THE 10-N ELECTION DEBATE OF 2019 IN SPAIN: POLITICAL CANDIDATES AND *RTVE*

EL DEBATE ELECTORAL DEL 10-N DE 2019 EN ESPAÑA: LOS CANDIDATOS POLÍTICOS Y RTVE

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ABSTRACT

Electoral campaigns aim to increase participation to capture the votes of the electorate. In this sense, the privileged space to approach the citizens is the debate, which in Spain exceeds a million viewers. Although, the conventional media are decisive in campaigns. Television is still the main media outlet chosen by the Spanish citizens, according to the 'Center for Sociological Research', to follow political information of the electoral campaign. The objective of this research is to analyze the speeches of political candidates in the 10-N election debate in Spain. On the other hand, we seek to conclude whether the discourses of Spanish Radio and Television (*RTVE*) about the debate on Twitter are a reproduction of political discourse or whether the function of public service media is fulfilled. For the analysis of the political discourse and electoral debate in *RTVE*, we use framing theory as an analysis methodology. The findings of this study show that public television informed citizens without reproducing political discourse, although tweets dedicated to conflict between candidates and the presentation of PSOE measures were the most frequent.

KEYWORDS: Electoral debates; Campaigns; *Framing*; Agenda-setting; Candidates; *RTVE*; Television; Twitter; Discourses.

RESUMEN

Las campañas electorales tienen el objetivo de aumentar la participación para captar el voto del electorado. El encuentro privilegiado para acercarse a los ciudadanos es el

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debate, que en España supera los diez millones de espectadores. No obstante, los medios de comunicación convencionales son determinantes en las campañas. La televisión todavía es el medio escogido por los españoles, según el Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, para seguir información política en campaña electoral. El objetivo de esta investigación es analizar los discursos de los candidatos políticos en el debate electoral de las elecciones del 10 de noviembre de 2019 en España. Por otro lado, buscamos concluir si el discurso de la Radio y Televisión Española (*RTVE*) sobre el debate electoral en Twitter es una reproducción del discurso político o si se cumple la función de servicio público. Para el análisis del discurso político y de *RTVE* del debate electoral empleamos como metodología de análisis la teoría del *framing*. Las conclusiones de este estudio muestran que la televisión pública informó a la ciudadanía sin reproducir el discurso político, aunque los tuits dedicados al conflicto entre candidatos y la presentación de medidas del PSOE fueron los más frecuentes.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Debates electorales; Campañas; Encuadres; Agenda-setting; Candidatos; *RTVE*; Televisión; Twitter; Discursos.

1. INTRODUCTION

The new multiparty environment in Spain forces national parties to reach agreements to form a government (Simón, 2017). The inability of the presidential candidates to make pacts, and the failed investiture after the April 2019 elections, lead to an electoral repetition that calls citizens to the polls, again, on November 10th. With the reform of the Electoral Law of 2016, which allows the electoral calendar to be reduced, the campaign times were shortened by half, with eight days in which the political forces had the opportunity to address the electorate to ask for the vote.

In this context, digital technologies are increasingly integrated into political communication (Lilleker et al., 2017). Communication offices and social networks, used to gain visibility and tell political stories (Kalsnes & Olof, 2019) have become protagonists, but conventional media still continue to be decisive for the public sphere and deliberation on issues of the political system (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2015). It has recently been concluded that there is a thematic equivalence, a common political tactic, and a discourse based on confrontation and the spectacularization of language both on television and on Twitter (Pérez and García, 2020). A study by López and Oñate (2019) in Argentina, Peru, Ecuador, Honduras, and Chile, concludes the coalition of agendas between television and candidates, establishing as a guideline that public televisions are placed with the official candidates and private ones with the opposition (pp. 10-11).

Electoral campaigns have the objective of increasing the participation of citizens to get their vote (Ohme, Marquart, & Fristensen 2019). In the electoral campaign of this research, a single televised debate was held with the five candidates for the presidency of the Government: Pedro Sánchez, secretary-general of the PSOE; Pablo Casado, from the *Partido Popular* (PP); Pablo Iglesias, from *Unidas Podemos*; Albert Rivera, from *Ciudadanos*, and Santiago Abascal, from Vox. The meeting was organized by the

Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, in collaboration with Radio Televisión Española, Atresmedia, and FORTA. It was directed by journalists Vicente Vallés and Ana Blanco.

2. OBJECTIVES

The strategies proposed in the campaigns are aimed at reaching the electorate, especially like-minded and undecided voters. Therefore, the communication strategies of political candidates become stories that are manifested through the frames that determine the interpretation of a social problem. Political parties and the media have a determining weight in the construction of discourses. In this research, we analyze the speeches in the electoral debate, which still attract audiences of around twelve million viewers (Vidal, 2017) and which, as developed in the proposed theoretical framework, has a pedagogical function that, also, produces effects in undecided voters (Canel, 1998). On the other hand, *RTVE* must fulfill, in the coverage of the encounter on Twitter, its public service function. This analysis intends to check if the speeches articulated in the debate by the political candidates are represented in the speech on @*RTVE's* social networks, fulfilling the mission of guiding the public, or if the public radio-television has elaborated a political story of its own.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. The media and the political system

The 20th century was a participant in the development of theories of the effects of the media. McCombs and Shaw (1972) show, in their analysis of the media during electoral campaigns, that the public perceives the relevance that the media gives to the issues since they use them to organize their own agenda. In this way, the media agenda is, to a large extent, the public agenda (McCombs, 2006: 25). Years later, the framing theory would explain that not only the topics that people talk about matter but also how they do it (Entman, 1993).

In the polarized pluralism system (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) of Mediterranean countries, such as Spain, the media has close relationships with the political system. The media are political actors "with genuine interests and goals that interact with others, in a permanent process of conflict and negotiation that involves the generation of public meanings" (Aruguete, 2017, p. 38). For this reason, the media must safeguard the figure of gatekeeper, paying special attention to newsworthy events, since it is in them where the partisan bias in the selection of messages becomes important (Haselmayer, Wagner, & Meyer, 2017).

The media have the function of guiding the public. For this, journalists must simplify the complexity of the news about the electoral process: the substance lies in the focus or the line under which the news are presented (Castromil and Rodríguez, 2010). In an attempt to attract audiences, there has been a tendency to focus their attention on political candidates rather than on their actions (Aruguete, 2013), which has an ideological background: ignoring structural issues (Edelman & Piatigorsky, 1991).

3.2. Public Agenda, media, and Framing

In most cases, there is an adjustment between the media and the public agenda because, in general, the media has a good sense of what is important to the public (Trigueros and Lacasa, 2018). According to the Preelectoral Barometer of the CIS (Sociological Research Center by its acronym in Spanish) of October 2019, the issues that most concerned Spaniards, as the first problem, were unemployment (19.9%), problems of an economic nature (13.4%), pensions (9.9%), problems related to the quality of employment (6.4%), those related to the Welfare State, which are education and health; and, also, the lack of agreements, which leads to political instability in Spain (2.6%).

A second campaign emerges in the media (Padilla, 2015). The electoral debate has two objectives: intellectual confrontation and the struggle to prevail over the adversary (p. 107) and evidence has been found that electoral debates contribute to learning (Van Der Meer, Walter, & Aelst 2016). Furthermore, an interrelation is generated between the political power, the media, and citizens. Political actors compete for media attention. On the other hand, the media compete among themselves to attract the attention of audiences (Donsbach, 1995). The debate also arises in the conversation on social networks. Moreover, it has been concluded that the highest volume of tweets is always given by a television broadcast (Deltell, 2014, p. 34).

The televised debates gather audiences of twelve million viewers (Vidal, 2017, p. 23). They constitute the most important media event of an electoral campaign (Rúas & Quintas, 2020) and are sometimes the most-watched of the television year (Luengo, 2011). There is a certain consensus among academics regarding the fact that debates have a limited impact on electoral preferences and that they influence by acting as reinforcement (López, Rivera, and Araújo, 2017) especially in the undecided (Anstead, 2016). On the other hand, it has been detected that these encounters contribute to the establishment of the agenda (Schrott, 1990). In electoral debates, the media agenda, politics, and the public agenda converge (López, Rivera, & Araújo, 2017). In the relationship between journalists and politicians in televised political debates, prior negotiations take place. There may be armchairs, decide whether to stand behind the lecterns, and even ask questions posed by anonymous citizens or formulate open or closed questions (Barrientos, Caldevilla, & Vargas, 2019, p. 20).

In the debate being analyzed, the participation of the moderators is reduced to a minimum: checking that the norms imposed by the candidates are met. However, social networks such as Twitter are configured as a space for defining the agenda by public television. Similarly, the days that exceed the daily average of tweets correspond to days in which the parties register more appearances in conventional media, especially television (Marcos, Alonso, and López, 2021). Electoral debates are not a direct vehicle between candidates and voters: there is mediation by the media. The fact of highlighting some actors over others, or mentioning a social problem to the detriment of another, can shape the agenda (Richardson, Huddy, & Morgan., 2008).

4. METHODOLOGY

This research is carried out with a qualitative content analysis methodology (Jivkova, Padilla, and Pernía, 2015) from the theory of framing (Bartolomé and Rodríguez, 2012; Entman, 2003). With this objective, we proceed to see the RTVE debate transcribing the political discourse of the format. On the other hand, the blocks and themes introduced by moderators Ana Blanco and Vicente Vallés are assumed, which are: cohesion of Spain, economic policy, social policy, democratic quality, and international politics. However, the candidates for the presidency of the Government introduce their own measures, attacks, and proposals (Benoit, 2003). The duration of the candidates' speeches is five minutes per block; the opening of each one of them and the golden minute, agreed by lottery.

For the analysis of the electoral debate of the November 10th election campaign, we assumed the keywords of the speech through the themes introduced by the candidates; On the other hand, we apply the perspective of the frame based on the functions of Entman (1993, p. 52) which are: definition of the problem, attribution of responsibility, moral evaluation, and treatment or recommendation. Regarding the analysis of Twitter, we do an advanced search on the network taking the days 4th and 5th of November 2019; that of the electoral debate and the subsequent one, filtering with the *@RTVE* account. We carried out the analysis of the tweets according to the definition of Ardèvol-Abreu (2015) that distinguishes five types of frames: conflict, consequences, human interest, morality, and attribution of responsibility. With the analysis, we will be able to determine the social problems that stand out from RTVE; the bloc to which they belong within the debate, as well as the political candidates who enjoy the greatest popularity in the media coverage of public radio and television on their social network Twitter.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Territorial cohesion

The issue of territorial cohesion, with the crisis in Catalonia, was central to the debate. Table 1 includes the topics, with their frames, introduced by each political candidate. Subsequently, we provide the keywords used to interpret the social problem.

Table 1. *Topics of the candidates for the Presidency of the Government in the territorial cohesion block*

	Topics
Pedro Sánchez	Crisis in Catalonia
Pablo Casado	Public disorder in Catalonia
Albert Rivera	Threat to Democracy in Catalonia
Santiago Abascal	Permanent coup d'état/autonomies
Pablo Iglesias	Rural world and public services/crisis in Catalonia

Source: *RTVE* electoral debate. Self-made.

Except for Pablo Iglesias, who incorporated the difficulties of people in the rural world due to access to *public services*, avoiding the Catalan crisis; and Santiago Abascal, who focused on the *autonomies* in an economic key, insisting that they represent a "waste" and that they force to choose between the *autonomy or pension* dichotomy, Pedro Sánchez, Pablo Casado, and Albert Rivera framed the crisis in Catalonia.

Table 2. *Keywords of the speech in the territorial cohesion block*

Block 1. Cohesion of Spain	**Keywords**
Pedro Sánchez	Coexistence, independence, confrontation, encounter, Unilateral Declaration of Independence, unity, proportionality, democratic firmness, right
Pablo Casado	Public order, Constitution, freedom, independents, Spanish nation, national security, conscience, concord, Law
Albert Rivera	Public disorder, threat, Democracy, Rule of law, freedom, moronic beasts, compatriot, Constitution, coexistence, respect, Law, 155
Santiago Abascal	Separatism, permanent coup, freedom, nation, 155, criminals, state of autonomies, totalitarian policies
Pablo Iglesias	Rural, public services, homeland, dialogue, reconciliation, nation of nations

Source: *RTVE* electoral debate. Self-made.

From a presidential position, Pedro Sánchez threw the framework for the analysis of the definition of the problem (crisis in Catalonia) from his interpretation: "*The crisis in Catalonia is one of coexistence, not independence.*" The justification for this issue was found in his criticism of Casado, to whom he insisted that the Unilateral Declaration of

Independence (DUI) did not pose a problem of independence. Avoiding the concept of *dialogue*, the solution he proposed was "*to increase the meeting spaces and reduce those for confrontation.*" His treatment or recommendation of the problem focused on harmony from *education, modification of the General Audiovisual Law, and incorporation in the Penal Code of the prohibition of illegal referendums*. Another subject that he repeated throughout the debate was that of the three principles of the PSOE around this issue: democratic *legality, proportionality, and unity*. To establish a position regarding Pablo Iglesias on the Catalan issue, Pedro Sánchez specified his disagreement with the candidate of the purple formation through a play on words: while Pablo Iglesias spoke of *political prisoners*, the PSOE of *imprisoned politicians* "for having broken democratic legality." On the other hand, in his criticism of what he calls "the right" -PP, Ciudadanos, and Vox-, he represented it with a nuance: "*On the right, they have a problem with Catalonia; we will have a problem in, but they with*".

One of the sources of tension in this block occurred with the insistent question of the popular leader Pablo Casado Casado to the socialist Pedro Sánchez: "What is the Spanish nation to you?" Casado insisted to Sánchez: "A person who does not believe in the Spanish nation does not deserve to be in the race to preside over it." The popular candidate made an explicit and open criticism of Sánchez throughout the entire debate. As he pointed out, "for Mr. Sánchez, Catalonia is a nation and Spain is a nation of nations." The solution for the *Partido Popular* would be "*to guarantee the order in the streets, freedom, conscience, and harmony*", applying the Constitution. The *Partido Popular* candidate, Pablo Casado, articulated his speech around the interpretation of the Catalan crisis. In the opinion of the PP, the attribution of responsibility falls on Sánchez, who is held responsible for not holding elections "*in freedom in Catalonia*", for not having "applied the national security law", or the "requirement for Torra to comply with the Constitution".

Albert Rivera began the debate with a cobblestone, through which he introduced the issue of the *Catalan crisis*. He called it a problem of *public order* and a threat to the rule of law. The solution to the problem, according to the candidate, would consist of applying the Constitution to dismiss Quim Torra, President of the Generalitat of Catalonia. In the interpretation of Ciudadanos, what the "separatists" want is to build "borders between compatriots", when what is needed is "coexistence and large doses of respect, but also the Law." It is interesting how the law serves as a concept to articulate democracy: outside it "is the jungle", while within it is "the Constitution." The line of attack of *Ciudadanos* is the "40 years of bipartisan cessions", which he contrasts with the need to apply the Constitution (155) "with serenity" to protect the Spaniards "who never protest, but are forgotten."

In Vox's speech, Santiago Abascal based his message on two axes: the attack on the four opponents, on the one hand; and the proposal of measures, on the other. In this sense, Abascal accused Zapatero of eliminating the penalization of referendums from the Penal Code. On the other, he accused Rajoy, of not recovering the penalization. In the present, he accuses Sánchez of appearing next to "a Spanish flag" to later defend *multi-nationality*. In Vox's speech, the Catalan issue is summarized in a premise: "*Permanent coup*" for having awarded "the betrayal of the nation." In Abascal's opinion, this has produced the destruction of "*freedom in Catalonia*", which can only be recovered with the "suspension of autonomies" and the "outlawing of

nationalist parties." The justification for these measures would be: "the state of the autonomies has failed" because it has rewarded the "regions governed by the most treacherous and disloyal" with "totalitarian policies that have made us unequal."

On the other hand, from *Unidas Podemos*, with a speech that moved away from the Catalan crisis, a change of framework was provided. Pablo Iglesias said that talking about territorial cohesion focusing only on Catalonia is a "lack of respect" for Spaniards because the *rural world* knows another territorial problem: not having access to *public services*. He also positioned himself, although secondarily, criticizing the candidates for trying to throw "the toughest measure" in Catalonia when, in his opinion, the Catalan crisis "can only be resolved with *dialogue, common sense, and the left hand*." The justification of the candidate of the purple formation starts from the premise that Spain "is not centralist, many languages are spoken, national identities", so if there are "conflicts to be solved", it can only be through dialogue.

5.2. Economic policy

The economic policy block was introduced, by the moderators, under the premise of the slowdown in the economy and the fear of a new crisis in Spain. Faced with this reality, the *Partido Popular*, *Ciudadanos*, and Vox are betting on speeches focused on tax cuts; PSOE and *Unidas Podemos*, on the increase in spending. Thus, we proceed to the analysis of the political communication of the political forces in this matter.

Table 3: *Topics of the candidates for the Presidency of the Government in the economic policy block*

	Topics
Pablo Iglesias	Slowdown that can turn into a crisis. Protection of the Welfare State
Pablo Casado	The crisis brought about by socialism / Create employment
Albert Rivera	The crisis makes it impossible to create a family / Corruption of bipartisanship
Santiago Abascal	Waste of autonomies vs pensions
Pedro Sánchez	Cooling down of the economy: just transition

Source: *RTVE* electoral debate. Self-made

Table 3 shows the topics of the candidates in the matter of the economy, with their respective interpretations. The contribution of Albert Rivera stands out, who, besides incorporating the idea of *revolution in families*, also emphasized the *corruption of bipartisanship*, in its relationship with the burden it poses to the economy.

Table 4: *Keywords of the speech in the economic policy block*

Block 2. Economic policy	Keywords
Pedro Sánchez	Cooling down of the economy, Interprofessional Minimum Wage, climate emergency, employment
Pablo Casado	Crisis, rescue, socialism, employment
Albert Rivera	Family, birth rate, conciliation, corruption, 'Two-party corruption tax', Transparent government, entrepreneurs
Santiago Abascal	Expenditure policies, middle and working classes, autonomies, pensions, birth rate
Pablo Iglesias	Slowdown, crisis, cuts, Constitution, Consumer Price Index, tax fraud, Welfare State, temporality

Source: *RTVE* electoral debate. Self-made

The economic policy block, which Pablo Iglesias started, was articulated on the interpretation of the slowdown or crisis: cuts have to be made "from the bottom or the top." Regarding the treatment of the problem of the crisis, Iglesias uses the Constitution as a political program to face it. In his definition of the Constitution, beyond its use to defend sovereignty or apply Article 155, "it cannot be a paving stone to throw at the adversary but rather a toolbox to protect the people." In his speech, he announced a string of articles emphasizing 128: "*All the wealth of the country will be subordinate to the general country.*" Regarding the measures to cope, he introduced the issue of "tax fraud" caused by the "IBEX companies". In this block, Iglesias stressed, again, the need to govern with the PSOE. He pointed out to Sánchez, repeatedly, that "if there is no government of the left, there will be of the right." Relating future government agreements with the economy, he proposed to Sánchez "to govern together" and publish the lists of "tax amnesties".

The popular candidate, Pablo Casado, opted for a speech based on two axes, which led to his definition of the economic problem in Spain: *socialism brings the economic crisis* (the 90s and Zapatero's time, which he calls "the biggest hack") and the need for *job creation*. He referred to the year 2011, "with 3 million unemployed and frozen pensions" and to the present, with a Sánchez who "denies reality."

The leader of *Ciudadanos*, Albert Rivera, focused his message on the *family* or, in metaphorical terms, what he called the need for a "revolution in families." The definition of the problem for *Ciudadanos* is that "the birth rate has been lost." In his criticism of the PSOE, he insisted, in the same way as Casado and Abascal, that Sánchez would raise taxes. His interpretation of this fact is that "an economy that strangles those who generate wealth" is "a country that has no dignity." The strategy of *Ciudadanos* was based on relating the economy to what they called ICB (Corruption Tax on Bipartisanship). In the line of past elections, the strategy consisted of an accusation of the PSOE and the PP and the need for a "transparent government." According to

Abascal, he also pointed out that the Autonomous State, on occasions, had been "a joke."

The Vox candidate, Santiago Abascal, in his definition of the economic problem in Spain, pointed to "a structural framework that ruins us" and based on two *spending policies*: *state of the autonomies* and *illegal emigration*. According to him, the "waste of the autonomies" forces us to choose between these "that ruin and divide" or the *pensions*. Vox's strategy could be summarized in the following statement by Abascal, reflected in an intervention in the debate: "For the humblest Spaniards, Spain is their only heritage, and only the rich can afford the luxury of not having a *homeland*."

Pedro Sánchez, in contrast to the rest of the candidates and due to his position as President, ignored the word *crisis*, alluding to the term *cooling of the economy*. The strategy consisted, on the one hand, in criticizing the Partido Popular governments, with the lowering of taxes and the pensioners who had lost purchasing power. On the other hand, he emphasized the good performances of the PSOE "in 18 months", as well as the need for a "look to the future" from the "pillars" of the party: grow above the European average or raise the SMI, among others. Furthermore, he announced the economic vice-presidency in case of presiding over the Government, a strategy that he used on more than one occasion throughout the debate. Again, he established a position regarding Iglesias through the perception that the PSOE has about the figure of the businessman. From the PSOE, the framework of interpretation is that if businessmen "pay taxes and generate wealth", there is no problem "if they donate resources."

5.3. Social policy and equality

Regarding the Social Policy and Equality block, the debate took place around *education, health, pensions*, and *feminist policies*. In the case of Albert Rivera, emphasis was placed on what he called the *equality revolution*, according to which all citizens, in Spain, must have the same "rights" regardless of their place of origin, referring to autonomies. Pablo Casado dedicated a generous space to blame the PSOE for the destruction of employment; Iglesias reserved most of his time for the issue of *social and feminist policies*. Pedro Sánchez encompassed social policies and feminism in the same framework of speech and elaborated a critique of the *cowardly right and the aggressive extreme right*. Santiago Abascal took advantage of the block to talk about two issues: *social emergencies* and the need for *borders to maintain security*.

Table 5: *Topics of the candidates for the Presidency of the Government in the social policy and equality block*

	Topics
Albert Rivera	Life cycle: training, having a decent job, and a pension / Equality Revolution - Nation of free and equal citizens
Pablo Casado	PSOE destroys employment and pensions are not sustained / Achievements of the *Partido Popular*
Pablo Iglesias	Sexist violence and feminist policies / Social policies
Pedro Sánchez	Feminism and social policies / Attack on the right and the extreme right
Santiago Abascal	Social emergencies / Security - borders

Source: *RTVE* electoral debate. Self-made

The social policy and equality block was introduced by the journalist Ana Blanco, who pointed out the absence of women as candidates for the presidency of the Government. "They will talk about parity but it is not a picture of equality," she said. The introduction of the block did not succeed in making candidates reserve part of their speech to equality between men and women, which had little presence in this privileged space of the electoral campaign.

Table 6: *Keywords of the speech in the social policy and equality block*

Block 3. Social policy and equality	**Keywords**
Pedro Sánchez	Government, parity, cowardly right, aggressive extreme right, public, Welfare State,
Pablo Casado	Employment, pensions
Albert Rivera	Family, unemployment, garbage contracts, autonomies, nation, freedom, equality revolution
Santiago Abascal	Spain, social emergency, old hatreds, enemies of Spain, security, call effect, borders
Pablo Iglesias	Feminist policies, public services, education, health, Constitution

Source: *RTVE* electoral debate. Self-made.

In this block, started by Albert Rivera, the strategy of *Ciudadanos* started from the premise of *a country that cares about families*. The main problem of this country, under the interpretation of *Ciudadanos* and taking into account the economic level, is *unemployment*. The proposition for this problem is an *indefinite contract and protect*

the self-employed. In the social sphere, from *Ciudadanos*, it is pointed out that Spain is a "nation of free and equal citizens" regardless of where they live but, in Spain, "one of the greatest inequalities is living in a town or a capital". In the attribution of responsibility, the nationalists are blamed for the unequal conditions in access to the civil service and that they hold "*the true revolution of equality*."

The speech of the *Partido Popular*, in this block of social policy and equality, consisted again in a reminder of measures of the past, well done by the PP and badly done by the PSOE. The topics on which the attack strategy was articulated were: *employment, health, and education*. Casado attacked Sánchez for causing "permanent hiring to drop." Also, because when the PP arrived in 2011, it found itself with health debt. The proposal of the PP in social policy would go through: increase in scholarships, educational MIR at the national level, Spanish as a vehicular language, and bilingualism in public and private schools.

For his part, Pablo Iglesias introduced the block, in response to Ana Blanco, saying that "in crises, it is women who suffer the most", insisting that *social policies in Spain must be feminist*. He proposed measures such as free education from 0 to 3 years of age or the modification of the Penal Code so that only "yes is yes", referring to all crimes against sexual freedom being considered as rape. From *Podemos*, Pablo Iglesias criticized that, also in this block, Catalonia was mentioned, insisting on *education and public services*. Furthermore, he used the Constitution, again, to defend social rights and not only *unity* in Catalonia: "Education and health are a right, the Constitution says." Also, Iglesias mentioned the issue of the rental market and the limitation of its prices, as well as what he calls the "forgotten": *Kelly's*, military over 45 years, the right to animal welfare, or maintain public banks.

The socialist candidate, Pedro Sánchez, in his strategy around equality policies, introduced the debate through feminism, mentioning to Ana Blanco that "it was necessary to improve parity", but that the Parliament of Spain had the highest number of women and the council of ministers with the most women in the world. He blamed the Partido Popular for "leaving a society with fewer rights," referring to the issue of child poverty. As a solution, he proposed measures for the future such as, for example, gratuity from 0 to 3 years or multiplying scholarships and repealing the "Gag Law." In his line of attack, Pedro Sánchez rebuked the *extreme right and partners* whom he calls, throughout the debate, as the *cowardly right* and the *aggressive extreme right*, for wanting to end the Autonomous Communities (CCAA by its acronym in Spanish), repeal the law against gender violence, eliminating democratic nationalist parties, privatizing the public pension system, or making abortion illegal, among other issues.

From Vox, Santiago Abascal raises the speech in a dichotomous key: the old hatreds -such as unearthing the dictator Francisco Franco, represented by the PSOE- and the social emergencies, which would be, as he points out: 32% youth unemployment or "misery pensions", among other issues. Along these lines, Abascal articulated the concept of *security* "for women and Spaniards" in contrast to the Law against gender violence. As he understands, this "makes men allegedly guilty." Besides, he relates it to "*false accusations*" and proposes *life imprisonment* as a solution. To justify the elimination of the autonomies, he refers to the concept of *equality of all Spaniards*.

5.4. Democratic quality

In the democratic quality block, Pablo Casado opted for a criticism of the PSOE for "not regenerating" what they had promised in the motion of censure; On his part, Iglesias insisted on Sánchez's need to make it clear with whom he intended to agree, making a strong criticism of Santiago Abascal for comparing, in the Civil War, the republican side with the national one. Pedro Sánchez insisted on a solitary government and the rights achieved by the PSOE, in the face of the absence of past freedoms. For his part, Rivera hinted at his position regarding historical memory, which he does not consider as important as "the present and the future." The president of Vox, Santiago Abascal, took advantage of his space to speak, again, of *social emergencies* but above all, to throw his interpretation on the exhumation of dictator Francisco Franco: historical memory only serves "to confront" and Vox represents what that the "Spaniards needed": *the right to disagree.*

Table 7: *Topics of the candidates for the Presidency of the Government in the democratic quality block*

	Topics
Pablo Casado	Criticism of the PSOE for not regenerating after the motion of censure
Pablo Iglesias	Need for clarification of agreements / Criticism of Santiago Abascal due to historical memory
Pedro Sánchez	Government of the most voted list and insistence that there are no pacts / Rights vs. repression
Albert Rivera	Electoral law / Historical memory is less important than looking to the present and the future
Santiago Abascal	Social emergencies / Security - borders / Historical memory is to confront / Democratic quality is the right to disagree

Source: *RTVE* electoral debate. Self-made.

The speech that opened this block was that of Pablo Casado who started, also this time, with an attack on Pedro Sánchez based on two issues: *motion of censure and instrumentalization of Justice*, accusing the secretary-general of the PSOE of knowing the sentence of Francisco Franco or the "seditious in Catalonia" before it was made public. From the *Partido Popular*, as it was made clear throughout the debate: "The danger to democratic quality is you" and "Pairing with pro-independence disables you as President of the Government."

Pablo Iglesias based his speech on justifying that "decency" went through saying with who each wanted to govern. For this he explained that Spain is a parliamentary system, not presidential, insisting on a *left-wing coalition government* and pointing out that it was not understood that the PSOE reached an agreement with the right.

Table 8: *Keywords of the speech in the democratic quality block*

Block 4. Democratic quality	Keywords
Pedro Sánchez	Most voted list, democratic Spain, freedom, Europe, feminism, tolerance, corruption PP, far-right
Pablo Casado	Pacts, pro-independence, democratic danger, Sánchez
Albert Rivera	Democratic regeneration, electoral law, separatists, ERE ruling, division, future
Santiago Abascal	Totalitarian regime, Constitution, old hatreds, constitutional order, right to disagree
Pablo Iglesias	Covenants, coalition government, public systems, Constitution, social rights

Source: *RTVE* electoral debate. Self-made.

The tense moment of this block was starred by Santiago Abascal and Pablo Iglesias when the latter replied that being a victim of ETA does not imply giving lessons as a "victim of terrorism". To argue this, Iglesias pointed out that in *Unidas Podemos* they had victims in their ranks who "do their job" so that Spain "is a better country." Once again, Iglesias appealed to the Constitution, which he said is not "a brick to throw at the adversary" but a "political program."

The socialist candidate, Pedro Sánchez, used the democratic quality block to deliver the premise: "Democratic Spain is the fruit of forgiveness but it cannot be the product of oblivion." In this sense, he introduced the concepts of *democracy, Europe, feminism, and tolerance*. He assured, on one occasion, that there was not going to be a great coalition with the *Partido Popular*.

Albert Rivera took advantage of the democratic quality block to introduce his proposal: a new Electoral Law. *Ciudadanos* emphasized the issue of *corruption*; Albert Rivera asked Sánchez if with the ERE sentence, if it was convicting, he expected to resign. Regarding historical memory, he argued that he was "fed up with a country that is divided by people like you", and that it was necessary to "overcome the past and look to the future."

The Vox candidate, Santiago Abascal, articulated the strategy of relating the laws of historical memory with the *confrontation*, understanding that both the republican and national sides "embraced each other in the Constitution." In Vox's opinion, the PSOE wanted to rescue *old hatreds*. In its line of attack and, therefore, of attribution of responsibility, Vox also accused *Podemos* of defending a *totalitarian regime*. In this sense, he insisted that the left has "a moral superiority" that had annulled the *right to dissent*, which is what "democratic quality" represents.

5.5. International policy

The last block, dedicated to international policies, was the one in which the political parties showed the greatest discrepancy. Santiago Abascal devoted a wide space to talking about *sovereignty within nations* and the *borders* that, in his opinion, had to be built in *Spain*. Rivera reserved his space to defend the *Unity of Spain* in Latin America and Europe. Sánchez, with a more complex speech, spoke of a *common European project*, at the same time that he used Europe to flatter the sanitary cordon that was made to the extreme right. Pablo Casado, at his insistence on articulating a constant strategy to attack the PSOE and Sánchez, blamed the socialists for the *illegal emigration*, while proposing a *common agrarian policy*. And Pablo Iglesias dedicated practically the entire block to defending that, in the face of the *economic slowdown*, the solution was: "worker safety against the IBEX 35".

Table 9: *Topics of the candidates for the Presidency of the Government in the international policies block*

	Topics
Santiago Abascal	Sovereignty within borders / Europe - Brussels
Albert Rivera	Spain in Europe and Latin America
Pedro Sánchez	Humanitarian migration policy and common European project / Health Cordon in Europe
Pablo Casado	Common agricultural policy / Illegal emigration because of socialism
Pablo Iglesias	Economic slowdown and trade war: Safety for workers against the IBEX 35

Source: *RTVE* electoral debate. Self-made

The journalists Vicente Vallés and Ana Blanco introduced the block through the issue of the deportation of emigrants and the construction of an impassable wall proposed by Vox. The strategy introduced by Santiago Abascal, in a context of a debate on Europe, was to affirm, in his definition of the problem, that "there is no *nation without borders*", relating *international politics* to the *sovereignty of nations*. From Vox they understand that the solution is dichotomous: *identity* (represented by Vox) or *dissolution*.

Table 10: *Keywords of the speech in the international policies block*

Block 5. International policies	Keywords
Pedro Sánchez	Irregular entries, humanitarian migration policy, Europe, health cordon, progressive government
Pablo Casado	Reviewable permanent prison, security, European politics
Albert Rivera	Spanish-speaking, cultural, Spanish, Latin America, Europe, Democracy, free trade
Santiago Abascal	Sovereignty, borders, nation, illegal emigration, identity, Europe-Brussels, Islamization, free trade, Spain
Pablo Iglesias	Economic slowdown, trade war, insecurity, security of the people, sovereignty, Government measures, taxes, IBEX 35, multinationals, Government agreements

Source: *RTVE* electoral debate. Self-made

When talking about *Europe*, Abascal raises the concept by establishing a relationship with *Brussels*. According to the far-right party, the problem is that the elites of Brussels "impose mass immigration" and "Islamization", which causes a *crisis of coexistence*. That is why the solution, for Abascal's party, is the *sovereignty of the nations*, taking advantage of the "heritage", which is language.

Albert Rivera's strategy consisted in explaining that *Spain*, at present, does not play a leading role in "important problems". The solution to the problem would be to raise *Spanish culture*. From *Ciudadanos* it is understood that this fact will be forged in a "united" Europe and Latin America, as both are "the future." On the one hand, concerning Latin America, collaborating with countries with governments of "dictators" to help them in their transition to democracy. In the case of Europe, Rivera once again brought to the debate the issue of the crisis in Catalonia, once again insisting on the defense of the *Unity of Spain*, but "in Europe." Furthermore, from *Ciudadanos* it is mentioned again what they consider to be the vehicle, the *economy*, stating that "commerce is civilization." For this, we must bet on "our own products" and "free trade agreements".

Pedro Sánchez took up the issue of *migration* to articulate the block on international policies, which he defined as a "historical fact" and not a circumstantial one that is restricted to the arrival of the PSOE, in the context that there are "human beings" on the other side. In this sense, Sánchez took advantage of the topic of Europe to also talk about the *sanitary cordon to the extreme right*, affirming that justice is carried out "inside and outside the borders." The PSOE's proposal goes through a *common European project* characterized by social policies.

Pablo Casado articulated his speech on the international policies block around the need to introduce more assumptions in the *reviewable permanent prison*, alluding to

the need to preserve *safety in the streets*. Regarding Europe, Casado argued the need for a *European policy* "in which Spain is essential." In the attribution of responsibility, again, the issue of *illegal emigration* was mentioned, accusing Zapatero of the worst crisis of the cayucos and telling Sánchez that he is an "absolute" incompetent for emigration.

To change the concept of *security* that the right had introduced, Pablo Iglesias chose to give it another meaning: "neither walls nor racism". From Podemos, he opted for the "security of the people in the face of the insecurities of the slowdown and the commercial war", which he exemplified with the case of taxi drivers and with families threatened by a vulture fund, the "largest landlord in Spain". Thus, turning the concept of *sovereignty* compared to the right, Iglesias said: "Sovereignty is not defended with a flag, it is defended with government measures." Regarding free trade, Iglesias once again turned the debate towards the need to "pay taxes in Spain", taking the opportunity to criticize multinationals that do not do so in the country.

5.6. The golden minute

The candidate of the extreme right-wing force, Santiago Abascal, was in charge of presenting the golden minute. Vox's speech was based on proposals for the future (beginning all the phrases with "we want") through measures to defend the *unity and sovereignty of Spain*: outlawing separatist parties, reducing public spending as much as possible, combating emigration, and ending the state of the autonomies. In short, the dichotomy: *equality* in the face of the *progressive dictatorship*.

The speech of *Ciudadanos* was based on the premise: "Don't be told that you can't." For this, Rivera articulated a hopeful message: "If you want to change things, you can." The audience to whom his speech was addressed was the *working middle class*: "To those who get up every day, against all odds", or to those who begin "a project in the face of all obstacles and bureaucracy", referring to his recurring concept in the debate: *the true revolution of equality*.

Pedro Sánchez used the golden minute to defend himself against attacks for the "hidden pacts" by raising the dichotomy: *truth-lie*. Thus, he said: "There is nothing stronger than the truth." In the line of establishing a position regarding Iglesias, Sánchez used the *Unity of Spain* concept to place himself in the center. *Unity* was related to the policies of the majority: "to safeguard the Unity of Spain we must not renounce social justice."

Pablo Casado's speech also started from the strategy of being in the center, and was articulated around two axes: "Stop the separatists" and "solve the economic and social crisis of the left". Through the concept of *España suma y todo lo que nos une*, he introduced the three actors from the like-minded and undecided public: pensioners, young people, and families who, according to him, need "a real government" to lead.

Iglesias' bet started from the strategy of giving voice to one of the millions of Spanish citizens. The protagonist of his story is a young woman, with studies, who works precariously in a job that does not correspond to what she has studied, with functional diversity, and who wants to emancipate herself. She represents the *fear of*

precariousness and of losing one's job. She is one of many in Spain who represents what, in the debate, Iglesias pointed out was the biggest problem in Spain: *temporality*. Iglesias said, taking her as an example: "Let no one convince you that things cannot be changed", referring to the fact that "a government that defends the people is possible."

5.7. Twitter analysis

For the Twitter analysis of *@RTVE,* we have started from Ardèvol-Abreu's (2015) typology of frames: conflict, consequences, human interest, morality, and attribution of responsibility. Then, when analyzing the tweets, we have added to the definition what we call *contextualization tweets of the debate*, dedicated to announcing the golden minutes, electoral debates, or polls, among others; on the other hand, the *presentations of the candidates*, which are tweets used to raise a performance of the past of the political parties, or to contextualize the intentions in the present or the future.

With a total of 37 tweets dedicated to the electoral debate organized by *RTVE* and Antena3, we have detected that most of them are dedicated to contextualizing the candidates and the encounter (17) as well as interacting with users through surveys or questions. That is to say, *RTVE* fulfills a mainly *informative* function. It is followed by the *conflict* tweets, a total of (9), of which 5 are from the popular leader Pablo Casado in which he talks about *corruption, the Catalan crisis* (3), and *the waiting lists*. On the other hand, we have only 1 tweet from Rivera, focused on *corruption* and *Catalonia*, 1 from Iglesias asking Casado about the 'only yes is yes', that is, related to sexual violence; and 1 tweet in which it is noted that Abascal and Iglesias argue over *historical memory*.
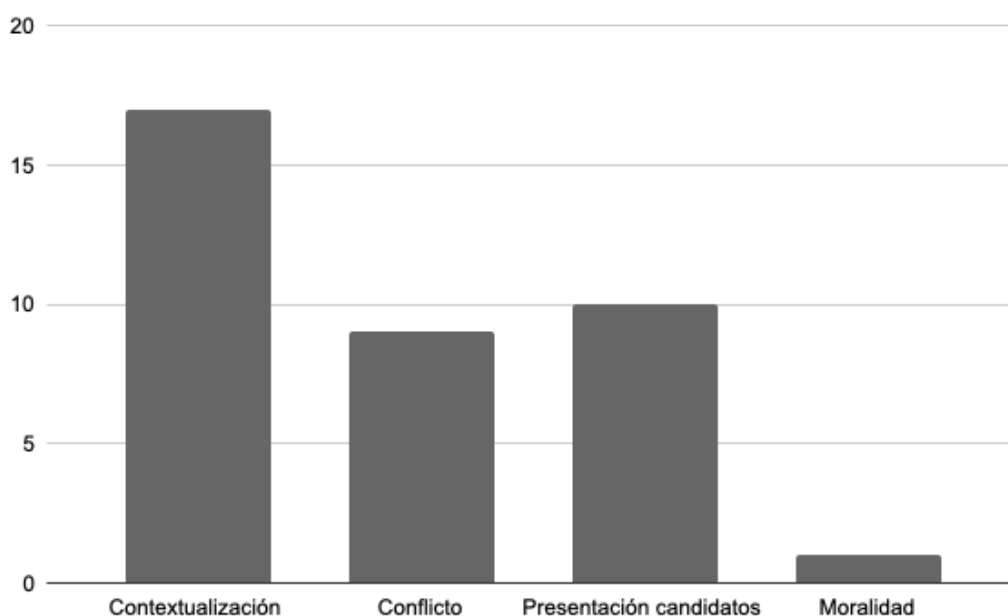
Graph 1. *RTVE* frames of the 10-N electoral debate on Twitter.
Source: Self-made.

In the type of *morality* framing, we have a tweet of the presenter Ana Blanco. It is significant because the intervention of the moderators was restricted to moderation, with this exception. The journalist pointed out that there were no female political candidates at the encounter, pointing out that it does not represent a picture of *equality*. This intervention was reflected in a tweet, which said:

**@*rtvenoticias· 4 Nov. 2019*

Ana Blanco, to the candidates: "Allow me to make a reference to the photo of this debate, with five candidates and no women present. I suppose you will talk about parity, but, at this moment, it is not a picture of equality." #Debatea5RTVE

Later, in the presentation of the candidates, we see 7 *RTVE* tweets about Pedro Sánchez; 1 by the other political candidates: Pablo Casado, Albert Rivera, and Pablo Iglesias. In the case of Pedro Sánchez's measures, as we have indicated, *RTVE* published tweets in response to the PSOE leader's discursive strategy: political measures for the future government and promises of vice presidencies. These were the two propositional strategies of the PSOE. This was a constant in the debate, both on the part of Sánchez and *RTVE*. We point out two examples that show it:

@rtve

Electoral Debate to 5 | Sánchez proposes three measures in education, the audiovisual sector, and the penal code for Catalonia. [#Debatea5RTVE](#)

@rtve

VIDEO | Sánchez announces that Calviño will be the Economic Vice President of the Government. [#Debatea5RTVE](#)

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the electoral debate on November 10th present two aspects. In the first place, we must attend to the line of attack of the political parties, which implies understanding who the adversary is according to the polls or the predisposition of the parties to future government pacts. Pablo Casado articulated his speech, in all the blocks, against the PSOE, in general, and Pedro Sánchez, in particular. The socialist leader attacked the *Partido Popular* for its management in the governments, with special prominence in that of Mariano Rajoy, at the same time that he criticized Iglesias in his intention to agree on a left-wing coalition government. Sánchez wanted a solitary government. In line with past electoral campaign strategies, Albert Rivera insisted on what, from Ciudadanos, they called ICB (Corruption Tax on Bipartisanship), which was his focus of attack. Meanwhile, Santiago Abascal criticized the management of PSOE and PP (especially in the Catalan issue) and called Podemos a *totalitarian regime*.

On the other hand, the debate had five blocks, which were territorial cohesion, economic policy, social policy and equality, democratic quality, and international policies. The declaration of independence in Catalonia was the protagonist of the first block, with two interpretations: *crisis* by the PSOE and *Unidas Podemos*; an *attack on*

the rule of law or public disorder (*Partido Popular, Ciudadanos*); and *permanent coup d'etat*, by Santiago Abascal. In the economic policy block, the crisis was interpreted in terms of the *cooling of the economy* (PSOE) and *economic slowdown* (*Unidas Podemos*) on the one hand. The *Partido Popular* accused the PSOE of causing the crisis while the leader of Vox referred to the autonomies to justify the "waste." For their part, Ciudadanos mentioned the loss of birth rate and the need to help "families".

In the third block, reserved for social policies, *Ciudadanos* introduced the concept of the *revolution of equality* to incorporate the idea of a "nation of free and equal citizens" with its star measure: the *single contract*. The *Partido Popular* drew up, again, a criticism of the PSOE for its management in the Government, this time alluding to *employment, health, and education*. Iglesias focused the speech on *social and feminist policies*, using the Constitution as a tool to "protect the people." Pedro Sánchez insisted, in this block, on the social measures carried out by the PSOE, as well as on proposals for the future. He referred to the *cowardly right-wing and the aggressive right-wing*. And Santiago Abascal made a speech based on the dichotomy: *social emergencies* in the face of *old hatreds* of the PSOE.

In the space of democratic quality, Pablo Casado insisted on his criticism of the PSOE, relating Pedro Sánchez to the nationalist parties. Pablo Iglesias continued asking Sánchez about the pacts, emphasizing his idea of the Constitution as a political program. In this block, Pedro Sánchez affirmed, trying to refute the concept of *old hatreds*: "Democratic Spain is the fruit of forgiveness but it cannot be the product of oblivion." Rivera, taking weight away from the issue of historical memory, summarized his interpretation: "Overcome the past and look to the future." Santiago Abascal spoke that said Law meant confronting whoever was embraced in the Constitution. Moreover, the Vox candidate related the *democratic quality* to the arrival of Vox, which, in his opinion, represented *the right to disagree*.

The last block, of international policies, was introduced by the leader of Vox, Santiago Abascal, who insisted that Brussels produces a *crisis of coexistence*. The solution would consist of the *sovereignty of nations* and the imposition of *borders*. On his part, Rivera articulated the strategy of "*Unity of Spain in Europe*", with a presence in Latin America, as well as the commitment to the *culture* of the country and *trade*, which he calls "civilization." Pedro Sánchez spoke of a *humanitarian migration policy* while defending a *common European project* and praised the *sanitary cordon to the extreme right* in Europe. Pablo Casado proposed the solution of the *Partido Popular*: a *European Policy in which Spain is essential*. Finally, Pablo Iglesias threw a change of framework in the concept of *security* contributed by the right, insisting that, in the face of the *slowdown* and the *economic war*: the protection of workers.

Considering Pérez and García (2020), there is a common tactic of political candidates in their speech on television and on Twitter, a network they use for self-promotion of the electoral campaign (López, 2016; Suau, 2020). However, we wanted to attend to the actor in which that speech is created: television. According to the Latin American conclusions of López and Oñate (2019), which point out that public television companies tend to position themselves with the official leader, and private ones with the opposition, the objective was to analyze whether public television granted greater coverage to a candidate in detriment of others. In the Twitter analysis of *@RTVE*, with

a total of 37 tweets, we have seen that 17 are dedicated to the contextualization of the encounter. Therefore, *RTVE* fulfills its public service function by being an actor that is not dedicated to reproducing the content of political candidates: it informs and encourages conversation on social networks through surveys and questions to citizens.

Afterward, we found a total of 9 tweets framed in what we have called a *conflict*, among which are all the candidates: tweets dedicated to Rivera and Casado for the Catalan crisis; tweets about Pablo Casado mentioning corruption, the crisis in Catalonia, and public management; Abascal and Iglesias arguing over historical memory, and Pablo Iglesias referring to sexual violence. For its part, in what we call *morality*, we only found a tweet about the journalist Ana Blanco criticizing the absence of women candidates for the presidency of the Government. Finally, 10 tweets dedicated to the presentation of the measures of the candidates of the five political forces, among which we extract an interesting piece of information: 7 tweets (70%) were dedicated to hypothetical government measures proposed by the PSOE. The candidates' proposals on Twitter are mediated by public television, which creates its own story about the television debate. We confirm, as López and Oñate (2019) had concluded, that public television, in Spain, reflects its position within the framework of the *presentation of candidates*, in which it gave more prominence to the political measures of the PSOE. This research reflects, in line with previous research, that public television, in Spain *RTVE*, provided greater coverage to the measures of the official leader, that is, Pedro Sánchez.

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