *Teoría y técnica de la propaganda electoral (formas publicitarias)*. Escuela Superior de Relaciones Públicas.
- Hill, A., Mortensen, M., & Hermes, J. (2021). Fear: Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 24(4), 793–800. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494211033297>
- Hloušek, V., Meislová, M. B., & Havlík, V. (2024). Emotions of fear and anger as a discursive tool of radical right leaders in Central Eastern Europe. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 6, Article 1385338. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2024.1385338>
- Huici Módenes, A. (2017). *Teoría e historia de la propaganda*. Síntesis.
- Humanes, M., Alcolea-Díaz, G., & González-Lozano, M. (2021). Materialización de los modelos de periodismo en los informativos de televisión del Grupo Atresmedia: Antena 3 y La Sexta. *Profesional de la Información*, 30(5), Article e300514. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2021.sep.14>
- Jowett, G. S., & O'Donnell, V. (2015). *Propaganda & persuasion*. SAGE.
- Krippendorff, K. (1990). *Metodología de análisis de contenido: Teoría y práctica* (L. Wolfson, Trans). Paidós. (Original work published 1980)
- López Zapico, M., & Moreno Cantano, A. (2016). Imágenes de odio y miedo: ¡Así eran los rojos! Una exposición anticomunista en la España franquista (1943). *Historia del Presente*, (27), 19–33.
- Martella, A., & Bracciale, R. (2022). Populism and emotions: Italian political leaders' communicative strategies to engage Facebook users. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 35(1), 65–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2021.1951681>

- Martín-Díaz, M. D. (2011). La sorpresa, el asco y el miedo. In E. Fernández-Abascal, B. García-Rodríguez, M. P. Jiménez-Sánchez, M. D. Martín-Díaz, & F. J. Domínguez-Sánchez (Eds.), *Psicología de la emoción* (pp. 221–264). Editorial Universitaria Ramón Areces.
- Martínez-Fresneda Osorio, H., & Sánchez-Rodríguez, G. (2022). La influencia de Twitter en la *agenda setting* de los medios de comunicación. *Revista de la Comunicación e Información*, 27, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.35742/rcci.2022.27.e136>
- Masip, P., Suau, J., & Ruiz-Caballero, C. (2020). Percepciones sobre medios de comunicación y desinformación: Ideología y polarización en el sistema mediático español. *Profesional de la Información*, 29(5), Article e290527. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.sep.27>
- McCombs, M. (2006). *Estableciendo la agenda. El impacto de los medios en la opinión pública y en el conocimiento* (Ó. Fontrodona, Trans.). Paidós. (Original work published 2004)
- McCrow-Young, A., & Mortensen, M. (2021). Countering spectacles of fear: Anonymous' meme 'war' against ISIS. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 24(4), 832–849. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494211005060>
- McNair, B. (2003). *An introduction to political communication*. Routledge.
- Meana, R. J. (2008). Enfermar de miedo. *Revista Padres y Maestros*, (317), 5–9.
- Nguyet, J., & Striphos, T. (2021). Introduction: COVID-19, the multiplier. *Cultural Studies*, 35(2–3), 211–237. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2021.1903957>
- Niñoles-Galván, A., & Ortega-Giménez, C. (2020). Discurso de odio en radio: Análisis de los editoriales de las cadenas COPE y SER tras la llegada del Aquarius a España. *Mhjournal: Miguel Hernández Communication Journal*, 11(1), 117–138. <https://doi.org/10.21134/mhcj.v11i0.317>
- Nor, M. W. M., & Gale, P. (2021). Growing fear of Islamisation: Representation of online media in Malaysia. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 41(1), 17–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2021.1903161>
- Özer, Y., & Kaçar Aşçı, F. (2021). Instrumentalization of emotions and emotion norms: Migration issue in European right-wing populist discourse. *Global Affairs*, 7(2), 173–192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23340460.2021.1944261>
- Pineda, A. (2006). *Elementos para una teoría comunicacional de la propaganda*. Alfaro.
- Pratkanis, A., & Aronson, E. (1994). *La era de la propaganda. Uso y abuso de la persuasión* (R. Andreu & J. Vigil, Trans.). Paidós. (Original work published 1992)
- Qualter, T. H. (1962). *Propaganda and psychological warfare*. Random House.
- Ramírez-Dueñas, J., & Vinuesa-Tejero, M. (2020). Exposición selectiva y sus efectos en el comportamiento electoral de los ciudadanos. *Palabra Clave*, 23(4), Article 2346. <https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2020.23.4.6>
- Rebollo-Bueno, S. (2022). El miedo en la propaganda de Vox: Twitter y su irrupción en la política española. *Observatorio (OBS*)*, 16(4), 42–62. <https://doi.org/10.15847/obsOBS1642022062>
- Rebollo-Bueno, S. (2025). Debating threats: Fear in Spanish political election propaganda. *Cuadernos.info*, (60), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.60.81898>
- Rimé, B. (2011). *La compartición social de las emociones* (M. J. Rodríguez-Salazar, Trans.). Desclée de Brouwer. (Original work published 2009)

- Rincón, O., & Rey, G. (2008). Los cuentos mediáticos del miedo. *Urvio. Revista Latinoamericana de Seguridad Ciudadana*, (5), 34–45. <https://doi.org/10.17141/urvio.5.2008.1093>
- Saperas, E. (1987). *Los efectos cognitivos de la comunicación de masas*. Ariel.
- Sarráis Oteo, F. (2014). *El miedo*. EUNSA.
- Simón, P. (2018). *El príncipe moderno*. Debate.
- Tarín-Sanz, A. (2018). Comunicación, ideología y poder: Anotaciones para el debate entre la teoría de la propaganda intencional y la teoría de la reproducción espontánea de la propaganda. *Comunicación Social*, (32), 191–209. <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.voi32.6794>
- Thorbjørnsrud, K., & Figenschou, T. U. (2020). The alarmed citizen: Fear, mistrust, and alternative media. *Journalism Practice*, 16(5), 1018–1035. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2020.1825113>
- Uğur, S. B., Yiğit Açıkgöz, F., Çelik, H. C., Arık, M. A., Kayakuş, M., Güdekli, İ., Paçacı, S., & Çizmeli, D. (2025). Violencia contra las mujeres en el contexto de la ira y la reivindicación de derechos: Un análisis de la red social X. *Vivat Academia*, 158, 1–42. <https://doi.org/10.15178/va.2025.158.e1621>
- Vázquez-Barrio, T., & Campos-Zabala, M. V. (2020). El contra debate de Vox en Twitter: Boicot, ninguneo y mensajes antisistema. *Sphera Publica*, 2(20), 51–72.
- Young, S., & Watson, B. R. (2024). Trial by media? Media use, fear of crime, and attitudes toward police. *Journalism Practice*, 18(4), 1015–1036. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2022.2055624>

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Sara Rebollo-Bueno is a faculty member at Loyola Andalusian University's Department of Communication and Education. She holds a PhD in Communication from the University of Seville; she graduated *cum laude* and was awarded an international mention, facilitated by her research stays at Maynooth University in Dublin (Ireland), and NOVA University Lisbon in Lisbon (Portugal). She holds degrees in Advertising and Public Relations and a master's in Institutional and Political Communication — receiving the extraordinary prize. She also earned a master's degree in Applied Statistics from the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia. Currently, she focuses her research on propaganda and political communication, as well as the intersections of ideology and gender in popular culture, which she has extensively published on. She is an active member of the research group on Political Communication, Ideology, and Propaganda.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8179-6562>

Email: srebollo@uloyola.es

Address: Av. de las Universidades, 2, 41704 Dos Hermanas, Sevilla (Spain)

Adrián Tarín-Sanz holds a PhD in Communication from the University of Seville, specialising in the theory and history of propaganda, and has been researching the media construction of political identities over the past few years. He is a member of the research group on Memory and Communication: The Political Uses of the Past. He was an

associate professor at Central University (2015–2022) and later served as TFM director at the International University of La Rioja (2023). He has over 20 scientific publications in high-impact journals and publishers.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6788-5291>

Email: adrian.tarin@uaw.edu.ec

Address: Juan León Mera 56, 170143 Quito, Ecuador

Submitted: 16/05/2025 | Accepted: 20/02/2026



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.