

## The charismatic leadership of the ECB presidency: A language-based analysis

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**Abstract.** There is little doubt that the European Central Bank (ECB), and in particular its presidency, has taken the lead in tackling the euro crisis. But can this leadership be also characterised as charismatic? This article answers the question by focusing on language – a key component as well as a reliable indicator of charisma. By means of a software-assisted content analysis of the entire corpus of ECB presidential speeches, it is found that the crisis has indeed led to the emergence of the Bank's presidency as a charismatic euro leader. This in turn confirms the recent politicisation of the ECB, but at the same time might be seen as mitigating the problems related to the Bank's democratic deficit, to the extent that charisma can be seen, from a Weberian standpoint, as an alternative source of political legitimacy.

**Keywords:** European Central Bank; leadership; charisma; euro crisis; European Monetary Union

### Introduction

Crises are times for political leadership. Critical historical junctures in which a society's core values are threatened and its political and economic order is upset call for and favour the emergence of strong political agents who can take matters in their hands, reduce uncertainty and guide the community out of the mire (Ansell et al. 2014). In particular, situations of crisis call for *charismatic* leaders: extraordinary political actors able to assuage people's stress and anxiety by presenting inspiring visions and solutions for the future, so breaking the collective impasse and creating the conditions for new social orders to materialise (Tucker 1968; Pillai 1996).

The European Union (EU), and most notably the Eurozone, has been in a state of economic, political and institutional crisis for almost a decade now and yet leadership – let alone charismatic leadership – is still in scarce supply among its key players. Due to their limited resources and clout, common political institutions (in the first place, the European Commission, the EU's executive body) struggle to fulfil this role beyond wide-ranging statements whose effectiveness remains questionable (e.g., the 'Five Presidents' Report'; Juncker 2015) – or narrower and more concrete yet negligible actions (e.g., the recent 'Juncker investment plan'). Neither is there much effective leadership at the level of member states. The guidance provided by Germany – the EU's 'natural hegemon' – has been intermittent at best, and in any case largely unimaginative and centred on the preservation (and strengthening) of the Eurozone's existing legal and economic paradigm (Bulmer 2014; Schoeller 2016). At the same time, alternative loci of (potential) leadership, such as Italy or France, are either too weak, both structurally and politically, or have yet to prove to be credible candidates to lead Europe out of its predicament (Longo & Murray 2015).

Amid this vacuum of political leadership, it is a formally technocratic actor that has emerged to provide some clear and effective responses to Europe's crisis – namely the European Central Bank (ECB). 'The dramatic days of the euro crisis are, thank God – or thank Mario Draghi, now behind us,' former European Parliament president Martin Schulz commented in early 2015 (Schulz 2015). While Schulz's take on the end of the crisis might have been overly optimistic, it is certainly fair to say that the ECB's actions in defence of the euro – culminating with President Draghi's oft-cited 'whatever it takes' pledge – are the closest thing to effective supranational crisis leadership the Eurozone and the EU as a whole have seen in recent years (Verdun 2017). Needless to say, in the eyes of many this has come at the cost of an increased 'politicisation' of the ECB and its policies.

This article aims to investigate whether and to what extent the leadership of the ECB, and more precisely its presidency, can be characterised as charismatic by looking at a particular aspect of it – namely language. The question of ECB charisma is important from both analytical and normative standpoints: for one thing, it bears on the transformation of EU governance and political equilibria resulting from the euro crisis. For another, it relates to the issue of the democratic legitimacy of the Bank in the context of its increasingly political role.

The article proceeds as follows. It begins by providing an overview of the ECB's actions to tackle the euro crisis, and highlights how these can be seen as configuring the Bank as a 'euro leader'. Building on this premise, the article proceeds to examine the applicability of the concept of 'charismatic leadership' to the ECB case, and introduces the topic of language as a signal of charisma. Thereafter the research design is presented, along with the results of a software-assisted content analysis of 560 speeches of the ECB president, showing that the Bank's presidency has indeed emerged as a rhetorically charismatic actor as a result of the euro crisis. The final section of the article discusses the implications of these results and concludes.

### **The ECB's role in tackling the euro crisis**

The ECB's responses to the euro crisis have been analysed in detail elsewhere (e.g., Beukers 2013; Micossi 2015), so only a summary will be presented here. In the early phases of the international financial crisis, following the September 2008 collapse of Lehman Brothers, the ECB acted through a number of instruments with the main objective of tackling liquidity problems within the Eurozone. In the first place, between October 2008 and May 2009 it lowered interest rates from 4.25 to 1 per cent. In addition, the Bank extended the maturity of its refinancing operations and relaxed collateral requirements for loans to the financial sector. In the spring of 2009 the ECB also launched the first instalment of its new Covered Bond Purchase Programme (CBPP1), planned to continue for one year and for a total amount of €60 billion.

The improvements in the Eurozone's financial situation resulting from these measures proved short-lived: in early 2010, revelations about Greece's previous budget data falsifications marked the beginning of the country's public debt crisis. The ECB's response to the Greek crisis was mainly twofold. First, in May 2010, the Bank introduced a Securities Market Programme (SMP) to carry out sterilised purchases of Greek bonds in secondary

markets. The SMP represented the ECB's 'first foray into distressed sovereign bonds markets' (Micossi 2015: 13) and was later renewed several times to also assist Ireland, Portugal, Italy and Spain. Furthermore, in the same period the ECB also started having a more direct role in dealing with the Greek crisis by joining the 'troika' of creditors – together with the European Commission and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – that would negotiate and monitor the implementation of Greece's structural reforms in the context of its international bail-out packages. Later on, this ECB function would be generalised and embedded legally with the establishment of the European Financial Stability Facility and the European Stability Mechanism.

The year 2010 also marked the beginning of the ECB's practice of sending letters to governments whose economies were receiving assistance to request certain measures and reforms in exchange. In October and November, for instance, two such letters were sent to Ireland asking the country to apply for a bail-out and threatening to cut the Emergency Liquidity Assistance (ELA) that was propping up the country's financial institutions. Similar letters were sent to the Italian and Spanish governments the following summer asking for a series of structural reforms (e.g., in the area of pensions and labour regulations) as a condition for buying the countries' bonds under the SMP. Spain and Italy were also the main beneficiaries of two rounds of Very Long Term Refinancing Operation (VLTROs) implemented in December 2011 and February 2012, respectively. Finally, in October 2011, the ECB launched a second one-year CBPP for a total of €40 billion.

In November 2011 Mario Draghi took over the ECB presidency from Jean-Claude Trichet. One of Draghi's first moves was to lower the Bank's refinancing rate (previously raised by Trichet) from 1.5 to 1.25 per cent and then to 1 per cent – initiating a path of steady rate reduction that has continued to this day. Draghi's moves did not prevent yield spikes in Spanish and Italian government bonds, which were caused by the markets questioning the solvency of the two countries. The risk of default in Spain and Italy was key to Draghi declaring, on 26 July 2012, that the ECB was ready to 'do whatever it takes to preserve the euro'. The speech precluded the launch, in September, of the Outright Monetary Transaction (OMT) programme for the unlimited purchase of government bonds, conditional on reform programmes on the part of the assisted countries. An augmented version of the SMP (which it replaced), the OMT proved to be so effective as to reassure financial markets without ever being actually employed.

In March 2013 yet another banking crisis erupted in Cyprus, to which the ECB responded most notably by pushing the country to agree on an EU-IMF package under the threat to cut its ELA funds. The Bank would use this leverage instrument again two years later with Greece, following the decision by the new government led by Alexis Tsipras to hold a national referendum on the terms of a third bail-out agreement. In the meantime, in June 2014, the ECB announced new measures to tackle the Eurozone's liquidity problems, primarily the introduction of the Targeted LTROs (four-year loans open to the non-financial sector, renewed for a second round in March 2016) and a third round of CBPP. In the same month the ECB also applied, for the first time, negative interest rates.

On 22 January 2015 in a further move to counter the Eurozone's low inflation, the ECB announced its first programme of quantitative easing (QE), involving the purchase of €60 billion worth of financial assets per month between March 2015 and September 2016,

for a projected total of €1.1 trillion. In December 2015 the QE was extended to last until March 2017, and expanded by an additional €360 billion, raising the monthly purchases to €80 billion. A second extension came in December 2016, with the doubling of the QE's original amount to €2.2 trillion, to be achieved by the end of 2017 (with the monthly purchases brought back to €60 billion).

### *The ECB as a euro leader*

In the variety of ECB actions just summarised, two broad and closely connected trends can be detected. The first is that, over time, the ECB's response to the euro crisis has become bolder, more proactive and increasingly unconventional. Applicable virtually to the entire gamut of ECB actions, this trajectory is nonetheless particularly marked in the areas of government financing and the more general countercyclical support of the Eurozone economy. Begun under Trichet, this transformation of the Bank's role has culminated with the Draghi presidency, which has consolidated the ECB as a *de facto* lender of last resort for distressed euro area countries, and led the ECB to a more expansionary role in the economy through the unprecedented QE. Draghi's activism *vis-à-vis* the euro crisis has, on several occasions, even gone beyond the realm of monetary policy, such as in his continued calls for Europe's governments and institutions to have more supportive fiscal policies and implement institutional reforms able to promote recovery and shield the EU from future crises (e.g., Draghi 2014).

To be sure, these moves have not remained uncontroversial, in political as well as legal terms. For one thing, the Bank's government financing policies have encountered the opposition of northern member states, most notably Germany, who have protested against the effects of ECB policies on the fiscal and budgetary policies of assisted countries, and on their incentive to implement structural reforms. This conflict has transposed within the ECB's governance structure, leading among other things, to the resignation of Bundesbank president Axel Weber and German ECB board member Jürgen Stark, both in 2011, in protest against the SMP. For another, the OMT in particular has been the object of a high profile legal challenge, still originating in Germany, arguing its inconsistency with the Treaties' prohibition of government financing, and which has eventually been resolved in favour of the ECB.<sup>1</sup>

The second trend is one of increasing perception – among practitioners and observers alike – of the ECB as an ever more 'political' (as opposed to technocratic) actor. The ECB's politicisation, in turn, comes in two, partly overlapping, guises. One is the Bank's transformation from a neutral and 'inoffensive' actor to one that makes distributive and consciously biased policy decisions. (Needless to say, the direction of such bias is often different depending on the observer.) The other is the ECB's increasing transcendence, in the eyes of many, of the boundaries of its original mandate to become an overly independent (and uncontrolled) player, capable of making macroeconomic policies of its own, affecting not only the monetary field but, more importantly, adjacent areas such as fiscal and budgetary policy (Högenauer & Howarth 2016). It is exactly this increasingly politicisation of the ECB that forms the basis for an interpretation of the Bank's role in terms of leadership, and creates the space for investigating the charismatic nature of such leadership.

## Charisma and the ECB

The concept of 'charisma' was introduced in the study of politics and society by Max Weber, who borrowed it from the realm of religion. For Weber (1978: 241), charisma is

a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a 'leader'.

Weber juxtaposes charismatic leadership and authority to two other forms of rule: traditional and rational-legal. While the former is based on history and tradition, and the latter on laws, charismatic authority hinges on the 'attitude of awe' that the leader inspires among followers due to his (perceived) exceptional abilities (Spencer 1973). Implied in this definition is also the dependence of charismatic authority on performance, whereby obedience to the leader is withdrawn if the latter is seen to fail in his functions, or in any case he loses his aura of invincibility in the followers' eyes (Weber 1978; also Tucker 1968).

In its ideal conception, charismatic authority is both an individual characteristic and a transitional state – often between traditional and modern legal systems – which should therefore disappear with the modernisation and rationalisation of society: 'in its pure form charismatic authority may be said to exist only *in statu nascendi*. It cannot remain stable, but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both' (Weber 1978: 246). At the same time, Weber theorised the possibility of a 'routinisation' of charisma through, among other mechanisms, what he called 'charisma of office' – namely the transformation of charisma from a purely individual quality to an inherent attribute of a certain office (e.g., the papacy or a throne), so that the person holding that office acquires some dose of charisma just by virtue of his position (in addition, of course, to any charisma deriving from his personal characteristics).

While some later scholars have criticised what appears as a contradiction in Weber's theory (e.g., Tucker 1968), others have picked up and elaborated on these ideas. Shils (1965), for instance, has taken issue with historicist readings of charisma, and posited that the latter can and does exist in dispersed form in any rational-legal social system. It is especially those institutions that are high up in the system that carry charisma because of their proximity to the ultimate values and principles ordering society and its members, and their consequent ability to defend and preserve such values, but also change them. In linking the metaphysical and the earthly order, Shils continues, these offices perform a function analogous to the connection between God and people that the charismatic leader performs in the original, religious meaning of the term.

Whether a product of individual traits or the consequence of an office, charismatic leadership is particularly likely to appear and thrive in situations of social crisis. Junctures in which common values are at stake, institutions are under pressure and unable to offer clear answers to people's needs, are fertile ground for the emergence of leaders able to respond to collective and individual anxieties by 'mak[ing] sense of an incomprehensible reality' and providing 'guides for action and a promise for the future' (Spencer 1973: 345). The charismatic leader, Tucker (1968: 742) notes, 'is one in whom ... the promise or hope

of salvation – deliverance from distress – appears to be embodied. He is a leader who convincingly offers himself to a group of people in distress as one peculiarly qualified to lead them out of their predicament.’

At the same time, situations of crisis make it easier for charismatic leadership to deliver on its promise by loosening societal and structural constraints, so expanding the space for leaders to break old organisational and institutional frames, and promote and eventually establish new ones (Pillai 1996). In this sense, charismatic leadership often overlaps with (although it remains distinct from) the idea of ‘transformational leadership’ (Bass 1985; Yukl 1999).

More recently, organisational scholars have further explored the dynamics and mechanisms of charisma, particularly during crises, working from two different but complementary angles. Drawing mainly on management studies and social psychology, and on a large body of (often questionnaire-based) empirical research, a number of scholars have spelled out the ways in which charisma plays out and affects social action in various settings. By presenting resonant ideas, articulating a vision and future objectives, and in some cases providing role models, charismatic leaders are able to respond to and stimulate certain follower needs in times of uncertainty, for example, by improving followers’ self-esteem and self-perception, increasing their sense of belonging and loyalty to a group, and providing templates for desirable behaviour. This in turn increases followers’ commitment to common goals and motivation for action and change (House 1977; Shamir et al. 1993; Choi 2006).

Another strand of scholarship has elaborated on the coordinative aspects of charismatic leadership, building on insights from economics, political communication and game theory. Social crises are here depicted as situations akin to Rousseauian stag hunt games, in which the collapse of old frames of reference and behavioural guides leaves the members of a group uncertain about each other’s preferences and hence unable to coordinate for collective action. Charismatic leadership is able to break this strategic uncertainty by means of ‘values-based, symbolic, and emotion-laden’ signaling (Antonakis et al. 2016: 304). Signals have a number of functions: they indicate that the (potential) leader is willing to act as the first mover to break the social impasse, they convey certain skills (so making leadership credible) and they indicate the direction of social action by transmitting a vision and commitment to a course of action. Needless to say, viewing charisma as signaling places great emphasis on the importance of communication – both verbal and non-verbal – in shaping and strengthening leadership (Frese et al. 2003; Antonakis et al. 2011; 2016; Reh et al. 2017).

### *The ECB president as a charismatic leader*

At a first glance, the ECB and its presidency might not appear as the best place to look for charismatic leadership, due to their detachment from traditional political and electoral mechanisms (Szabo 2016). Yet there are at least three factors which justify an analysis of the ECB and its role in the euro crisis through the lenses of charisma. The first is the Bank’s position as perhaps the most state-like among EU institutions, with managing powers over one of the traditional core instruments of sovereign power – that is, currency. The ECB’s position as a ‘new Leviathan’ (Howarth & Loedel 2003) in the making gives it not only tremendous power – probably greater than any other supranational body – with respect to the Eurozone’s (and the EU’s) economic and political life, but also symbolic significance

as the embodiment of Europe as a bounded political and social entity (Kaelberer 2004; McNamara 2015). This places the ECB and its presidency in that mediating position between the transcendent and earthly orders which Shils identifies as a key characteristic of ‘charismatic offices’.

The second factor refers precisely to the ECB’s role *vis-à-vis* the tenets underpinning the EU and the Eurozone. While one should not overstate the ‘paradigmatic’ effects of the ECB’s anti-crisis policies, it is fair to say that, at least under Draghi, the Bank has been the institutional actor most effectively challenging – or at any rate compensating for – the Eurozone’s ordoliberal principles. The ECB has done so, first, by gradually transforming itself along the lines of a ‘normal’ central bank and, second, by introducing some doses of Keynesianism in the political economy of the Union (Matthijs & Blyth 2018). Seen in this light, the rift between the ECB and Germany is not just a matter of immediate politics, but a confrontation between different organisational frames.

The final reason for the study of the ECB presidency as a charismatic actor has to do with the Bank’s increased public profile as a result of the crisis, in terms of both greater media coverage (e.g., Drewski 2015) and improved openness and communication about policies and decisions with the European public and its representatives in the European Parliament (Torres 2013; Collignon & Diessner 2016). This increased public profile partly makes up for the ECB’s lack of a politico-electoral base, and provides the basis for examining the ECB presidency along the lines of a leader-followers relationship.

### *Language and charisma*

It is clear from the foregoing that charisma is a complex phenomenon whose detection and measurement elude simple solutions. Two characteristics of charisma, in particular, pose challenges for its empirical study. The first is the role of intangible or not immediately observable factors such as the charismatic aura or the public perception of the leader. The second is charisma’s inherently relational nature: to be charismatic, a leader not only has to possess certain qualities and behave in certain ways, but needs also to be seen by followers as possessing charisma. Given the multifaceted nature of charisma, it should not be a surprise that the concept has been operationalised in a variety of (often partial) ways in the empirical literature (for an overview, see Antonakis et al. 2016).

In the remainder of this article we concentrate on a particular aspect and measure for the operationalisation of charisma – namely communication. While communication clearly does not exhaust the idea of charisma – it leaves out, above all, its perceptual dimension – it is viewed as a core feature of the concept and dynamics of charismatic leadership both in traditional sociological and in more recent psychological theories, as shown in the above overview. It is primarily through communication that the charismatic leaders manifest themselves as such, and transmit their values and vision to followers (Tucker 1968). Language, in particular, has long been deemed a key element of charisma, as well as a reliable indicator for its detection (Antonakis et al. 2011, 2016). Language is central in the signaling and transmission of values, beliefs, symbolism and emotions to followers, and in capturing their imagination. And the more verbal communication resonates with the values, beliefs and frames of the followers, the readier the latter will be to attribute to the speaker exceptional qualities in terms of courage, wisdom and competence, and trust

him in situations of uncertainty – ultimately making him a prototypical charismatic leader (Antonakis et al. 2016).

Scholars have elaborated on these ideas by attempting to pinpoint the linguistic characteristics of charismatic leadership. The main reference here is provided by two seminal studies by Shamir et al. (1993, 1994), who have laid out the rhetoric of charisma by identifying seven principal traits that distinguish it from non-charismatic language:

- (1) More references to collective history and to the continuity between the past and the present;
- (2) More references to the collective and to collective identity, and fewer references to individual self-interest;
- (3) More positive references to followers' worth and efficacy as individuals and as a collective;
- (4) More references to the leader's similarity to followers and identification with followers;
- (5) More references to values and moral justifications, and fewer references to tangible outcomes and instrumental justifications;
- (6) More references to distal goals and the distant future, and fewer references to proximal goals and the near future; and
- (7) More references to hope and faith. (Shamir et al. 1994: 29)

The studies by Shamir and coauthors have since been the basis for a number of empirical analyses of charismatic leadership in times of crisis (e.g., Bligh et al. 2004; Bligh & Hess 2007; Davis & Gardner 2012; Bastardo et al. 2015). Recently this theoretical framework has also been applied to the case of the euro crisis in order to appraise the charismatic rhetoric and leadership of the President of the European Commission (Olsson & Hammargård 2016). In the remainder of the article we will further extend this language-based approach to measure the presence of charisma in the crisis leadership of the ECB.

### **Research design and empirical analysis**

As stated at the outset of the article, the objective of our research is to establish if the crisis leadership of the ECB, and particularly its presidency, can be described as rhetorically charismatic. This broad research question in turn implies two causal sub-questions: the first is whether the euro crisis has led the ECB presidency to use a more charismatic language; and the second is whether such a shift – should it be detected – has been mediated by individual factors. As mentioned in the foregoing, it is particularly under Mario Draghi's presidency that the ECB has taken the lead in crisis management and has been perceived, and often criticised, as politicised. Therefore, should an increase in the ECB's charismatic rhetoric in the crisis years be observed, we must ask whether this is the effect of the crisis itself on the holder of the ECB presidency office (no matter who this person is) or, on the contrary, just the result of Draghi's own personal characteristics.

To answer these questions, we have conducted a content analysis of the entire corpus of ECB presidential speeches from the inception of the Bank in 1998 to 31 December 2016.<sup>2</sup> The corpus consists of 560 speeches, of which 129 are by the Bank's first president

Wim Duisenberg, 312 by Jean-Claude Trichet and 119 by Mario Draghi. While speeches are not the only way in which the ECB communicates, we have both theoretical and methodological reasons to focus on this particular corpus. In the first place, speeches are the ECB's main form of public communication, hence the place where the charismatic leadership of the Bank's presidency, if any, is most likely to be matched by verbal markers and signals. Second, and from a more methodological standpoint, speeches present the important advantages of accessibility, plenitude and relative standardization – all of which facilitate and strengthen empirical analysis and comparison.<sup>3</sup>

To analyse the texts we have used the DICTION 7 software (Hart 2001). Created specifically to analyse the tone of political discourse in speeches and other types of texts, DICTION codes text on 31 pre-defined variables using in-built dictionaries and assigns scores reflecting the presence and weight of dictionary terms. Generally speaking, dictionary-based software analysis presents methodological pros and cons. Among the latter are difficulties in detecting nuances in language and differentiating between contexts. These shortcomings, however, are compensated by the software's ability to process large text corpora (as needed in our case) and its high levels of coding reliability.

Relying on a well-established method (Bligh et al. 2004; Bligh & Robinson 2010; Davis & Gardner 2012; Bastardoz et al. 2015; Olsson & Hammargård 2016), we have analysed the corpus of ECB speeches by combining DICTION variables into seven composite constructs, building on the linguistic characteristics of charisma listed in the previous section. Table 1 summarises the seven constructs and the corresponding formulas of DICTION variables, along with sample words for each variable and text examples extracted from various ECB presidential speeches.<sup>4</sup>

The constructs can be kept separate for a fine-grained analysis of charisma's components or aggregated into a single index of charismatic rhetoric by subtracting the value of *tangibility* from the sum of the six remaining constructs.<sup>5</sup> Figure 1 presents a first overview of the charismatic content of the corpus under examination by plotting the year-by-year mean value of the speeches' aggregate indicator of charisma. A first visual inspection reveals a general increase in the charismatic content of ECB speeches over time, and particularly in the past decade or so, in correspondence with the financial crisis years. Interestingly, there also seems to be a considerable drop in charismatic rhetoric in the past couple of years, which might be accompanying Europe's recent return to more stable and favourable economic conditions.

The next step in answering our research questions is to assess the statistical significance of the observed increase in charismatic rhetoric from before to during the crisis period, so as to establish whether this variation is likely to reflect a true difference in the underlying populations. In the absence of statistical significance, the null hypothesis that the underlying populations are the same, and that the observed increase is due to sheer chance, cannot be safely discarded.

Broadly speaking, there are two ways in which such a test can be run. The first, following much of the quantitative literature on charismatic rhetoric (e.g., Bligh et al. 2004, 2010; Davis & Gardner 2012; Schroedel et al. 2013; Olsson & Hammargård 2016), relies on univariate and multivariate analyses of co-variance (ANCOVA and MANCOVA), two techniques for testing the significance of mean differences in a dependent variable of interest (in our case, charismatic language) across samples, while also controlling for a number of factors

Table 1. The seven linguistic constructs of charisma

| Construct   | DICTION 7 variables  | Sample terms   | Examples from corpus (emphasis added)  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <i>Collective focus</i> : Charismatic leaders show a collective orientation and describe their actions and goals as directed towards common achievements and interests.   | Collectives<br>+ People references<br><br>- Self-reference | Assembly, cabinet, humanity, mankind, nation<br>Crowd, residents, constituencies, majority, citizenry, population<br>I, I'd, I'll, I'm, I've, me, mine, my, myself, race, union  | Our responsibility towards <i>the people of this continent</i> is indeed to put in place a sustainable economic model that helps to increase employment and boost growth. (Mario Draghi, 'Stronger together in Europe', Frankfurt, 20 November 2014)<br><br>We must keep our <i>European perspective</i> – and stand up for our <i>common interests</i> . (Mario Draghi, 'The future of Europe', Frankfurt, 22 November 2013)  |
| <i>Temporal orientation</i> : Charismatic leaders use more temporal references and tend to highlight the continuity between the past and the present.   | Present concern<br><br>+ Past concern                      | Become, care, desire, make, need, request, take, want<br><br>Became, cared, desired, made, needed, requested, took, wanted   | Throughout the <i>five years</i> of its existence, the ECB <i>has stated</i> that a strong euro is good for a strong Europe. <i>I would now like to add</i> that a strong Europe is good for a strong euro. (Wim Duisenberg, 'The first lustrum of the ECB', Frankfurt, 16 June 2003)  |
| <i>Follower's worth</i> : Charismatic leaders highlight the positive aspects of the followers and reinforce their sense of awareness <i>vis-à-vis</i> the achievement of collective goals (collective self-efficacy). | Praise<br><br>+ Inspiration<br><br>+ Satisfaction          | Admirable, brave, delightful, intelligent, kind, lovely, respected<br><br>Ambition, devotion, ideals, leadership, merit, optimism, promise, reassurance<br><br>Comfort, cherish, delight, fascinate, gratify, laugh, love, pleasure, rejoice | [W]hile we ensure a strict separation between monetary policy and banking supervision, both these areas of activity will be able to rely on the <i>accumulated expertise</i> in shared services areas and of course be inspired by the European spirit that guides our work. The SSM is also benefiting from the <i>experience and resources</i> of the national authorities. We have combined <i>all these strengths</i> . (Mario Draghi, 'Stronger together in Europe', Frankfurt, 20 November 2014) |

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued

| Construct  | DICTION 7 variables  | Sample terms   | Examples from corpus (emphasis added)   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <i>Similarity to followers</i> : Charismatic leaders highlight their own similarity to followers by describing themselves as 'one of them'.  | Leveling<br>+ Familiarity<br>+ Human interest                  | Anybody, everybody, fully, obvious, permanent, totally, unquestionably<br>About, between, for, on, past, than, who, with<br>Children, family, friends, parents, yours, charity, blessing, faith, hope  | Economic growth is not an end in itself – its purpose is to empower individuals and to raise the sum of human happiness. So we have to ensure that <i>everyone can make a contribution</i> – and that efficiency and equity are reconciled and no one is left behind. (Mario Draghi, 'Introductory statement at the Italian Parliament', Rome, 26 March 2015)   |
| <i>Tangibility</i> : Charismatic leaders devote less attention to concrete and short-term goals, and are more prone to discuss their expectations and goals in abstract and general terms. | Concreteness<br>+ Insistence<br>– Variety                      | Animal, baseball, cancer, factory, household, movie, school, sugar<br>Score calculated on the basis of repetition of key terms<br>Score calculated by dividing different words in a passage by total words   | In the first half of the year, euro area <i>real GDP</i> growth stagnated in the context of considerable <i>economic and geopolitical uncertainty</i> , due to the escalation of <i>tensions in Iraq</i> and the associated <i>turbulence in oil prices</i> and financial markets. (Jean-Claude Trichet, Presentation of the ECB's Annual Report 2003, Brussels, 27 April 2004)   |
| <i>Action</i> : Charismatic leaders use an action-oriented language in order to mobilise followers and describe themselves as 'proactive'.   | Aggression<br>+ Accomplishment<br>– Passivity<br>– Ambivalence | Attack, challenge, combat, dominate, furious, hurt, kill, oppose, preempt<br>Achieve, aspire, create, finish, motivate, pursuit, resolution, succeed<br>Accept, acquiesce, complacent, disinterested, hesitate, laekadaisical<br>Blur, confound, hesitate, puzzle, quandary, vacillate, wonder | <i>We need to secure</i> the economic recovery, <i>reduce fragmentation</i> in the euro area and <i>continue</i> the process of institutional and structural reform. To achieve this, it is essential that <i>we do not retreat</i> into purely national perspectives. ... <i>We need to act</i> as much when there is a risk that inflation in the medium term might become too low as well as too high. (Mario Draghi, 'The future of Europe', Frankfurt, 22 November 2013) |
| <i>Adversity</i> : Charismatic leaders describe the situation as intolerable with the aim of supporting the proposed alternative 'visionary future' and moving to action.                  | Blame<br>+ Hardship<br>+ Denial                                | Contemptible, desperate, guilty, incompetent, mediocre, rash, senile<br>Conflict, crisis, death, fear, insecurity, loss, outrage, sorrow, tension<br>Didn't, hadn't, never, wasn't, wouldn't   | As we now all recognise, if left on its own, finance has the potential to spiral <i>out of control</i> , for example through leverage cycles, triggering <i>financial disruption, wealth destruction and economic hardship</i> for our people. (Jean-Claude Trichet, 'Building a crisis management framework for the internal market', Brussels, 19 March 2010)   |

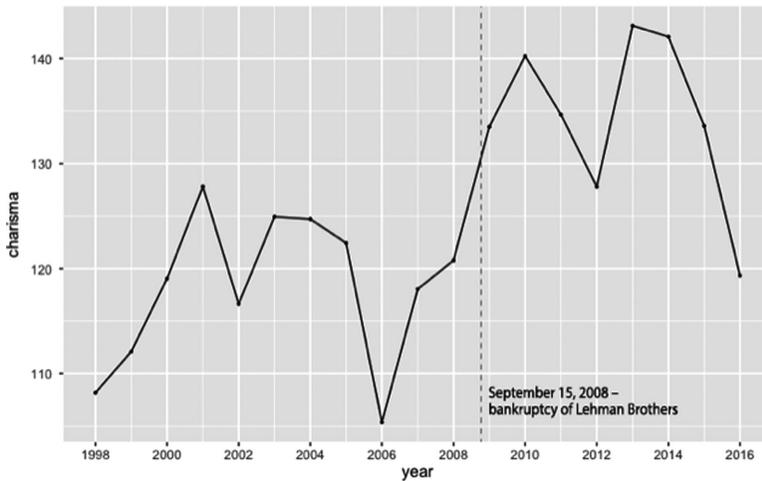


Figure 1. The ECB presidency's charismatic rhetoric over time, 1998–2016.

(covariates) that might be related to that variable. In recent years a part of the charisma scholarship has moved away from the analysis of covariance to propose the regression discontinuity design (RDD) as an alternative method (e.g., Antonakis et al. 2010; Bastardoz et al. 2015; Steffens et al. 2017). Compared to ANCOVA/MANCOVA, the RDD allows the modeling of the assignment variable (in our case, time) in the regression model – thus tackling endogeneity problems resulting from the non-random nature of the sample distribution – and concentrates on the significance of differences in the dependent variable around the cut-off point between groups, rather than throughout samples (Lee & Lemieux 2010).

While recognising the merits of the RDD, we believe that the analysis of covariance remains, on balance, a better method for our case, for two reasons. First, although our group selection method is clearly not random, we have no reason to expect time to have, in and of itself, an independent effect on the charismatic language of the ECB presidency. As such, the endogeneity that the RDD is designed to solve should not be too problematic an issue in our case. The second and more important reason has to do with the nature of the global and European financial crisis, which escapes the identification of a single, unequivocal starting point, but has instead unfolded more gradually over time. Accordingly, a method that treats the division between periods as more conventional than absolute and looks at the samples in their entirety is more appropriate than one placing most of the weight on the cut-off point based on the expectation of a sudden change in the dependent variable (charismatic language). In the remainder of this section we therefore present analyses of covariance as our primary identification strategy and use the RDD as an auxiliary technique, aimed to check the robustness of our results.

For our tests we divide the period under examination into two sub-periods, 'pre-crisis' and 'crisis', placing the cut-off point conventionally at 15 September 2008, the day in which the investment bank Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy, starting the chain of events making up the global financial crisis. As discussed above, this was also the time during which the ECB began to deploy the first ordinary and extraordinary instruments to tackle the

Table 2. The euro crisis and the ECB presidency's charismatic rhetoric: Aggregate results

|          | Pre-crisis<br>period<br>MEAN | Standard<br>error | Crisis<br>period<br>MEAN | Standard<br>error | Univariate<br>F (1, 557) | Partial eta<br>squared | Observed<br>power |
|----------|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Charisma | 118.811                      | 2.187             | 133.626                  | 2.454             | 20.221***                | 0.035                  | 0.994             |

Notes: Pre-crisis period N = 312; crisis period N = 248. \*\*\* p < 0.001.

Table 3. The euro crisis and the ECB presidency's charismatic rhetoric: Results by single construct

| Charismatic<br>construct   | Pre-crisis<br>period<br>MEAN | Standard<br>error | Crisis<br>period<br>MEAN | Standard<br>error | Univariate<br>F (1, 557) | Partial eta<br>squared | Observed<br>power |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Collective focus           | 1.751                        | 0.326             | 3.045                    | 0.366             | 6.943**                  | 0.012                  | 0.749             |
| Temporal<br>orientation    | 10.583                       | 0.226             | 11.744                   | 0.254             | 11.623**                 | 0.020                  | 0.926             |
| Followers'<br>worth        | 14.209                       | 0.386             | 15.217                   | 0.433             | 3.007 ns                 | 0.005                  | 0.410             |
| Similarity to<br>followers | 161.655                      | 0.928             | 160.354                  | 1.042             | 0.865 ns                 | 0.002                  | 0.153             |
| Tangibility                | 78.470                       | 1.811             | 70.119                   | 2.032             | 9.368**                  | 0.017                  | 0.863             |
| Action                     | 2.597                        | 0.618             | 4.085                    | 0.694             | 2.548 ns                 | 0.005                  | 0.357             |
| Adversity                  | 6.485                        | 0.236             | 9.300                    | 0.264             | 62.863***                | 0.101                  | 1.000             |

Notes: Pre-crisis period N = 312; crisis period N = 248. \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001; ns = non-significant value.

effects of the crisis in Europe. Our division places 312 speeches in the pre-crisis period and 248 in the crisis one.

As a first test, we performed a univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) comparing the aggregate measure of the ECB's charismatic rhetoric (the dependent variable) across the two periods (the independent variable), including the total number of words in each speech as a covariate, to control for speech length.<sup>6</sup> As Table 2 shows, the test determines that the difference in the mean values of the aggregate index of charisma across periods is statistically significant ( $F(1, 557) = 20.221, p < 0.001$ ). This confirms our general hypothesis that in the euro crisis years there has been an increase in the charismatic rhetoric of the ECB presidency.

To add a more fine-grained examination of these results, we have then looked into the seven linguistic constructs taken individually by means of a one-way multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) on the adjusted mean value of each construct in the two periods. As in the previous test, the total number of words was included as a covariate. The multivariate test confirms the results we obtained for the aggregate charisma index, attesting significant differences between the two time-periods (Wilks's Lambda = 0.840,  $F(7, 551) = 14.994, p < 0.001$ ). As Table 3 shows, the test determined that four out of the seven constructs – *Collective focus*, *Temporal orientation*, *Adversity* and *Tangibility* – changed in the expected direction as a result of the crisis (i.e., the first four increased, while *Tangibility* decreased). Conversely, results for *Action*, *Followers' worth* and *Similarity to*

Table 4. The euro crisis and the ECB presidency's charismatic rhetoric: Trichet's speeches

|          | Trichet pre-crisis period MEAN | Standard error | Trichet crisis period MEAN | Standard error | Univariate F (1, 309) | Partial eta squared | Observed power |
|----------|--------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Charisma | 119.643                        | 2.859          | 133.858                    | 3.423          | 9.875**               | 0.031               | 0.880          |

Notes: Trichet pre-crisis period N = 183; Trichet crisis period N = 129. \*\*p < 0.01.

Table 5. Individual characteristics and the ECB presidency's charismatic rhetoric: Trichet and Draghi

|          | Trichet crisis period MEAN | Standard error | Draghi crisis period MEAN | Standard error | Univariate F (1, 245) | Partial eta squared | Observed power |
|----------|----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Charisma | 134.601                    | 3.162          | 133.062                   | 3.294          | 0.113 ns              | 0.000               | 0.063          |

Notes: Trichet crisis period N = 129; Draghi crisis period N = 119. ns = non-significant value.

*followers* show no statistical significance, which means we cannot exclude that the observed variation is due to chance. At least as far as the last two constructs are concerned, a preliminary explanation – which, however, would require further testing – might be that because the ECB is not an elected body, the rhetorical aspects that relate most closely to its relationship with the European citizenry (the ‘followers’) are less important in its charismatic discourse than it might be the case for a traditional political actor or institution.<sup>7</sup>

As already noted, the above tests by themselves do not distinguish between the direct effect of the euro crisis on the charismatic rhetoric of the ECB presidency and the effect that might have been produced by individual factors, regardless of the crisis. More precisely, the analysis does not tell us to what extent the observed increase in charismatic rhetoric might be an independent effect of the personal characteristics of Mario Draghi, who has held the ECB presidency for over five of the roughly eight years that we have classified as the crisis period. The lag between the beginning of the crisis and the Draghi presidency, however, allows us to separate individual dynamics from the effects of the crisis itself, in order to answer this question. We have done so in two ways. First, we have isolated the presidency of Jean-Claude Trichet (1 November 2003 to 31 October 2011) and run a one-way ANCOVA with the same characteristics as above but limited to the corpus of his speeches, dividing them between those held in the pre-crisis period (183) and those held in the crisis years (129). The test results, summarised in Table 4, show a statistically significant increase in the charismatic rhetoric of Trichet's speeches in the crisis period ( $F(1, 309) = 9.875, p < 0.01$ ). In other words, the effect of the crisis on the ECB president's charismatic language remains even once we control for personal factors by holding them constant.

We, then, have run a further mirroring test by isolating all presidential speeches held during the crisis period, and checking for the significance of the difference between those by Draghi (119) and those by Trichet (129), so as to hold the crisis factor constant (thus controlling for it) and focus on the effect, if any, of individual characteristics. As Table 5 shows, there is no significant difference between the charismatic content of the two presidents' corpora of crisis speeches. This rather surprising result shows that, at least linguistically speaking, Mario Draghi cannot be said to be a more charismatic president than

Table 6. Individual characteristics and the ECB presidency's charismatic rhetoric: Trichet and Draghi – results by single construct

| Charismatic construct   | Trichet crisis period MEAN | Standard error | Draghi crisis period MEAN | Standard error | Univariate F (1, 245) | Partial eta squared | Observed power |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Collective focus        | 3.008                      | 0.423          | 3.126                     | 0.440          | 0.037 ns              | 0.000               | 0.054          |
| Temporal orientation    | 10.675                     | 0.321          | 12.832                    | 0.334          | 21.541***             | 0.081               | 0.996          |
| Followers' worth        | 15.069                     | 0.481          | 15.418                    | 0.503          | 0.203 ns              | 0.001               | 0.073          |
| Similarity to followers | 162.100                    | 1.315          | 158.725                   | 1.369          | 3.133 ns              | 0.013               | 0.422          |
| Tangibility             | 69.288                     | 2.630          | 70.683                    | 2.739          | 0.134 ns              | 0.001               | 0.065          |
| Action                  | 3.876                      | 0.681          | 4.400                     | 0.709          | 0.281 ns              | 0.001               | 0.082          |
| Adversity               | 9.161                      | 0.400          | 9.244                     | 0.417          | 1.436 ns              | 0.000               | 0.052          |

Notes: Trichet crisis period N = 129; Draghi crisis period N = 119. \*\*\*p < 0.001; ns = non-significant value.

Jean-Claude Trichet. Moreover, it reinforces our finding of a relationship between the euro crisis and the charismatic rhetoric of the ECB presidency.

Like before, for this test we have looked more closely at the seven individual constructs so as to establish whether the aggregate picture shown above hides some interesting fine-grained rhetorical differences between Draghi and Trichet – put differently, whether the two presidents have been linguistically charismatic in different ways as a result of the crisis. Table 6 shows the results of a MANCOVA run on the mean values of the seven individual constructs from the crisis speeches of Draghi and Trichet. Interestingly, the analysis confirms the overall similarity between the rhetoric of the two presidents: while some values are higher for Draghi and others for Trichet, none of these differences is statistically significant, with the sole exception of *Temporal orientation*, which is higher and statistically significant for Draghi.

#### *Robustness check: Regression discontinuity design*

As discussed above, by placing the emphasis on the cut-off point between the pre-crisis and the crisis period, the regression discontinuity design is better suited to analysing the effects of sudden and unequivocal crisis events (such as a natural disaster or a terrorist attack). Given the different configuration of the global and European financial crises, we do not expect our results to be perfectly replicable by means of a RDD. However, if our results are robust enough, they should hold, at least in part, with an alternative model specification.

Following the same setup as above, we have first tested the effect of the crisis on the aggregate value of the ECB's charismatic language at the cut-off point of 15 September 2008, modelling our regression to account for the interaction between time and the time-centred grouping factor ('pre-crisis' and 'crisis'). Accordingly, we included three independent variables: *period*, *time* and the *interaction term between period and time* (see also Bastardoz et al. 2015), where *period* is a binary variable with a value of 0 and 1, and *time* is the number of days separating the date of each speech from the cut-off date. The *total numbers of words*

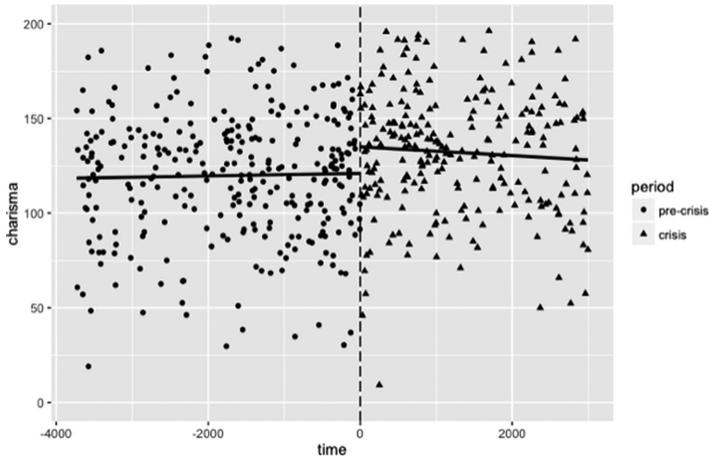


Figure 2. The euro crisis and the ECB presidency’s charismatic rhetoric: Regression discontinuity plot.

of the speeches was included as a covariate to control for speech length. Finally, we added a categorical variable, *president*, to control for any effect of the individual characteristics of the three ECB presidents. The regression is presented visually in Figure 2.

On the whole, the RDD results are consistent with those of the analyses of covariance presented above: as Table 7 shows, the level of charismatic rhetoric of the ECB presidency displays a statistically significant increase at the crisis cut-off point ( $\beta = 14.240$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), while the identity of the president does not have any statistically significant effect on charismatic language. Furthermore, the RDD shows that time, whether by itself or interacted with period, is not correlated with the dependent variable, confirming our initial expectations.<sup>8</sup>

Next, we performed an analogous test on the seven charismatic constructs taken individually by means of a seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) to keep track of the

Table 7. RDD estimates for charisma and individual constructs (SUR)

| Charismatic construct | Charisma             | Collective focus     | Temporal orientation   | Follower’s worth     | Similarity to followers | Tangibility          | Action              | Adversity            |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| period                | 14.2400*<br>(6.3490) | 2.5807**<br>(0.9417) | 1.0576<br>(0.6290)     | 1.1593<br>(1.1068)   | 2.1565<br>(2.6844)      | -6.6147<br>(5.2467)  | -1.1532<br>(1.7745) | 1.8204**<br>(0.6822) |
| time                  | 0.0010<br>(0.0039)   | -0.0014*<br>(0.0006) | -0.0017***<br>(0.0004) | -0.0010<br>(0.0007)  | -0.0007<br>(0.0017)     | -0.0048<br>(0.0032)  | 0.0005<br>(0.0011)  | 0.0005<br>(0.0004)   |
| total_words           | -0.0012<br>(0.0010)  | -0.0001<br>(0.0001)  | 0.0001<br>(0.0001)     | -0.0002<br>(0.0002)  | -0.0006<br>(0.0004)     | 0.0007<br>(0.0008)   | -0.0003<br>(0.0003) | 0.0005**<br>(0.0001) |
| president2            | -1.5860<br>(13.5400) | -2.0682<br>(2.0077)  | -2.4187<br>(1.3409)    | -6.0864*<br>(2.3596) | 4.0433<br>(5.7230)      | -7.6361<br>(11.1855) | -3.4649<br>(3.7831) | 0.7727<br>(1.4543)   |
| president3            | -1.6740<br>(10.0000) | 0.0499<br>(1.4836)   | 0.0360<br>(0.9909)     | -1.5074<br>(1.7437)  | 3.1605<br>(4.2292)      | 3.8152<br>(8.2659)   | 0.0247<br>(2.7956)  | 0.3771<br>(1.0747)   |
| period*time           | -0.0025<br>(0.0068)  | 0.0014<br>(0.0010)   | 0.0031***<br>(0.0007)  | 0.0003<br>(0.0012)   | 0.0006<br>(0.0029)      | 0.0075<br>(0.0056)   | -0.0003<br>(0.0019) | -0.0001<br>(0.0007)  |

Notes: N = 560. Standard errors in parentheses. \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001.

disturbances between the different dependent variables (Bastardo et al. 2015). For this operation we relied on the *systemfit* package for R (Henningsen & Hamann 2007). As shown in Table 7, when disaggregated, our results are not perfectly aligned with the previous ones: of the four constructs on which the crisis had a significant effects in the MANCOVA, only two – *Collective focus* and *Adversity* – remain significant in the RDD.

Read together with the outcome of the aggregate regression, these results indicate that, to the extent that we are looking for an immediate effect of the global financial crisis (represented here by the collapse of Lehman Brothers) on the ECB presidency's charismatic language, this effect is still to be found, but is carried mostly by the change in two of the seven components of charisma. The remaining two constructs, on the other hand, have moved more gradually over time, so escaping significance when tested through the RDD.

All things being considered, the fact that most of our ANCOVA/MANCOVA analysis (and in particular the aggregate-level one) holds when replicated with the different specification of the RDD is, we believe, a good indicator of the robustness of our results.

## Discussion and conclusion

To recap, our content analysis of the ECB presidential speeches corpus has found a solid correlation between the euro crisis and the charismatic rhetoric of the Bank's presidency, as measured through the aggregation of DICTION's seven linguistic constructs. The correlation holds well when the analysis is conducted on the individual constructs, four of which show statistically significant variation from the pre-crisis to the crisis period. Finally, by means of two additional analyses controlling, respectively, for individual factors and period, we have been able to rule out any significant mediation of the effect of the euro crisis on the ECB presidency's charismatic rhetoric on the part of President Mario Draghi's personal characteristics. The overall consistency between our ANCOVA/MANCOVA analysis and the outcome of the alternative RDD specification lends additional support to the robustness of our results.

Once again, we should be clear about the limitations of this study, which has focused on a particular aspect of charismatic leadership – namely language – and has examined the ECB presidency's charismatic rhetoric via the analysis of a specific type of communication embodied by presidential speeches. That said, given the key role of public communication in the dynamics of charismatic leadership, the reliability of language as an indicator of charisma, and finally the robustness of our empirical results, we feel confident in concluding that our study supports the hypothesis that the euro crisis has led to the emergence of the ECB presidency as a charismatic euro leader.

These results in turn suggest that the EU has conformed to the expectations of charismatic leadership theory, but has done so in an unusual way, for the charismatic response triggered by the crisis appears to have taken place in what is at least formally a technocratic body rather than among political actors – in the first place, supranational ones. In this respect our study must be read together with Olsson and Hammargård's (2016) analysis of the public rhetoric of the European Commission between 2006 and 2011, which has found a negative correlation between the severity of the financial crisis and the deployment of charismatic language on the part of the Commission president, reflecting,

more generally, the latter's fast retreat from a leadership role in tackling the euro crisis (for a more qualitative take, see also Pansardi & Battagazzorre 2016).

Our findings have a number of analytical and normative implications for the governance of the EU. Analytically, this study confirms the trend of 'politicisation' of the ECB that has been observed time and again in recent scholarly and journalistic accounts of the Bank's anti-crisis measures (e.g., Scicluna 2014; Fleming 2015; Wyplosz 2015; Högenauer & Howarth 2016). Unlike most of these accounts, however, we do not regard politicisation necessarily as a negative phenomenon. Instead, we see it more neutrally as a process whereby the ECB has stepped up its own role in the context of, and as a response to, a paucity of crisis leadership among other players. This process in turn can be interpreted negatively as the ECB's opportunistic overstepping of its limits and mandate, or positively as an act of responsibility and guardianship *vis-à-vis* the Eurozone (and the EU as a whole) as the latter's future seemed increasingly at risk (on this, see, e.g., Torres 2013). At a minimum, this alternative interpretation of politicisation as charismatic leadership should be added to the existing ones to further enrich the political and academic debate on this topic – not least because it lends itself to being tracked empirically through language, as we have done here, so mitigating the 'essentially contested nature' of politicisation as a concept (Gallie 1956).

Our analysis of the ECB as a rhetorically charismatic actor is also important normatively. The foremost problem linked to the political role of the ECB is its lack of democratic legitimacy. The Bank's highly independent setup, the argument goes, has a counterweight in the strict mandate – to ensure price stability – given to it by the Treaties. As soon as the ECB starts exceeding the limits of its mandate (or at any rate is perceived to do so) to influence the Eurozone's economic policy beyond its monetary policy mission, the question is immediately raised of 'who elected the ECB' to take such initiatives. In Weberian terms, this can be formulated as a problem of rational-legal authority: when acting outside of its statutory powers, the Bank loses, by definition, the authority conferred to it by the Treaties without being able to make up for it with the sort of authority deriving from an electoral mandate (or, more realistically, from acting on the instructions of another body endowed with such a mandate). However, to the extent that charisma is considered an alternative basis of legitimacy, along the lines suggested by Weber, the problem posed by the ECB's lack of rational-legal authority is mitigated, at least in part. Put differently, as long as the ECB presents itself, acts and is perceived as the saviour of the Eurozone and the EU more generally, its deficit of democratic accountability might be regarded as less of a problem. In this article we have explored empirically the specific communicative side of charisma as a source of authority. Future analytical and normative work on the ECB should expand on these ideas by looking at different aspects of charisma and, more generally, examining the question of alternative bases of political legitimacy in times of crisis.

Yet charismatic authority is very dependent on the performance of the charismatic leader. In this sense, the ECB's legitimation through charisma is intertwined with the widespread notion, illustrated in the introduction to this article, that the Bank so far has been the main bulwark against a breakup of the euro. Should this cease to be the case – either for exogenous reasons, such as a new deterioration of the European economy, or following changes in the ECB's own conduct and policies, such as the future phasing out of the quantitative easing programme – the democratic legitimacy problem will come back in full force and call for a more stable solution in the form of a retreat of the Bank to a purely

technocratic role or, alternatively, a radical restructuring of its governance architecture to connect it more closely to the Eurozone's political authorities, ultimately increasing the ECB's democratic accountability.

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## Notes

1. *Gauweiler & Others v. Deutscher Bundestag*. Judgement of the Court (Grand Chamber) of 16 June 2015. C-62/14.
2. Speeches were downloaded from the European Central Bank website at: [www.ecb.europa.eu/press/key/date/2016/html/index.en.html](http://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/key/date/2016/html/index.en.html)
3. We are, of course, also aware that ECB presidential speeches are usually written in part or entirely by speechwriters. However, we do not consider this aspect particularly problematic for our analysis, for two interrelated reasons. The first is the assumption that, by approving and adopting his speeches, the ECB president acquires 'ownership' of their content and language. The second, and more important reason is that as far as the attribution of charisma and the latter's effects are concerned, what matters is not so much the origin and authorship of a speech, but rather its public delivery, which in our case is, by definition, carried out always by the ECB president (on this issue, see also Jacquart & Antonakis 2015).
4. Note that Bligh et al. (2004), Bligh and Robinson (2010), and Davis and Gardner (2012) include an eighth construct, labelled 'values/moral justification'. Similar to the more recent study by Olsson and Hammargård (2016), we limit our analysis to seven constructs following the removal of the variables making up the values/moral justification construct from the latest version of DICTION.
5. The aggregation formula follows Bligh et al. (2004: 225).
6. Unlike Olsson and Hammargård (2016), we do not include the number of unique words in each speech as a further covariate, due to its high degree of correlation with the covariate *total words analysed* ( $r = 0.996, p < 0.001$ ).
7. Interestingly, in their study on the crisis rhetoric of the European Commission presidency – whose accountability to European voters and their representatives is greater than the ECB – Olsson and Hammargård (2016) find *followers' worth* to be the only construct that increased with statistical significance, amidst an otherwise uncharismatic reaction to the crisis. This could be seen as lending further support to the explanation sketched above.
8. That said, a cautious observation could be made that charismatic rhetoric seems to have decreased in recent years – as indicated by the downward slope of the crisis period regression line – consistently to what was already observed for Figure 1.

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