

En Himmet Karadal, *10th EMI Congress Proceeding*. Estambul (Turquía): EMI Congress.

Symbols and Manipulation: the Dynamic of Political Communication in Contemporary Argentina.

Quiroga, Sergio.

Cita:

Quiroga, Sergio (2024). *Symbols and Manipulation: the Dynamic of Political Communication in Contemporary Argentina*. En Himmet Karadal *10th EMI Congress Proceeding*. Estambul (Turquía): EMI Congress.

Dirección estable: <https://www.aacademica.org/sergio.ricardo.quiroga/250>

ARK: <https://n2t.net/ark:/13683/pgPS/s0z>



Esta obra está bajo una licencia de Creative Commons.
Para ver una copia de esta licencia, visite
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.es>.

Acta Académica es un proyecto académico sin fines de lucro enmarcado en la iniciativa de acceso abierto. Acta Académica fue creado para facilitar a investigadores de todo el mundo el compartir su producción académica. Para crear un perfil gratuitamente o acceder a otros trabajos visite: <https://www.aacademica.org>.



Proceedings Book

EMISSC2024 

10th International EMI Entrepreneurship & Social Sciences Congress,
10-13 September 2024, Targoviste / Romania

10th International EMI
Entrepreneurship & Social Sciences Congress

PROCEEDINGS E BOOK

Editors:

Prof.Dr.Himmet KARADAL
Dr. Neslihan DUMAN
Asst.Prof.Dr. Menekşe ŞAHİN KARADAL

ISBN: 978-605-73415-5-6

DILKUR Academy

References

Quiroga, S. (2024). Symbols and Manipulation: the Dynamic of Political Communication in Contemporary Argentina. In Proceedings 10th International Entrepreneurship Social Sciences Congress. September 10-13, 2024. Targoviste/Romania. Pages 882-887. Available in <https://www.emissc.org/en>

Title: Symbols and Manipulation: The Dynamics of Political Communication in Contemporary Argentina

Author Sergio Quiroga

Institution: Research Project “The Symbolic Construction of Power in Public Institutions. A look from Everyday Political Practices“ Universidad Nacional de San Luis, Argentina

Email: sergioricardoquiroya@gmail.com

Introduction

Symbols in politics play a fundamental role in communicating ideas, values and emotions effectively and quickly. Below, some key aspects of the relationship between symbols and politics are explored. The study focuses on the new political force led by the Argentine politician Javier Milei and whose party is called "La Libertad Avanza" and who will win the 2023 elections for the country's presidency.

Digital technology has democratized access to information and participation in political discussions, allowing greater connection and citizen expression. However, it can also have negative effects, such as the creation of filter bubbles due to algorithms, exposing individuals to only certain points of view and distancing them from a broader reality. Furthermore, the economic cost of maintaining a presence on digital platforms is not accessible to all parties, and excessive repetition of figures can cause fatigue or exacerbation in audiences.

The current crisis of political modernity is exhibited in the lack of faith in the political system, the crisis of representativeness of the national State and the political-legal crisis of sovereignty. Although the secularization of political power continues, its context has changed. Marcel Gauchet (2003) studies secularization from the "disenchantment of the world", where religion loses its role as the foundation of political and social legitimacy. According to Gauchet (2003), secularization not only implies the emancipation of the human sphere from religion, but also a positive reconfiguration of the human world. He prefers the term "withdrawal from religion" to "secularization," as the latter does not fully capture the complexity of the process.

Cassirer (1998) explores how different forms of human expression, such as language, art, myth-religion, and scientific thought, constitute symbolic modes that allow us to understand and represent the world. Through these symbolic forms, human consciousness manifests and relates to reality. His approach is both systematic and historical, and he lays the foundation for analyzing general mental functions and various forms of expression. For Cassirer, mythical thought and perception are the fundamental symbolic form from which all others emerge. The perception of the mythical world is colored mainly by affects and emotions, which is why the myth is perceived with not objective, but physiognomic characteristics.

In 1995 and 1996, Duch published "Mite i cultura" and "Mite i interpretació", the two volumes that form the original version of his work "Myth, interpretation and culture. Approach to logomitics". This work is the result of a slow and profound intellectual and vital maturation, and seeks to clarify the crucial role of myth in the human constitution from an anthropological-philosophical perspective. Duch argues that, contrary to common belief, mythos was never superseded by logos; Both are fundamental and complementary components of the human condition, maintaining an intense dialectic at all times and places. Duch's approach focuses on the complementarity between mythos (image, fable, symbol, story) and logos (concept, reasoning, analysis). He maintains that the human being is a "coincidentia oppositorum", a unity of opposites. The complementarity between mythos and logos must be the basis for any introduction to logomitics, since both institute complementary pedagogical practices. Duch uses a detailed and rigorous argumentative and expository method, characteristic of the Germanic tradition. Instead of opting for the essay, he chooses the treatise, a genre that requires disciplined effort and offers many difficulties.

In the crucial section of the work, "big themes surrounding myth," Duch reflects on the relationships between myth and narrative, myth and culture, and myth and history. These reflections are relevant not only for the general anthropology that he proposes, but also for the construction of an anthropology of media communication. Duch emphasizes the central role of the human word in all forms of knowledge, communication and expression.

The use of symbols in politics in Western countries is a powerful tool to communicate ideas, values and emotions quickly and effectively. Symbols help politicians connect with

their audiences and build a visual and conceptual identity that reinforces their message. Here are some key aspects of the use of symbols in Western politics:

- **Flags and National Colors:** National symbols such as flags and colors (for example, red, white and blue in the United States and France) are frequently used to evoke patriotism and unity. Politicians and parties often use these symbols in campaigns, speeches and promotional materials.
- **Animals and Emblems:** Animals and other emblems have deep historical and cultural use. For example, in the United States, the elephant and the donkey represent the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, respectively. These symbols encapsulate the identities of the parties and are easily recognizable by the public.
- **Ideological Symbols:** Politicians also use symbols that represent specific ideologies. For example, the red rose is a symbol commonly associated with democratic socialism and is used by social democratic parties in Europe.
- **Images of Historical Leaders:** Visual references to important historical figures, such as the Founding Fathers in the United States or revolutionary figures in Europe, are used to invoke the authority and legacy of these figures in support of certain values or policies.
- **Logos and Slogans:** Parties and candidates develop logos and slogans that encapsulate their campaign message. For example, Barack Obama's 2008 campaign logo, with its stylized "O" design in the colors of the American flag, became an iconic symbol of hope and change.
- **Gestures and Postures:** Gestures can also be symbolic. For example, the military salute can be used to symbolize respect and honor towards the armed forces, while specific hand gestures, such as the "thumbs up", can symbolize approval and optimism.
- **Music and Songs:** Patriotic anthems and songs, as well as specific musical themes, are used at political events to evoke emotions and create an atmosphere of solidarity and enthusiasm.
- **Social Networks and Memes:** In the digital age, memes and hashtags have become new political symbols. Campaigns and movements use these tools to virilize messages and connect with younger audiences effectively.
- **Art and Popular Culture:** References to works of art, movies, and other elements of popular culture are increasingly common in politics. These symbols can make political messages more accessible and attractive to the public.
- **Effective use of symbols in politics** requires a deep understanding of the culture and values of the electorate, as well as an ability to communicate complex messages in visually impactful and emotionally resonant ways.

Methodology

This work explores the use of symbols in Argentine politics, highlighting how political communication uses techniques to transmit powerful symbolic messages in different media of Argentina in the 2023 year. Emphasis is placed on staging, creating pseudo-events, and using events as communication tools. Symbols are susceptible to manipulation and are used by political elites to keep audiences politically active. In the Argentine context, which does not recognize the symbols and tactics of contemporary fascism, the images of President Milei's party go unnoticed, even when they present obvious similarities. The extreme right

in Argentina is usually interpreted through conservative biopolitics of Catholic nationalism or traditional national socialism, with an economic perspective that contrasts with the economic liberalism of figures such as Javier Milei. This superficial analysis allows certain ideological elements to go unnoticed. The study also mentions the use of neologisms on social networks, such as "jword", a term used by cryptofascists to denigrate Jews, evidencing how certain sectors try to avoid censorship on digital platforms.

Findings

According to Edelman (1960, 1964), the public's relationship with political issues is fundamentally symbolic and emotional, where the figures of the hero, the villain and the common person play key roles. In particular, the populist leader is seen as a charismatic idol who establishes a direct link with the people, without intermediaries. Symbols present sensitive expressive capabilities and their function is to communicate a set of feelings that appeal to the people with whom it is related. Thus, through a certain symbol, ideas are grouped that simplify political communication. To group together as many people as possible, the symbols gave an identity to all the party's followers, thus facilitating the transmission and reception of the message to large groups of people (Quiroga, 2021).

Function of Symbols in Politics

- **Unification and Identity:** Symbols help build a collective identity and unify individuals around a common cause. They are essential for social and political cohesion.
- **Quick Communication:** They allow the communication of complex messages in a simple and fast way, taking advantage of the power of visual recognition.
- **Legitimacy and Authority:** They can confer legitimacy and authority to governments and movements. For example, the use of historical and cultural symbols can reinforce the legitimacy of a regime.
- **Mobilization and Propaganda:** They are crucial tools in political propaganda to mobilize people, generate support and spread ideologies.

Symbols and Controversies Associated with Javier Milei

During the 2023 election campaign, followers of Javier Milei, candidate of the La Libertad Avanza party, adopted the American libertarian flag known as the Gadsden flag. This flag is yellow and features a coiled rattlesnake in a defensive position, accompanied by the phrase "Don't tread on me." This symbol, originated in 1775 by Christopher Gadsden with inspiration from Benjamin Franklin, is an emblem of libertarianism and resistance to oppression. The adoption of the Gadsden flag by Milei's followers highlights their connection to American liberalism and the defense of individual liberty. During the campaign events, young Milei supporters, many of whom are under 30 years old, enthusiastically gathered wearing this flag, as well as various merchandising that includes T-shirts with a lion and the legend "Milei 2023."

Symbols Used by Milei Followers

The rattlesnake coiled on a yellow background with the inscription "Don't tread on me." Originally a symbol of anti-colonial resistance during the American Revolution, it has been associated with far-right movements and supremacist militias in the United States. The Gadsden flag is a symbol of American origin, with a yellow background, in the center of which there is a rattlesnake coiled and in a defensive position. Under the snake you can

read the phrase "Don't tread on me", which can be translated as "Don't tread on me" or "Don't tread on me". The Gadsden flag as a symbol represents constitutionalism, classical liberalism and libertarianism. It can also represent feelings of rebellion, usually against the State. The members of the different security forces are prohibited from expressing themselves politically, so the personnel should be summed up and sanctioned by their superiors

Confederate Flags was historically associated with racism and white supremacy in the southern United States, they have been seen at Milei events and among his followers. There have been arrests in Argentina over threats of anti-Semitic violence, with young people linked to extremist ideologies using social media to spread hate messages. Milei's statements: Javier Milei has publicly repudiated the use of these racist and extremist symbols in his actions. He assures that he would expel anyone who displayed Nazi symbols and emphasizes that his liberal movement is based on respect for life, liberty and property, principles incompatible with Nazism.

At political events in Milei, such as Luna Park, merchandise with the coiled rattlesnake is sold, and it is common to see young people with Gadsden and Confederate flags, reflecting a worrying acceptance of these symbols. Lack of knowledge and appropriation: In Argentina, there is a general lack of knowledge about the historical meanings of these symbols, which facilitates their use without the rejection they generate in other countries. The use of these symbols could be interpreted as a reaction against progressivism and feminism, a form of political incorrectness that appeals to disaffected youth sectors.

Milei Symbols and Communication

Javier Milei, the Argentine president, uses various symbols in his communication and political campaign that reflect his ideas and personality. Some of the main symbols he uses are:

- The Lion: Milei calls himself "The Lion" and often represents himself with this animal, symbolizing strength, bravery and leadership. This symbol also appears in his rhetoric, where he speaks of "awakening the lions" in reference to his followers.
- The Dollar: In his economic discourse, Milei is a firm defender of the dollarization of the Argentine economy. He uses the image of the US dollar to represent his proposal to adopt this currency as a way to stabilize the country's economy.
- Hairstyle and Clothing: His distinctive style, with a tousled hairstyle and clothing that includes leather jackets, makes him stand out and has become part of his public image, symbolizing a break with traditional politics and a more direct and without filters.
- The Trojan Horse: This symbol has been used by Milei to represent his political strategy of infiltrating the existing political system to dismantle it from within.
- References to Economists and Libertarian Philosophy: He uses symbols and quotes from economists such as Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and Murray Rothbard, as well as libertarian iconography in general, to underline his economic and philosophical position.
- Phrases and Slogans: Phrases like "Long live freedom, damn it" have become his campaign slogans, encapsulating his message of fighting for economic and personal freedom.

These symbols and the strategic use of them help Milei connect with his audience, transmit his ideas clearly and stand out in the Argentine political landscape. Symbols have cultural

and psychological impact. Symbols have a deep emotional impact, as they can evoke feelings of pride, hope, resistance or anger. They help keep historical memory and national or group narratives alive, ensuring that certain ideas and events are remembered over time. They influence the construction of identity at both the individual and collective levels, affecting how people see themselves and their community. Symbols can be reinterpreted or appropriated by different groups, changing their original meaning. This can lead to conflicts over its use and meaning. In politically polarized contexts, symbols can become points of dispute and division, exacerbating tensions. However, some symbols may be discredited and banned due to their association with extremist ideologies or violent acts, such as the swastika in many Western countries.

Conclusions

Symbols are powerful tools in politics, capable of influencing public perception, mobilizing masses and communicating ideologies efficiently. Understanding its use and meaning is crucial to analyze any political and social context. The symbols associated with Javier Milei and his followers reflect a mixture of ideologies that, while they may not be fully understood by those who use them, are worldwide condemned for their associations with racism and the extreme right. Milei has tried to distance himself from these demonstrations, emphasizing that his movement is incompatible with Nazism and racial supremacy.

Javier Milei made history by founding the first Libertarian Party of Argentina in 2018, being the central axis of the La Libertad Avanza coalition. In addition to the use of the Gadsden flag, the party uses other animal symbols, such as the eagle in its logo and the lion, which refers directly to Milei. These symbols represent values such as freedom, bravery and protection. Milei's leadership and the creation of his own political space position him uniquely in the Argentine electoral scene, following in the footsteps of historical figures such as Juan Domingo Perón and Mauricio Macri, who also left a significant mark on the country's politics. The Gadsden flag and other libertarian emblems not only reflect the identity of his movement, but also his fight for a profound change in Argentine politics.

References

- Cassirer, E. 1998. *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas. El lenguaje*, vol. 1. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Chillón, A. (2000). La urdimbre mitopoética de la cultura. *Anàlisi. Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura* 24: 121-159.
- Duch, L. (1974). *Ciencia de la religión y mito: estudios sobre la interpretación del mito*. Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat.
- Duch, L. (2002). *Mito, interpretación y cultura*. Barcelona: Herder.
- Duch, L. y Chillón, A. (2012). *Un ser de mediaciones. Antropología de la comunicación*, vol. 1. Barcelona: Herder Editorial.
- Edelman, Murray (1960). "Symbols and Political Quies- Bibliografía cence", *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 54, núm. 3, pp. 695-704.
- Edelman, Murray (1964). *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press
- Gauchet, M. (2003). *La religión de la democracia. El camino del laicismo*. Barcelona: El cobre.

Quiroga, S (2021). Personalismo político, símbolos y democracia en San Luis, Argentina. Jornadas de Sociología UNCUYO 2021. Universidad Nacional de Cuyo. May-June Available in https://repositoriosdigitales.mincyt.gob.ar/vufind/Record/BDUNCU_a0ff12978c0ca908113d2abf4f81830d