

Personalism, disinformation and anti-system community-building: an analysis of the 2024 European election campaign of the political party “Se Acabó La Fiesta” on Telegram

Personalismo, desinformación y comunidad antisistema: análisis de la campaña electoral de “Se Acabó La Fiesta” en Telegram para las elecciones europeas



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Abstract:

This article examines the political communication of “Se Acabó La Fiesta” (SALF) on Telegram during the 2024 European election campaign, aiming to assess whether its strategy is built around the symbolic role of the leader, the use of sarcasm, and mockery as rhetorical tools, features common to other digital campaigns of the new far-right. Based on a thematic analysis of 110 posts from the Alvisé Pérez channel, the study explores narratives of leadership, community, and disinformation. Findings reveal a communication style centered on Alvisé Pérez’s figure, whose symbolic role evolves from “protector” to “great communicator,” coupled with a persistent tone of confrontation toward traditional media and political elites. Disinformation and emotional provocation operate as mechanisms of mobilization and community-building. The results illustrate how Telegram functions as a political arena where hyperpersonalization, irony, and criticism converge to construct collective identity and digital belonging.

Keywords:

Election campaigns, disinformation, thematic analysis, Telegram, far-right.

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Resumen:

Este artículo analiza la comunicación política del movimiento “Se Acabó La Fiesta” (SALF) en Telegram durante la campaña de las elecciones europeas de 2024, con el objetivo de determinar si su estrategia se construye en torno al rol simbólico del líder, el tono sarcástico y la burla como recursos retóricos, tal como ocurre en otras campañas digitales de la nueva ultraderecha. A través de un análisis temático de 110 publicaciones del canal Alvisé Pérez, se examinan las narrativas sobre liderazgo, comunidad y desinformación. Los resultados evidencian una comunicación fuertemente centrada en la figura de Alvisé Pérez, cuya representación evoluciona del “protector” al “gran comunicador”, combinada con un tono de confrontación constante hacia medios y partidos tradicionales. La desinformación y la provocación emotiva actúan como herramientas de movilización y cohesión de su comunidad digital. El estudio muestra cómo Telegram funciona como un espacio de politización donde la hiperpersonalización, el humor sarcástico y la crítica se entrelazan para construir identidad política y sentimiento de pertenencia.

Palabras clave:

Campañas electorales, desinformación, análisis temático, Telegram, ultraderecha.

1. Introduction and theoretical framework

1.1. The Emergence of SALF in the Context of the European Far Right and Its Impact on Spanish Politics

In the context of the 2024 European elections, a new political party called “Se Acabó La Fiesta” (SALF) emerged in Spain, led by political social media influencer Alvisé Pérez (Riedl et al., 2023). The party obtained three seats in the European Parliament with

4.6% of the national vote (approximately 800,000 votes), despite having barely any media presence in the country's major news outlets. This political party is located within the far-right ideological spectrum, where it competes electorally and directly with the hegemonic political party in this space: Vox. According to post-election data, it appeals to a much younger and more male-dominated voter profile than average (Camargo, 2024). The entry of social-media influencers into the European Parliament, in this case, Alvisé Pérez and the SALF party, is not, in fact, an isolated phenomenon. In other countries, such as Cyprus, the same phenomenon occurred during these elections. Digital influencer Fidias obtained a seat in the European Parliament through an electoral campaign centred on YouTube (Kaymak, 2024), characterised by a populist approach and closely linked to the figure of Elon Musk. Both influencers are close to the positions espoused by the new wave of far-right populist parties (Aktas, 2024) and are also closely connected to the digital ecosystems surrounding them (Lewis, 2018).

But what political space are we referring to when we speak of the “far right”? Mudde (2021, pp. 24-25) defines it as the “political space located to the right of the classical liberal and Christian democratic right”. This space embraces anti-system positions, although to varying degrees depending on the ideological family. The extreme right advocates a non-democratic political system and more authoritarian forms of government; however, the radical right accepts democratic rules and, unlike the extreme right, incorporates its positions within the democratic framework. Nevertheless, it advocates an illiberal model of democracy in which democratic freedoms and individual and collective rights are restricted (Wagrandl, 2021). Given the discursive ambiguity of these new political actors regarding the democratic framework and the classifications mentioned above, the term “far right” is used to refer to them because the term functions as an umbrella concept encompassing the entire political space. Therefore, this study uses the term “far right” to refer to the political space in which SALF is situated.

Reactionary tendencies have gained support worldwide over the past decade, expanding their presence in institutions and influencing current processes of democratic backsliding (Aktas, 2024; Valentim, 2024). The far right has become consolidated within democratic systems, primarily through the modernisation of its discourse and its progressive political normalisation. This transformation has allowed these actors to shed their old image and association with non-democratic regimes and to adopt more mainstream communication and discourse (Brown et al., 2021), as well as greater media coverage (Krzyżanowski and Ekström, 2022). The rise of this political movement has been reflected in a sustained increase in electoral support for far-right parties, leading to significant electoral victories, such as those achieved in 2024 in countries including Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, and the United States.

The emergence of the far-right parties Vox and CHEGA in Spain and Portugal, respectively, broke with what had been termed the Iberian exception: neither country had seen parliamentary representation by far-right parties during its most recent democratic periods (Alonso and Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2014). The emergence of these parties has had clear effects on the political agenda (Bonet-Martí et al., 2023; Cheddadi, 2023), introducing political issues that challenge the democratic consensuses that had previously been taken for granted. It has also affected citizens' values, which have shifted towards more conservative views and worldviews (Informe FAD, 2020; CIS, 2023). The emergence of SALF in Spain introduces a new political actor within the far right. It positions itself as a direct competitor with Vox and potentially introduces new discursive themes, influencing the political agenda.

1.2. Online Community-Building Strategies of the Far Right: Disinformation and Political Influencers

Election campaigns carried out on social media have become a fundamental element in the mass dissemination of political messages and in establishing connections with potential voters (Castro-Martínez and Díaz-Morilla, 2021). Digital strategy has played a key role in the growth of new far-right political movements. Through decentralised structures and informally organised actions (Urman and Katz, 2022), far-right political influencers intervene in public debate through strategies of harassment and insults directed at political opponents, as well as through the dissemination of disinformation (Arencón-Beltrán et al., 2023).

In recent years, differentiated strategies of online political activism have been observed depending on the ideological space of each community. In general terms, the ideological right has demonstrated an ability to construct closed online communities that function as information bubbles and have strong ties among their members (Jasser et al., 2021; Mamié et al., 2021). The consolidation of these online communities has been supported by the conditions of certain encrypted messaging platforms, such as Signal and Telegram, and by the structures of some social networks, such as Gab, Reddit, and 4chan, which have adopted more lenient content moderation and have become common ecosystems for communities close to the far right (Thiel and McCain, 2022). From these spaces emerge communities associated with misogynistic, libertarian and nativist ideas, among others, which sustain non-party far-right networks online. By contrast, the progressive space bases its digital activity on actions that create less connection among members and do not generate a sense of community, which Freelon et al. (2020) classify as Hashtag Activism, exemplified by the #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo activism campaigns.

The proliferation of new platforms has given influential reactionary figures, content creators, and disseminators of far-right ideas the opportunity to interact directly with their audiences without the filter of traditional media (Zhang and Davis, 2024). Added to this is the popularisation of chan culture, with anonymous “politically incorrect” forums that act as drivers of radicalisation and spreaders of hate speech (Papasavva et al., 2020), under the banner of freedom of expression. This digital ecosystem also includes pseudo-media outlets, alternative sources of news and information editorially positioned on the far right. In the United States, the most significant cases include Breitbart News and Infowars, while in Spain they include Libertad Digital and EDATV News. The conjunction of all these elements constitutes a digital ecosystem through which these actors seek to establish reactionary discourse as dominant and challenge the cultural hegemony of liberal progressivism.

These ecosystems are becoming broader and more consolidated within the digital public spheres of each country. Becca Lewis’s 2018 study illustrates this, defining this space in the US context as an “Alternative Influence Network”. She identified 65 far-right content creators on YouTube who interacted with one another and guided their audiences towards ideological radicalisation. Interaction among members of this ecosystem allows influencers with larger audiences to lend credibility to lesser-known and openly white-nativist content creators, as well as to figures from other extremist currents. Similarly, Munn (2021), on the creation of alternative far-right ecosystems, observed that Parler served as a social network for recruiting, mobilising and coordinating protesters involved in the storming of the United States Capitol on 6 January 2021.

The consolidation of alternative ecosystems has also been accompanied by the emergence of the figure of the political influencer (Riedl et al., 2021; 2023) in the field of political communication. Political influencers are content creators who, through techniques associated with microcelebrity, disseminate political ideas and establish relationships with their audiences based on authenticity and naturalness (Bause, 2021). By doing this, they bypass the filtering role of the media. This

is the case of our object of study, Alvisé Pérez and his political party SALF, who employed this disintermediation strategy using the Telegram instant messaging channel. The closeness that political influencers establish with their followers, together with the prioritisation of simplified language, also means that entertainment and discursive spectacle are often prioritised over credible information. Research such as that by Martí-Danés and Pont-Sorribes (2025) suggests that these figures, who are increasingly becoming part of young people's information diets, do not follow strict criteria regarding the credibility of the information they communicate.

Another fundamental dimension in the rise of the far right is the dissemination of disinformation and conspiracy theories (Törnberg and Chueri, 2025). As several studies have shown, voters on the right of the ideological spectrum are more likely to believe false or manipulated news (Borah, 2022; Sánchez et al., 2024). The same applies to voters with more populist tendencies, who have been shown to be less informed (Milner, 2020) and to show distrust towards traditional media and expert voices (Staerklé, 2022). Telegram is one of the channels through which these forms of disinformation are often circulated (Ng et al., 2022). This makes it necessary to include the dimension of disinformation in any study on a political party such as SALF, which has articulated its electoral strategy through Telegram.

1.3. A Telegram-Centred Campaign

Alvisé Pérez, leader of the SALF party, was the surprise of Spain's most recent European elections (Pérez-Castaños, 2024). The party, founded in early 2024, describes itself as an anti-corruption and anti-system party and has a discourse based primarily on policies against illegal immigration and in favour of increased investment in security, combined with the dissemination of conspiracy narratives surrounding electoral fraud and government management. The party's campaign was characterised by violent language (Casares-Carranza, 2025) and harassment of political rivals through the dissemination of private photographs. Its activity is primarily focused on undermining the Spanish government, which has been centre-left since 2018. This style of political message dissemination enabled the party to obtain three seats in the European Parliament and 4.6% of the national vote in the most recent European elections. The surprise related to these results is reinforced by the lack of coverage the party received in traditional news media, as required by media electoral law for parties without previous political representation. SALF countered this lack of coverage with a campaign disseminating its political message centred on the instant messaging platform Telegram.

Telegram is a fundamental tool for consolidating the party's online community of followers, as it enables messages to be sent to large audiences and is characterised by greater user security than other messaging platforms such as WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger. Several studies confirm that Telegram can be used effectively for political communication (Marcos-García et al., 2023; Tarullo and García, 2020; Laudano, 2017) because it allows users to avoid public overexposure (Piñeiro-Otero and Martínez-Rolán, 2020) and it does not limit message dissemination. Telegram as a political communication tool has already been studied in other electoral contests in Spain, such as the 2021 elections for the Madrid Assembly (Tirado-García, 2023) and the 2021 elections for the Parliament of Catalonia (Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2022). In both cases, the research showed that political communication on Telegram focused on the political leaders as predominant symbolic figures, and used a critical, sarcastic tone towards the opposition. It is therefore reasonable to expect this to be the tone and style of political communication on Telegram in other electoral contests.

Likewise, the platform is frequently employed by users who have been sanctioned under the regulatory rules of more mainstream platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or YouTube (Rogers, 2020). These users are usually members of far-right groups seeking ways to coordinate their digital influence with actions in the physical world, such as demonstrations or harassment campaigns (Stewart et al., 2023). The analysis by Pineda et al. (2024) also documents the use of Telegram as a mobilisation channel. This study identifies it as one of the main communication tools used by Volodymyr Zelensky during the Russian invasion to reinforce his leadership. These academic findings suggest that less popular social networks are relevant to political communication, since they are used for the advantages offered by some of their features.

In the case of SALE, Telegram has been a central element in the dissemination of electoral propaganda. There are two main dissemination channels for the political party: there is the party's Telegram account, called "SALF", which had only around 7,000 subscribers in September 2024; and there is the "Alvise Pérez" channel, with more than 700,000 subscribers at the same time. This last channel will be the focus of our research because it is the main dissemination channel of the party and the only one that can compete with traditional media in terms of audience size. The concentration of subscribers on the political candidate's personal account may suggest that party communication is centred on hyperleadership, as indicated by other studies of the Spanish far right (Pallarés-Navarro and Zugasti, 2021).

The present study analyses whether the use of Telegram as the main political communication tool by a candidate originating from the digital sphere (political influencer) also reproduces the patterns of hyperleadership and personalism characteristic of contemporary campaigns (Tirado-García, 2023; Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2022), particularly within the sphere of the new far right, or whether, conversely, it fosters a more collective and interactive dynamic with followers. For this reason, the following research question is posed: Does Alvise Pérez's political communication on Telegram reproduce the personalistic conventions, hierarchical structures, and use of disinformation techniques characteristic of most electoral campaigns of the new right?

2. Objectives and methodology

Based on the discussion above, the main objective of this study is to analyse the principal discursive and rhetorical lines used on the "Alvise Pérez" Telegram channel during the 2024 European election campaign (24 May to 7 June), in order to determine whether they follow patterns identified in previous campaigns, such as the prominent symbolic role of the leader, a sarcastic tone or discourse based on mockery and criticism. To achieve this main objective, three specific objectives have been established: to analyse the textual and discursive characteristics employed during the campaign; to examine how these characteristics evolved throughout the campaign; and to explore the disinformation techniques employed.

To conduct this study, a deductive content analysis (Elo and Kynäas, 2008) based on thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022) was carried out on all posts published on the "Alvise Pérez" channel during the campaign, that is, from 24 May to 7 June. A total of 110 posts were analysed, including videos, images, and texts. Telegram was used as a hub for posts and resources that were also used on other social networks, such as Instagram and Facebook. A codebook (Table 1) was developed for the analysis through an iterative multi-step process. It included categories created ad hoc, some ad hoc categories formulated inductively after a rapid reading of posts on the channel, and some categories adapted from previous studies addressing the same object of study. Three coders (AI, AMM and SVB) independently tested an initial pilot version of the codebook on 10 randomly selected

Telegram posts. After this first step, matching codes were compared, discrepancies were resolved, and the final codebook was revised and completed (see Table 1). After refining the definitions in the codebook and establishing consistency between coders, the remaining posts were coded individually and independently by the three researchers. At the end of the first coding round, the three reviewers conducted a second reading of publications that had raised doubts, thereby ensuring intercoder reliability. Data were collected through MS Forms. Coding was carried out using MS Excel for descriptive analyses and the R-based JASP platform for hypothesis testing.

Table 1. Content Analysis Codebook

Category	Code (Definition)	Source
Date	Day/Month/Year (publication date)	Ad hoc
Description	Open (Brief description of content)	Ad hoc
Element type (multiple selection)	Text; Photograph/Image; Video; Audio; Document; Other	Adapted from Marcos-García, Tirado-García and Casero-Ripollés (2019)
Main theme (maximum 2 options)	Anti-feminism; anti-immigration; anti-media; anti-party; anti-system; corruption; crime; paedophilia; electoral information; security; other	Ad hoc (induction after initial review by the authors)
Image protagonists	Party leader/candidate; party/other parties; citizens; media; landscapes or objects; family/friends; SALF supporters; other	Adapted from Quevedo-Redondo and Portalés-Oliva (2017)
Other actors	Citizens; party/other politicians; media; celebrities; family/friends; SALF supporters; none; other	Adapted from Quevedo-Redondo and Portalés-Oliva (2017)
Setting	Civic/public space; political setting; media setting; private setting; indeterminate	Adapted from Quevedo-Redondo and Portalés-Oliva (2017)
Symbolic role	Great communicator (identifies the candidate in speeches, interviews and press conferences); The hero (identifies the candidate cheered on by the crowd, participating in a rally or public event); The protector (humanises the candidate through gestures or attitudes expressing closeness, helping others or distributing ballot papers); The ordinary citizen (shows the candidate in the private sphere or as one of the crowd); Not applicable	Adapted from García-Beaudoux and D'Adamo (2006, pp. 97–98) and Quevedo-Redondo; Portalés-Oliva; Berrocal-Gonzalo, 2016, p. 95

Argumentative function	Political-type statement (statements about government actions, management, or electoral promises); Personal-type statement (personal statements, feelings and topics unrelated to the political landscape); Agenda/Presence indicator (reference to where the candidate is or statement of presence in a setting); Request for support (request for support for the party or the actions of the party or candidate); Other	Adapted from Quevedo-Redondo and Portalés-Oliva (2017)
Disinformation	Conspiracy (appeal to an external enemy that creates barriers to or prevents the community's success); Emotional provocation (use of exaggerated headlines appealing to emotions); Polarisation (offering only two opposing solutions to a problem and categorising the opposing one as dangerous or exaggerated); Opponent denigration (ridiculing, objectifying, or animalising the political opponent); False balance (equating experts and non-experts); Fake experts (presenting a person who is not an expert as one); False data (use of false data to illustrate an event); Other	Adapted from Roozenbeek and van der Linden, 2019 and Cook, Lewandowsky and Ecker, 2017

Source: Authors' own elaboration

3. Results

3.1. *Alvise Pérez and the SALF supporters (called “squirrels”): Personalism, Anti-Politics, and Community Building*

The following section presents the analysis results of the messages (N=110) from SALF’s communication campaign on Telegram. This section addresses the various formats used in the messages, the main thematic axes, and the protagonists and actors involved in the communications. It also explores the different settings in which the actions take place, the symbolic roles played by the actors, and the argumentative functions of the messages. Finally, it examines the categories of disinformation used by the party as part of its discursive strategy during the electoral campaign.

Table 2. Categories of the analysis of the “Se Acabó La Fiesta” campaign on Telegram. “Not applicable” refers to messages that do not address any of the listed themes

Category	Item	Number	Percentage
Main themes	Anti-party	39	23.08
	Electoral information	38	22.49
	Anti-media	35	20.71
	Anti-system	20	11.83
	Corruption	14	8.28
	Anti-immigration	6	3.55
	Crime	5	2.96
	Paedophilia	2	1.18
	Anti-feminism	1	0.59
	Security	1	0.59
	Other	1	0.59
	Not applicable	39	23.08
Image protagonists	Party leader/Candidate	59	64.9
	Party/Other politicians	24	26.4
	SALF supporters	12	13.2
	Media	10	11
	Citizens	4	4.4
	Landscapes or objects	1	1.1
	Family/Friends	0	0
	Other	0	0

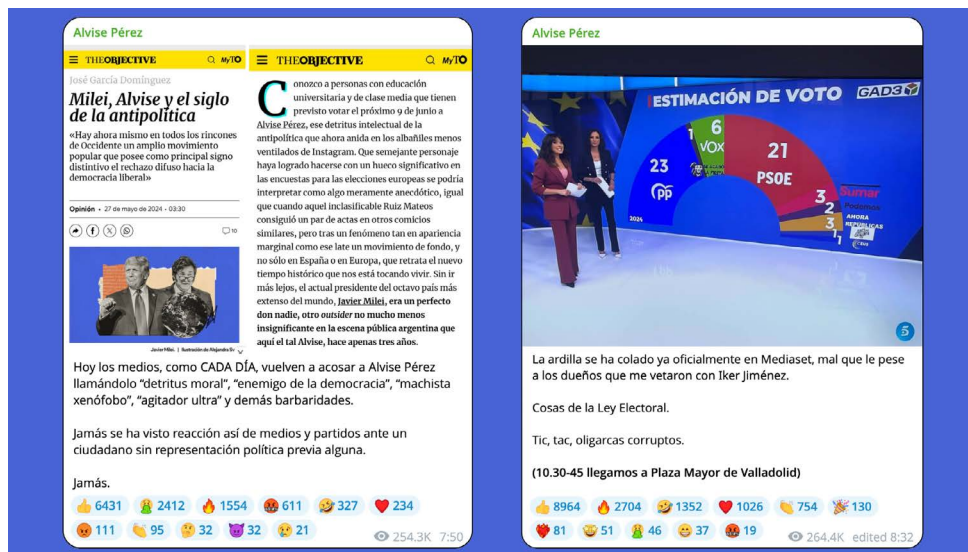
Actors	Party/Other politicians	32	35.2
	Media	30	33
	SALF supporters	13	14.3
	Citizens	6	6.6
	Other	3	3.3
	Celebrities	0	0
	Family/Friends	0	0
	None	26	28.6
Setting	Media setting	43	47.3
	Civic/public space	35	38.5
	Indeterminate	22	24.2
	Political setting	6	6.6
	Private setting	4	4.4
Primary argumentative function	Agenda/Presence indicator	40	51.7
	Political-type statement	31	34.1
	Request for support	19	20.9
	Personal-type statement	17	18.7
	Other	3	3.3

Source: Authors' own elaboration

The data shown in Table 2 reflect a communication strategy based on a balance between visual elements (photographs and videos) and textual elements, with less use of audio and documents. This mix suggests that SALF uses a variety of formats, prioritising textual and visual elements while reinforcing the message with linked external documents and the party leader's personal audio messages, although to a lesser extent. Analysis of the combinations of these elements provides a more detailed view of this strategy. The combination of photographs/images and text is the most frequent, with 30 messages (27.27%) using this format, which highlights the importance of the visual component in the communication strategy. Likewise, the text-only format appears in eight messages (7.27%), while exclusively video-based content is found in 18 messages (16.36%). These figures suggest that the party does not restrict itself to a single type of content, but alternates between visual and textual formats according to the purpose of each message. Other relevant combinations include video with text (20 messages, 18.18%) and photograph with text (23 messages, 20.91%), reinforcing the tendency to complement visual elements with textual support to add context or explanation to the images and videos shared. More complex combinations, such as photographs, text, and external document or audio and text, appear in a much smaller proportion (1 message, 0.91% each), showing that although the party experiments with different types of content, it prefers to use simpler and more direct combinations.

Analysis of the thematic agenda of the SALF political party on Telegram during the 2024 European election campaign reveals a clear focus on constructing a discourse of opposition, rejection of the system, and criticism of traditional political and media institutions. Regarding anti-party discourse (N=39), SALF positions itself as an alternative to the "partitocracy" and other electoral options. This is accompanied by the dissemination of electoral information (N=38) aimed at keeping voters informed about the electoral process and campaign. SALF also produced and sent newsletters as an alternative to the "deception of the media". In relation to "partitocracy", anti-media discourse is highly prominent in the sample, with 35 direct references to the media. SALF rejects the media on the grounds that they are participants in the system that denies the party recognition as a legitimate alternative (see Figure 1). Anti-system discourse (N=20) reinforces the idea of total opposition to established power structures, which feeds the narrative that SALF is a genuine alternative to the status quo. This discourse is complemented by themes such as corruption (N=14), which SALF uses as an example of the failures of the traditional political system. By linking corruption to political parties and the media, the party consolidates its image as an agent of change confronting a corrupt system.

Figure 1. Messages from the “Alviseperez” Telegram channel concerning the media



Less prominently, we find a critical stance towards immigration (N=6) and crime (N=5). SALF establishes a link between immigration and insecurity, a discursive strategy common among far-right movements seeking to gain support among sectors concerned about the alleged loss of border control or increases in crime (see Figure 2¹). These themes reinforce a discourse of security and protection (N=1), presenting the party as a defender of national values and security against what it considers external or internal threats. Finally, themes such as anti-feminism (N=1) and paedophilia (N=2) are not central to its discourse, but function as themes that complement and reinforce its central concerns.

1 The face of the person shown in the first image in Figure 1 has been obscured with a black band to preserve anonymity; the band was not present in the original image from the “Alviseperez” Telegram channel.

Figure 2. Messages from the “Alviseperez” Telegram channel concerning immigration and crime



The analysis of the protagonists appearing in the images shared by SALF during the 2024 European election campaign shows a communication strategy centred on its leader, Alvis Pérez, thereby reinforcing the personalistic nature of its narrative. The party leader (N=59) is undoubtedly the most recurrent protagonist in the messages that SALF sends, revealing a strategy of hyperpersonalisation that implies an almost direct relationship between the voter and the candidate. The prominence of the leader is complemented by the appearance of the party or other politicians (N=24) as protagonists, positioning SALF as an alternative. The party only refers to other candidacies either to delegitimise them, attack them, or comment negatively on their proposals. Within this personalistic framework, the role of the so-called “squirrels” (SALF supporters) (N=12) is particularly interesting, as this is the term SALF uses to refer to its potential voters. The squirrels also play an important role as secondary actors (N=13), increasing the sense of a community who actively participates even when they are not at the centre of the image. By contrast, citizens occupy a more limited role in the campaign, both as protagonists (N=4) and as secondary actors (N=6), which may be attributed to the intention of generating a community of “squirrels” and directing the messages towards potential voters.

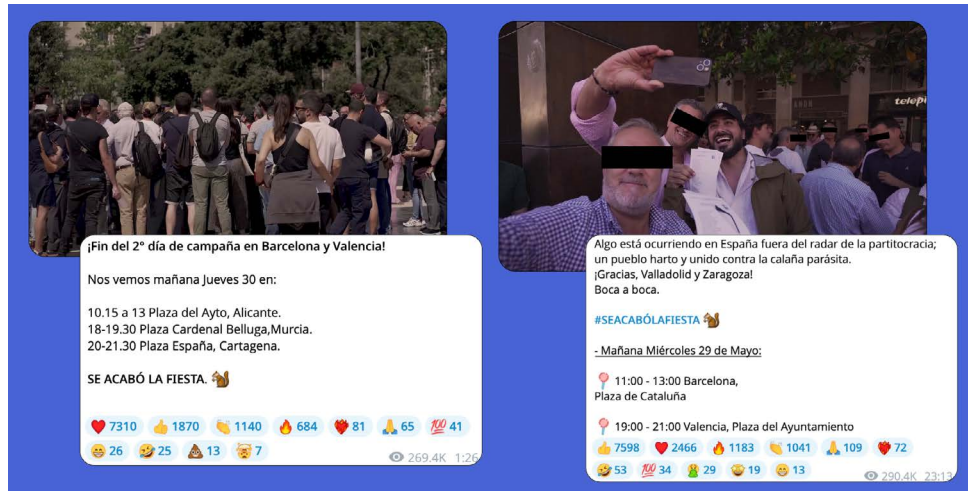
The media (N=10) also appear as protagonists of SALF's messages on several occasions, as well as secondary actors (N=30). This choice reinforces the critical discourse that SALF consistently maintains towards the media in its messages. Including the media as actors reinforces the narrative of constant confrontation with the press, highlighting their role in the campaign as symbols of the system it seeks to change and also as a main theme in the "Anti-media" category. The party and Alvisé Pérez play a fundamental role in the campaign, both as protagonists (N=24) and as secondary actors (N=32). When the actors are politicians from other parties, they are used to highlight ideological differences and are criticised for their participation in the "partitocracy", reinforcing the rejection of traditional political forces.

Furthermore, the fact that no secondary actors appear in 26 messages is also relevant and deserves attention within the party's communication strategy. The absence of actors in these messages may be interpreted as a communication strategy focused exclusively on the protagonist of the message, who is predominantly Alvisé Pérez, SALF, or other politicians. The actors, most of whom are linked either to the system being criticised (such as the media) or to the party's electoral base (the squirrels), help construct a narrative that opposes traditional structures, while reinforcing the party's collective identity as a political force supported by a solid and committed group of voters.

Regarding the settings in which the messages are set, the media environment is the most frequent (N=43). This reflects the importance SALF attaches to its relationship with the media; however, as seen in other categories, this relationship is generally confrontational. The fact that it is the most recurrent setting is consistent with the anti-media discourse that SALF has emphasised throughout the campaign, making it a central arena of its ideological base. The civic/public space (N=35) is another key setting, where SALF situates itself in an environment close to voters' everyday concerns (see Figure 3²). This setting includes public places such as streets, squares, or recognisable historic centres in different Spanish cities. This constitutes another reference to "the people" and to defending the interests of ordinary citizens, reinforcing the idea that the party is fighting against "partitocracy" and the media. The civic/public space allows Alvisé Pérez to present himself as close and accessible, conveying a discourse of connection with voters' everyday lives.

2 The faces of the people shown in the second image in Figure 3 have been obscured with a black band to preserve anonymity; the bands were not present in the original image from the "Alviséperez" Telegram channel.

Figure 3. Messages from the “Alviseperez” Telegram channel about his appearance in civic/public space



Another notable category is the indeterminate space (N=22), referring to settings where the exact environment in which the action takes place is unclear. The use of indeterminate settings may facilitate a more abstract or symbolic message, centred on the idea or concept to be conveyed, while also allowing messages to be more graphic or textual. This aligns with a political narrative that seeks to transcend the local and the specific in favour of broader problems, such as corruption or the discrediting of institutions.

Interestingly, the political space appears only six times, suggesting that SALF avoids becoming too closely associated with the formal contexts of traditional politics, such as parliaments, institutional debates, or high-level meetings. This can also be explained by the fact that it is a new party which did not have prior representation before the election and therefore no established presence in political spaces. Political space represents the system from which SALF seeks to distance itself. As noted above, it does so by presenting its ideas in other contexts (such as media or civic/public settings), thereby strengthening its image as an outsider to institutional politics. Finally, private space (N=4) has a very limited presence, indicating that settings involving the personal sphere are largely avoided.

Regarding the primary argumentative function, the agenda/presence indicator is the most common, appearing in 51.7% of messages (N=40). This indicates that a substantial part of the content focuses on showing the party's presence in public debate and maintaining constant visibility among voters. These publications are probably more informative than persuasive, as they focus on aspects such as the party's daily activity, visits, meetings, events and achievements. Political-type statements (N=31) account for 34.1% of the functions, meaning that one third of the messages seek to reinforce the party's ideological and political positions, while requests for support (N=19, 20.9%) indicate a significant effort to mobilise voters and secure their active participation, either through voting or spreading the party's messages. Personal-type statements (N=17) appear

in 18.7% of cases, which may reflect attempts to humanise the leader or party members, while 3.3% (N=3) of messages do not correspond to any function.

The analysis shows that SALF uses a diversified communication strategy that prioritises simple combinations of photographs, videos, and texts to convey its message directly and effectively. The extreme personalisation of its leader, Alvis Pérez, is a central tactic, reinforcing an almost direct connection between candidate and followers. In addition, the party positions itself as a strong critic of the political and media systems, while central themes such as corruption and crime help consolidate its oppositional discourse. Although citizens play a limited role in the party's representations, the follower base, the "squirrels", plays a key role in constructing a collective identity that drives SALF's anti-party and anti-system message.

3.2. *From Protector to Great Communicator*

The analysis of how each content-analysis variable evolved over time showed that the only variable yielding significant differences was the symbolic role represented by Alvis Pérez ($df=56$, $\chi^2=78.988$, $p=0.023$; see Figure 1), which has been demonstrated in previous studies (Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2022; Tirado-García, 2023). Analysis of the symbolic role played by the candidate during the SALF campaign reveals how political communication strategies evolve over time. This section examines how different symbolic figures (the great communicator, the hero, the protector, and the ordinary citizen) are used to connect with the electorate and shape public perceptions of the political leader. As the campaign progressed and drew to a close, significant changes can be observed in the frequency with which these roles were adopted. This suggests an adaptation of the narrative to maximise its impact at different key moments of the electoral process. However, it should be noted that the number of messages coded for this variable is limited, and the results should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Figure 4. Evolution of symbolic roles throughout the campaign (df=56, $\chi^2=78.988$, $p=0.023$)

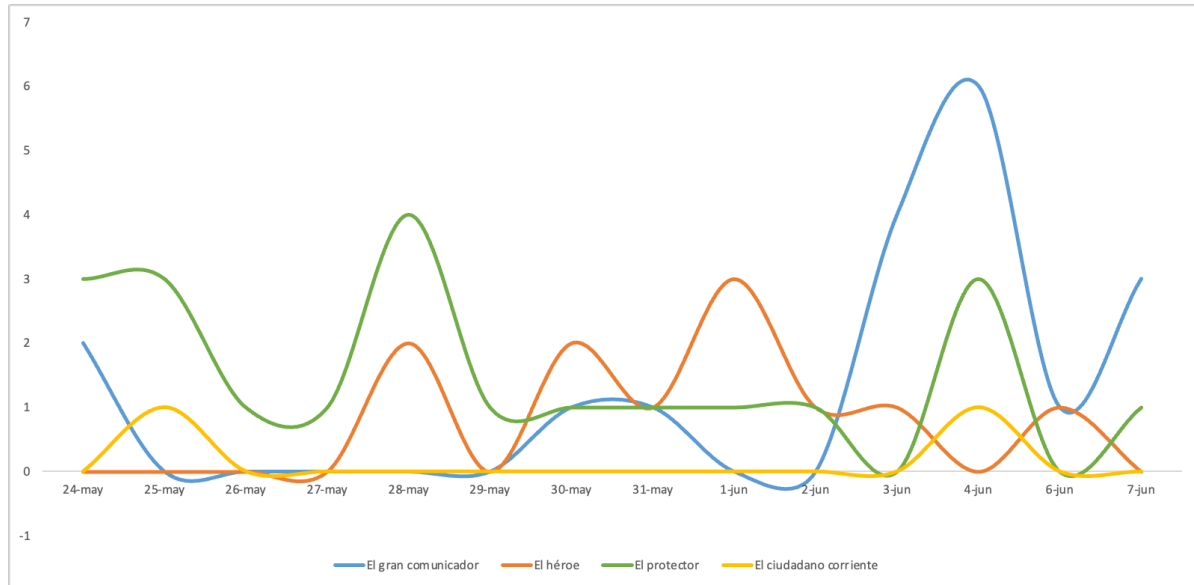


Figure 4 shows that during the first few days of the campaign, the role of protector predominated, which could reflect a strategy aimed at building a closer relationship with the public. There are occasional mentions of the ‘hero’ role at mass rallies, although these are in the minority (11%).

In the final phase of the campaign, the data points to an increase in the ‘great communicator’ role (22%), with messages centred on interviews, speeches and press conferences. This role increases significantly in the final days of the campaign, when the strategy shifts from being emotional and approachable to being more focused on rhetoric and media presence. This is an attempt to dominate the public sphere and influence public opinion in a more direct and formal way. Finally, the role of the ‘ordinary citizen’ is marginal, appearing only rarely (2%), which confirms the preference for more pronounced representations of leadership.

Overall, the data reveal a shift in the symbolic representation of the candidate, which begins by emphasising proximity and protection and then moves towards a communicative leadership role at the end of the campaign with the aim of consolidating his image as a central figure with political influence.

3.3. Between Emotion and Conspiracy: Disinformation Strategies in the SALF Campaign

The analysis of disinformation in the SALF campaign presented in Table 3 reveals the use of predominant strategies such as emotional provocation, conspiracy, opponent denigration, and false data. This section examines how SALF applies these tactics to reinforce its narrative, which appeals to strong emotions and, in many cases, distorts reality by using false data and arguments that foster distrust towards the media, politics, and other key actors.

Table 3. Categories of disinformation in the “Se Acabó la Fiesta” campaign on Telegram.
“Not applicable” means that no form of disinformation appears in that message.

Category	Item	Number	Percentage
Disinformation	Emotional provocation	34	52.36
	Conspiracy	33	50.82
	Opponent denigration	26	40.04
	False data	21	32.34
	Polarisation	5	7.7
	False balance	2	3.08
	Fake experts	2	3.08
	Other	1	1.54
	Not applicable	30	46.2

Source: Authors’ own elaboration

Table 3 reveals that the party’s strategy is based on key tactics designed to influence public opinion. The data show significant use of emotional provocation (52.36%) as the most frequently employed resource. Another prominent tactic is the use of conspiracy theories, which appears in 50.82% of cases. SALF constantly appeals to the notion of an external enemy that somehow obstructs the success of the community, reinforcing a sense of threat. Opponent denigration, used in 40.04% of messages, is another important tactic. By ridiculing or objectifying political adversaries, SALF undermines their legitimacy in the eyes of the public, facilitating polarisation. The use of false data is also notable, reaching 32.34%. These messages present information in ways that support the party’s claims and construct interpretations of reality that are not substantiated by data or empirical sources.

Polarisation, although less frequently used (7.7%), also constitutes a key strategy. This reductionist view of the political landscape not only fuels extremism among the party's electorate but also eliminates any possibility of consensus or understanding between different sectors of the population. The use of a false balance and fake experts, both at 3.08%, indicates that SALF also attempts to equate figures without credentials with experts on certain issues. The "Other" category appears in only 1.54% of cases, while 46.2% of messages do not involve any of these disinformation tactics.

In conclusion, SALF's Telegram campaign uses a combination of disinformation tactics focused primarily on manipulating public emotions, delegitimising opponents, and distorting reality through conspiracy theories and false data. In the long term, this may have corrosive effects on social cohesion and the democratic process.

4. Discussion and conclusions

This study examined the communication strategy of the "Se Acabó La Fiesta" (SALF) party on the Alviseperez Telegram channel during the European election campaign (24 May - 7 June 2024). Through a thematic content analysis (N=110 posts) and an iterative coding protocol, we aimed to (1) identify the textual and discursive characteristics employed, (2) observe their evolution throughout the campaign, and (3) describe the disinformation techniques used.

As detailed in previous sections and in line with studies related to Telegram and political communication (Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2022; García, 2022; Marcos-García, Tirado-García and Casero-Ripollés, 2023), we found that Telegram's relevance to SALF's communication strategy stemmed from the concentration of audiences in the leader's personal channel, the possibility of disseminating content without intermediation, and the ease of organising territorial micro-groups. These factors explain why the platform enabled the campaign to circumvent conventional media coverage (Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2022; García, 2022) and are consistent with recent findings on Telegram's mobilising role in campaigns. Together, they make the platform a macro-structure for dissemination and mobilisation, offering advantages (reach and message control) but also risks (the ease with which unverified content can be spread).

Based on the results and with regard to the first two objectives of the study, we can establish that the communication strategy of Alvisé Pérez and SALF is primarily based on the following characteristics: 1) constant appeals to external forces; 2) campaign centralisation around the leader and the evolution of his roles; 3) an argumentative function based on the present; 4) interaction and community generation; and 5) disinformation and emotional appeals. The thematic analysis shows an agenda centred on opposition to the system: "anti-party" (N=39; 23.1%), "electoral information" (N=38; 22.5%), and "anti-media" (N=35; 20.7%) were the most frequent themes. Communication prioritises public presence and immediate action (as reflected by the "agenda/presence indicator" function, which accounts for 51.7%). In line with other studies analysing the political discourse of the Spanish far right (Aladro-Vico and Requeijo-Rey, 2020; Pallarés-Navarro and Zugasti, 2021), SALF maintains the hyperleadership strategy as Alvisé Pérez dominates the visual representation and narrative (59 appearances; 64.9% of messages feature the leader as protagonist). In addition, there was a statistically significant symbolic evolution of the leader's role ($\chi^2=78.988$; $df=56$; $p=0.023$): shifting from a predominance of the "protector" role at the beginning to the role of the "great communicator" in the final phase of the campaign.

The constant reference to “partitocracy”, controlled media, and established power structures allows the party to position themselves as anti-system, which is reinforced by other issues that appear among the main current social problems: corruption, crime, immigration, etc. This populist anti-system rhetoric was already evident in Vox’s discourse when it emerged on the Spanish political scene (Capdevila et al., 2022); however, populist elements appear to be more prominent in SALF.

Unlike Pallarés-Navarro and Zugasti (2021), who analysed the communication of Vox leader Santiago Abascal on Instagram during the 2019 general elections and identified “The Hero” as his main symbolic role, we found that Alvisé Pérez instead assumes the role of “The Protector” during the first week of the electoral campaign, displaying various activities carried out by the party and its followers. From the second week onwards, he shifts to the role of “Great Communicator”, projecting an image built around his appearance in the few media outlets that interview him and his display of discursive skill. This evolution shows how the communication approach is adjusted over the course of the campaign towards a more strategic style focused on capturing mass attention.

Regarding disinformation techniques (the third objective of the study), the Telegram campaign employed disinformation tactics recurrently: emotional provocation (52.4%) and conspiratorial appeals (50.8%) were the most frequently used categories; opponent denigration appeared in 40% and “false data” in 32.3% of cases. SALF combined its own newsletters, ad hoc headlines, and emotional appeals to counter media narratives and reinforce the trust of its voter base, facilitating the creation of information bubbles and polarisation. A previous study by Palacios-López et al. (2024) had already confirmed that emerging political influencers, among whom Alvisé Pérez could be included, predominantly shared disinformation and did not contribute to creating an accurate and objective public debate about current affairs. In turn, our findings are consistent with recently published research such as Törnberg and Chueri (2025), which establishes a clear relationship between disinformation and far-right populism.

We acknowledge several relevant limitations. First, the study is restricted to a single channel and a specific time window (14 campaign days), limiting longitudinal and cross-platform generalisability. Second, the corpus (N=110) is exhaustive for the channel but does not include user-to-user interaction metrics (e.g., forwards, external comments) or audience sociodemographic data, preventing us from measuring actual reach and persuasive effects on voters. Third, although we applied a rigorous coding protocol (pilot, independent coding, and double reading), we do not report numerical agreement measures that could strengthen reproducibility. Based on these limitations, we propose several avenues for future research: (a) longitudinal studies extending the pre- and post-election periods; (b) cross-platform comparative analyses (Telegram vs. TikTok/YouTube/Instagram) to study disintermediation and audience migration; (c) integration of network analysis and computational tools (network analysis, automated disinformation detection) to map dissemination and influence nodes; (d) experimental or survey research linking exposure to messages with attitudes and voting behaviour; and (e) evaluation of countermeasures (fact-checking, media literacy, moderation reforms) and their effectiveness in closed messaging environments.

Our study provides empirical evidence of how the new digital far right articulates a strategy on Telegram based on hyperleadership, constant presence, and emotional and disinformation tactics to mobilise and consolidate audiences. Understanding these dynamics calls for interdisciplinary research and mixed methods capable of assessing both the communication structure and its effects on public opinion and the integrity of democratic debate. In sum, and in response to the research question, “Does

SALF reproduce the personalistic conventions, hierarchical structures, and use of disinformation techniques characteristic of most electoral campaigns of the new right?”, we can answer affirmatively: the political communication promoted by Alvisé Pérez on Telegram establishes a unidirectional structure focused on the figure of the political leader.

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7. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in any part of this research.

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