

## BARACK OBAMA – THE NEW CHARISMATIC POLITICAL ACTOR – A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

The American president, Barack Obama, is considered to be one of the most charismatic figures of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. His speeches are the best asset through which he emphasizes this quality. Although, he hasn't always been considered to be a successful politician, he made his entrance on the political arena in 2004, when he delivered one of his best speeches.

The aim of this paper is to reveal the most important elements of a political discourse that can contribute to creating a good image of a political actor. Using the critical discourse analysis method, we are trying to see if there is a connection between a good, coherent discourse strategy and the charisma of the American leader. The sample will include his 2004 speech, delivered at the Democrats' Convention, the speech that put him in the eyes of the media as a future American leader.

**Key words:** Barack Obama, political discourse, critical discourse analysis, charisma, leader

### INTRODUCTION

*"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time.  
We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek"*  
– Barack Obama.

Political discourse seems to be one of the best assets that a political actor can have. A good speech can enhance the politician's qualities and put him in the eyes of media. At the same time, the bad communication skills of a political actor can cause a lot of harm to that image. Therefore, a political speech can weigh a lot in a political strategy, it can create a good political résumé and it can make a political actor trustworthy.

Along with a good political speech, comes the charisma. This is a feature that can derive from a good discourse that is why a political speech is considered to be so important nowadays. Looking back at the times when politics was the asset of the high society, some important voices arose from the crowd. These leaders made a clear statement on how important a speech is: Martin

Luther King Jr., Hitler, Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Theresa. Their voices have an impact even in today's society. Of course, we can name many more charismatic leaders, but what is important to notice here, is the fact that all of these leaders delivered speeches that remained powerful throughout the years. The pressure is higher nowadays, as people respond only to questions that are really important for them. Given the problem, the political actors have to cope with these situations and come up with new methods that are of interest for the public opinion.

One of the charismatic leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is considered to be the American president, Barack Obama. His career was on a slow path, until the day he made his entrance on the American political scene with a memorable speech. The speech he delivered in 2004 at the Democrats' Convention was a statement of his abilities as a great political actor and a charismatic leader. His ongoing career started at that period and the starting point was a good political speech. After that, the great American leaders noticed him and he quickly became an important actor on the political arena. Not only did he become the first Afro-American to be the president of USA, but he is considered to be one of the greatest political communicators of all times. (Leanne, 2009, P. xvi) A few years after the 2004 speech, he became the presidential nominee of the Democrats.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Throughout this article, we will take into consideration key concepts as political discourse, charisma and leadership. As stated before, these are very important assets that explain the popularity of a political actor.

A good political discourse becomes a weapon for a political actor and at the same time, it becomes a manipulating tool. It is considered to be a persuading instrument and at the same time, it can create an advantage against the opponent. To be more precise, we will try to give some definitions of the political speech. "A discourse can influence the audience through its logical order, through the fundamentals that generate the discourse" (Sălăvăstru, 2009, p. 17). It is very easy to notice that a political discourse can influence a voting decision, as it promotes themes that correspond to a certain group. Therefore, all the political actors try to target their public as accurately as possible. The logic in targeting falls on the ideologies, the ones that the public identifies with, the needs and the expectations of the electorate. Moreover, "ideologies typically organize people and society in polarized terms. Group membership first of all has to do with who belongs or does not belong to us, and how we distinguish ourselves from others by our actions, aims and norms, as well as our resources" (van Dijk, 2000, p. 43). That is why political actors have to know very well who they are addressing to and what discursive strategies they have to approach. He not only has to do this, but the themes he uses in a discourse make the greatest difference on how the electorate responds.

Furthermore, the political discourse is an attempt at explaining a candidate's strategy in front of the electorate, a polemical dispute with the opponent; a documented response to an interpellation, a profitable negotiation with social partners' (Coyle, 2008, p. 5). Gaining legitimacy is the main reason for struggling in politics. "Legitimacy is obtained through discourse in disfavor of other political mechanisms." (Coyle, 2008, p. 5) That is to say, if the politician gets a positive reaction from the electorate after delivering a speech, he becomes representative for that segment of the population. Sometimes, legitimacy is perceived through speeches, because the electorate identifies their features in the words that were addressed to them. Also, the political speech "legitimizes, by justifying distribution of power within a social ideology" (Lilleker, 2006, p. 12). A discourse is a social construct that explains the distribution of power and a good political speech can deliver a positive message to the group and it also represents a mechanism through which these differences of power might be reduced. Thus, they are very important "Speeches are important, because they are one of the great constants of our political history" (Coyle, 2008, p. 5). The political speeches mark important moments in time and they are what the electorate will remember, the real electoral program of a political actor. They are a statement; a symbolic oath taken in front of the electorate.

Another aspect that is to be taken into consideration during this paper is the concept of charisma. The first to describe charisma is considered to be Weber and he stated that charisma is "an extraordinary quality" of a person who is believed to be endowed with superhuman properties thanks to which he/she gets acknowledged as a leader (Signorello, 2013, p. 343). That is to say, charisma is a must have quality of a leader, according to Weber. Some other people associate charisma with fire in the eyes, passion and command (Leanne, 2009, p. 22). Charisma relies not only on the ideas that the political actor transmits, but also on body language (Signorello, 2013, p. 343). The same author presents a more developed definition of charisma that implies the notions stated by Aristotle: *ethos* (the character of the speaker), *pathos* (the appeal to the audience's emotions) and *logos* (the rational argument) (Signorello, 2013, p. 343). "Charisma represents a set of characteristics of a leader that include his "having a vision" (a goal towards which he wants to lead his followers), a "high level of dominance" (look strong, persistent and fighting) and "emotional intelligence" (the ability to feel and transmit emotions, and to be and look empathic)" (Signorello, 2013, p. 343). According to the study conducted by Rosario Signorello, the sound of the human voice represents the best argument for a charismatic political speech. He analyzed features like the pitch contour, the intensity and the duration, in order to prove that charisma relies more on body language. He associated these elements with adjectives that describe Aristotle's variables of a good political speech. As a result, "charisma in political speech is partly determined by the acoustic characteristics of speech" (Signorello, 2013, p. 344), as it also depends on the quality of the voice of the speaker.

All in all, charisma is composed of many features, starting from the ideas that are presented in a speech and continuing with the body language. The political actor that masters these important features will most probably become a charismatic leader. Charisma is a quality that requires work and native features of a political actor.

Another key concept that we will use in this article is leadership. Many scholars have tried to offer an adequate definition of the concept, but it is still hard to define. Rainey defines leadership as "the capacity of a person to mobilize and guide the capacities of the members of the organization, in order to achieve the defined goals" (Hintea, 2010, p. 30). It is the leader's responsibility to guide his team in order to reach the initial goals. The key elements for a successful leadership are: charismatic leadership, compelling vision/intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, promotion of a common culture (Tourish, Vatcha, 2008, p. 455). So according to these elements, it is compulsory for a leader to promote some values to his organization, to create an organizational culture and to know the members of the team very well. Leadership appears to be a profitable tool for an organization or a company, in order to reach its goals.

## METHODOLOGY

The aim of this article is to emphasize the great impact a political speech can have. Moreover, our main purpose is to see whether or not a good discourse can contribute to creating a good image of a political actor and if charisma can derive from an important speech. Barack Obama is one of the most familiar figures in today's political arena. Of course, all the odds are in his favor now, but back in the days when he struggled to get a place in the American Senate, Obama was not as bright as he appears to be today. The most important moment of his early political career was marked by the speech he delivered on July 27, 2004 at the Democratic National Convention. That moment marked a new beginning for senator Barack Obama.

In order to undertake this analysis we will use as the research method document analysis, more specifically critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis represents a "multidisciplinary, and an account of intricate relationships between text, talk, social cognition, power, society and culture" (van Dijk, 2015, p. 253). This instrument allows us to analyze a speech from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. While undertaking the analysis, we will take into consideration aspects that concern the ideological part of the discourse, the main themes that are presented, the aspects of a liberal discourse, the most frequently used words and connotations, biblical references and the nonverbal aspects of the discourse. The sample will include materials from Obama's speech, the one delivered in 2004. These materials include the transcript of the speech and the video recording of it. In order to have a more accurate analysis, we will use

Textalyser software (the software can be found at <http://textalyser.net/index.php?lang=en#analysis> ), which gives us a more accurate vision on the quantitative part of our analysis.

## GENERAL FRAMEWORK

The 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America is the first Afro-American to take the leadership of the most diverse country on Earth. His career was full of ups and downs, until he made his presence memorable, on a Tuesday night, in July 27 2004. He was a junior senator, representative of the state of Illinois in the American Senate. After that night, Obama was on the right path towards victory. He had constructed a pretty solid career up until that point, but his work as a senator was not as good as he would have wished. He always counted on his charisma and magnetism, but his real chance to demonstrate this was on that night, at the Democrats' Convention. That was the speech that projected him as the new future hope of the party. (Thomas, 2009, p. 16) Members of his team say that he was treated like a rock star on that unforgettable night (Thomas, 2009, p. 16). "Obama's speech from the 2004 Convention impelled him in the strange world of the celebrities and offered him that aura that can transform a shapeless man, looking like a scholar, a flap-eared, into a sex-symbol." (Thomas, 2009, p. 16) Barack Obama presents himself as a true liberal, having role models as Lincoln and Reagan and following the philosophy of Hobbes and Locke "the free men form Governments as a compromise, in order to make sure that the liberty of a man it does not become the tyranny of another." (Obama, 2008, p. 50) Some scholars called his keynote speech "Out of Many, One", the Beginnings of a Rhetoric of Hope. (Atwater, 2007, p. 5) Obama stated his leitmotif in the 2004 speech, the one which he would continue to state in the later speeches and that in 2008 campaign, would become his campaign motto: "Hope".

## THE THEMES OF THE SPEECH

This speech is one of the greatest speeches of the American leader and it follows the same pattern as other speeches to come. The main themes he focuses on are the greatness of the American people, their faith and hope for a better future. To support these ideas he uses combination of words like: "generous America", "the pursuit of happiness", "saga". It is very likely to find patriotic statements in Obama's speeches and the evocation of nationalism. But particularly in this speech, he constructs the whole speech around these main ideas.

The main theme of this speech is national unity, as "he evokes the past triumphs of America, in the time of the controversial war in Iraq" (Olive, 2008, p. 52 ). In the first paragraph of the speech, he puts above all the idea

of patriotism "On behalf of the great state of Illinois, crossroads of a nation, land of Lincoln" (Retrieved from <http://obamaspeeches.com/002-Keynote-Address-at-the-2004-Democratic-National-Convention-Obama-Speech.htm>). As he goes on, he talks about his family, giving special thanks to his parents and grandparents. He always says he is mainly inspired by the great speeches of Lincoln, whom he takes as a role model. Here, in this speech, he approaches another important figure, when he talks about his roots "like Barbara Jordan in her 1976 Democratic National Convention keynote address, he too expresses the unlikelihood that he is speaking to this particular audience" (Atwater, 2007, p. 5). We can find similarities in these phrases "my presence on this stage is pretty unlikely. My father was a foreign student... My parents shared not only an improbable love". He is stating the fact that he is a biracial child, who had the chance to be born and raised in the world's most diverse country "in no other country on earth, is my story even possible.". Going forward, he talks about the diversity of the American nation, a land where all the dreams can come true, as long as people fight for what they want "That is the true genius of America, a faith in the simple dreams of its people, the insistence on small miracles". He presents a safe America, even if there are so many contrasts: so much diversity, but yet such a safe place for the American children. In order to make this discourse more American, Obama uses lots American symbols: FHA, GI Bill, etc. This establishes a closer connection to the public, which automatically gives a boost to his charisma.

Moreover, as a senator he presents himself as a simple man, who cares about the people he is representing: "More to do for the workers I met in Galesburg, Illinois, who are losing their union jobs". In this paragraph he talks about the everyday struggle of the ordinary people, who try their best to make a better life. His idea is that for these people it is worth working for, for granting them a better life: "we are called to reaffirm our values and commitments, to hold them against a hard reality and see how we are measuring up". He also mentions the fact that people understand their role in the society and they are willing to work in order to have a better life: "Don't get me wrong. The people I meet... They know they have to work hard to get ahead and they want to". The fact that he uses the verb in the present tense, suggests that he is continuing with his work of meeting the people he represents, suggesting the fact that he is very active on the political scene, especially in the area he represents. He offers a lot of examples about the people he met, offers various details, aspects which make him look like a very common man, a guy with whom the public can resonate with, a charismatic leader.

The next paragraph takes us to the main point of this speech, the elections. Senator Obama presents the main candidate of the Democrats, John Kerry, a brave man, who understands the implications of the word "sacrifice". Therefore, he considers that the Democrat Party is the one who offers the alternative: "John Kerry understands the ideals of community, faith, and

sacrifice, because they've defined his life. From his heroic service in Vietnam to his years as prosecutor and lieutenant governor, through two decades in the United States Senate, he has devoted himself to this country." He portrays John Kerry as the hero, the one who is going to save USA. He is basing his arguments on the facts presented above, that Kerry was in service of USA having different jobs in the public sector. Kerry is a true American, who has "faith" for his people. The word "faith" defines most of Obama's speeches, becoming a motto in the years to come. Furthermore, he presents some of the policies that are to be taken into consideration by Kerry, during his mandate: "instead of offering tax breaks to companies shipping jobs overseas, he'll offer them to companies creating jobs here at home". He uses some of the policies that are specific to democrat parties.

In the next paragraphs, he continues to talk about the importance of electing John Kerry as the next president of USA, while expressing his complete trust in Kerry's abilities. The most important theme that appears here is unity in diversity, the motto of the European Union (Retrieved from [http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/motto/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/motto/index_en.html)). He states that every single person matters to him and it is important to try to integrate everyone "an Arab American family being rounded up without benefit of an attorney or due process that threatens my civil liberties". The main quote of the discourse can reduce the whole speech to these Latin words "»E pluribus unum«. Out of many, one." This quotation also stands on the seal of the USA, being one of the country's mottos. This is how Obama and the democrats perceive their people, expressing their concern for the people as a group, but as individuals at the same time.

He talks about one country, a united one: "there's not a liberal America and a conservative America, there's the United States of America." Stating again the need for unity, Obama tries to promote "the politics of hope", considering hope as one of the most important words that describe the American people. He also sees hope as a civil duty, a hope that requires people to respect their civil duties. He talks about "the audacity of hope", a group of words that will be given as a title to his later book. We can see an alternation of the words hope and believe, the last one coming from the first. He expresses his hopes for a better future that can be transmitted as beliefs to candidate John Kerry. It is in his power to transform all of the plans/ hopes they have in true beliefs. In the end, he encourages the population to go out and vote "the people will rise up in November, and John Kerry will be sworn in as president, and John Edwards will be sworn in as vice president, and this country will reclaim its promise, and out of this long political darkness a brighter day will come." He restates the importance of voting and the heroic capacity of Kerry to create a brighter future.

All in all, this represents a motivational speech, that talks about the importance of unity, the real struggle for a better future and of course, the solution to the problem: the democrat candidate, John Kerry. Obama offered a kind of one-man-show, a perfect asset of a charismatic leader.

## THE LIBERAL APPROACH OF THE DISCOURSE

Obama states his beliefs on the liberal philosophy of Hobbes, Locke and Mill (Obama, 2008, p. 50). Also, Lincoln, the 16<sup>th</sup> president of USA represents an inspiration for Obama and many people compare the two, as they “are two fragile men, coming from poor families, without too much experience in Washington and both of them succeeded to unite the American people to work together in crisis situations. Moreover, both of them are great public speakers, genius on the stage, with a great synchronizing sense” (Thomas, 2009, p. 137). Even if he is a member of the democrat party, he feels more connected to Lincoln, a Republican president, more specifically, to his liberalism (Thomas, 2009, p. 7). In part, this can be due to the fact that both of them represent the state of Illinois.

During this discourse, he approaches many liberal themes that make a pretty clear statement of his convictions. He uses lots of words that are to be found in the liberal philosophy: freedom, believe, diversity, happiness, rights. Also, he states the fact that USA is a liberal country by saying “we can say what we think; write what we think, without hearing a sudden knock on the door. That we can have an idea and start our own business without paying a bribe or hiring somebody’s son. That we can participate in the political process without fear of retribution” This pretty much sums up the liberal paradigm that encloses the civil rights and the citizens’ liberties. Going further, he states the liberal convictions of the democrat candidate as well: “John Kerry believes in the constitutional freedoms that have made our country the envy of the world”. Moreover, he talks about the famous “American individualism” that does not work if the people don’t try to cope as one, in order to make a better country. Also, the greatest statement of the whole discourse, is a liberal one “«E pluribus unum.» Out of many, one.” Mill used to say that “a person is free to do whatever he wants, as long as through his liberty, he won’t harm another person” (Mill, 2014, p. 20). This is what Obama states, that it is important to help all people equally, as individuals as well, not only as a group. He believes in the capacity of each person to treat people as equals “It’s the hope of slaves sitting around a fire singing freedom songs”, even if they are from different social groups. Last, but not least, he states the fact that every person has the freedom of choice, even when it comes to the voting decision, as everyone votes according to their beliefs “if you feel the same energy I do”.

In this discourse there are some marks of the beliefs that are shared by the democrats. These values are: unity, accepting diversity and minorities, encouraging the development of the private sector, the accent on the middle class (Roskin, 2011, p. 30), “collar counties around Chicago”, “There’s not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America”, “I believe we can give our middle class relief”, “start our own business without paying a bribe”, “have gay friends in the Red States”. All of these statements are values to be shared by the American democrats, as they try to



implement policies that concern these matters. He sees the Democrat party as the “party of reaction” (Obama, 2008, p. 62), the one that incorporates diversity and struggles for change.

### ANALYSIS OF BIBLICAL REFERENCES

It is very common to find biblical references in the American speeches. Given the fact that USA is such a diverse country, Obama says “We worship an awesome God”, including here the Christians, Muslims, Hindu, non-believers. Throughout the whole speech, he uses lots of words that have religious connotations: believe, faith, hope, bless. Moreover, he presents himself as a true believer by stating “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.” This part of the speech reveals his liberal believes, but at the same time, his references are to God, who created all people equal. This is a quote that is most probably retrieved from the Declaration of Independence of USA, which marks the basis of a believing people. Also, in order to express the importance of the people as individuals, Obama states “that fundamental belief: I am my brother’s keeper, I am my sister’s keeper”. He explains through these quotes the mechanisms that make USA work as a country. The quotation is retrieved from Genesis 4:9, that explains the selfishness that made Cain kill his brother, Abel (Retrieved from *Genesis 4:9*). Nowadays, this quote is the name of an initiative led by the White House, who helps boys and young men of color, who are having a hard time (Retrieved from *Remarks by the President on “My Brother’s Keeper” Initiative*). To make things matter, Obama underlined this quotation, in order to express the need of creating a balanced individualism. Also, we can see here that his idea of liberalism is more refined, as he approaches more the new liberalism, the one who has milder views on the extent to which liberty can go. (Roskin, 2011, p. 100). At the end of his speech, he uses the well-known phrase “God bless you”, very typical for the American speeches, which marks the faith of the people, as well as the typical blessing that is to protect us from evil. Moreover, this states the ending of a great speech, here, with the help of God (this marks a very-well know phrase for the American speeches, a mark of presidential speeches).

His liberal and religious approach marks a fresh beginning for senator Obama, as he addresses lots of communities, by using communicational strategies that people can identify themselves with.

### ANALYSIS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

A good control of the body language, a good tonality of the voice and a good scenario, can be the ingredients for a good speech and can contribute to perceiving a political actor as being charismatic. During the 2004 speech (Retrieved from *C-SPAN: Barack Obama Speech at 2004 DNC Convention*),

“Obama had all of these ingredients that made his discourse a memorable one. To begin with, the tonality of his voice transmitted confidence and he made sure he knew how to approach the public, by pointing the important parts of the speech. His voice became worried, while underlining the problems of the country; he amplified his voice in order to point out his hope in what he was transmitting and his voice came flat when he wanted to express his disapproval. (Leanne, 2009, p. 5) Moreover, he used a proper tonality, emphasizing his natural qualities of a great communicator, the one who knows which are the best strategies to use while delivering a speech. Secondly, his body language contributed to the success of the discourse. He had a great control over his movement, as he used to indicate a lot of words he used, by writing it in the air, or using a perpendicular move of his arms which expresses a reinforcement of what he is transmitting. Moreover, he uses his arms to indicate the direction, while he talks about the future. Furthermore, he has some gestures that represent symbols, like the gesture in the end when he lifts his left arm, to symbolize victory. Also, he puts both hands on the desk in front of him, a gesture that suggests confidence in what he is saying. Obama taps his fingers against the desk, to underline important matters. He also uses his palms, which are facing the ground, in order to calm people down. This gesture suggests that people should be calm, because the option he is proposing to them, John Kerry, is a good and safe one. He draws large gestures with his arms, in order to establish a better connection to the public. These gestures are meant to emphasize his ideas and to offer a better explanation to the public. On the other hand, his face transmits worry at some points, but most of the time, the face movements are simple, which suggests calmness.

Thirdly, it is important to analyze the position of his body. His posture is always a very straight one, suggesting confidence and calm. Moreover, his “square shoulders, set the tone and opened a positive dialogue with the viewing public.” (Leanne, 2009, p. 14) Finally, the venue is very important, as well as the decoration of it. Obama staying in front of a desk, in the middle of the public, suggests the importance of the political actor, as the one who had the knowledge and he will give it forward. His apparel is carefully selected; wearing a dark blue suit, white shirt and a light blue tie. The combination of colors matches the colors of the party, blue, making him the true representative of the Democrats. Moreover, the decoration of the venue shows us the symbols of the Democrat party, with lots of blue and having the American flag that governs the moment. The public is also diverse, which goes hand in hand with the theme of the speech: diversity. We can notice black people in the crowd, Asians, American, old, young, Christians, Sikh people. They all clap, emphasizing the importance of the moment. Moreover, they all have banners with Obama’s name on. The public only interrupts the speech to clap, showing their strong understanding and connection with Obama’s message. A very important aspect of the nonverbal communication are the shooting frames, that present Obama as a very important actor, when they film him from above, showing him in the middle of the crowd. He identifies

better with the public, than when he appears in closed frames. This filming game emphasizes the greatness of the moment and shows his ascending in popularity. The music that is played in the end of the speech appears to be a popular American song, which goes perfectly with the nationalist, patriotic image pointed out by the speech. Also, to add more importance to the speech, important figures, like Hillary Clinton, are to be seen in public.

Last, but not least, to make Obama look like the people's man, his wife comes on the stage, suggesting he is a simple man, like all others. This for sure must increase his popularity.

Obama made perfect use of the body language, suggesting he is a master of the nonverbal communication. He is smiling during the speech, which makes him very popular. His voice is very confident, his body posture as well and he transmits calmly, with the necessary pauses, all of his ideas. He appears to be very popular and charismatic, as he establishes a good connection to the public. He engages in a very bold discourse, but in the end he comes out victorious, with a boost of confidence and a serious increase in popularity. These elements contribute to the creation of his so appreciated charisma.

## FREQUENCY ANALYSIS OF THE KEYWORDS

In order to undertake the quantitative analysis, we will see the frequency of using some words and phrases. In order to do that, we used the software [textalyser.net](http://textalyser.net). To have an overview of the whole speech, we created a word cloud, using the software [wordle.net](http://wordle.net). We attach in the appendix, the materials used for this analysis.

## KEYWORDS REPEAT DENSITY

The speech has 1135 words, 691 different words and lexical density of 60.9%.

**Table 1:** The speech structure.

Word	Occurrences	Frequency	Rank
Our	22	1.9%	1
America	21	1.9%	1
Kerry	13	1.1%	2
John	13	1.1%	2
States	12	1.1%	2
Hope	10	0.9%	3
Country	9	0.8%	4
People	8	0.7%	5
You	7	0.6%	6
Believes	7	0.6%	6

Source: Own chart.

**Table 2:** Words repeat density.

Expression	Expression count	Frequency	
in the	14	0.6%	
john Kerry	11	0.5%	
in a	10	0.5%	
we can	9	0.4%	
there s	8	0.4%	
Kerry believes	6	0.3%	
hope of	5	0.2%	

Source: Own chart.

The analysis of frequencies confirms the fact that this is a speech about national unity as it puts in the center of everything America. Also, he uses the word *our*, in order to emphasize the need for unity of the American people. Moreover, the name of John Kerry appears to be used very frequently. The words “hope, people, believes” are the most commonly used words of the discourse. It is very easy to see that this is a speech about national unity, which has at its heart the idea of one people. This kind of discourse can establish a strong connection with the public and can increase one’s popularity. The discourse itself is easily assimilated and the people can resonate very quickly with the communicator. Thanks to his confidence and his abilities as a communicator, Obama manages to increase his popularity, becoming a charismatic leader to be, as well as getting a spot among the well-known public speakers.

The structure of the speech is very simple. He starts by using verbs in past tense to talk about the glorious past of the country, he uses present tense to articulate the struggle of the American people and the achievements of the democrat candidate and he uses future tense to express his strong beliefs and hope for the future and the candidate John Kerry. This structure offers a strong base for a speech about national unity. Moreover, the possessive adjective “*our*” talks about unity and nationalism: “our country”, “our people”, “our past”. On the other hand, we can also assume that these are marks of a populist speech, having a binary structure *us versus them*, even if *them* is implicit.

## CONCLUSION

This paper analyzes the first most popular speech of Barack Obama, the 2004 National Democrat Convention keynote address. The aim of the paper was to see if a speech can contribute to improving and creating the charisma of a political actor. In order to undertake this analysis, we used as a research method the content analysis, with its instrument, the critical discourse analysis. This method allows us to analyze the speech from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, with an accent on the qualitative aspect.

The general conclusion that we can derive from this analysis is the fact that a well-structured discourse, delivered by a good political communicator can transform him into a popular politician and it can definitely contribute to his charisma. This general conclusion comes from the results of this analysis. First of all, the themes he used establish a good connection with the public, having as main themes national unity, the glorious past, the struggle and the effort made by the democrats, the future plans and the belief in a brighter future. Moreover, he makes use of the common culture, using symbols of the American nation, to emphasize the fact that his is one of them. Also, he talks about diversity, so that a great part of the listeners can find themselves in his words. He makes use of liberal statements and religious ones, a very good strategy that shows he has very good knowledge about various domains and he has well-grounded beliefs. Obama appears to be a very tolerant man, well-educated, smart and easy-going. Furthermore, he has a very good control of the nonverbal communication, transmitting confidence and sincerity. The quantitative analysis reveals the importance of the themes he approaches and the way he tries to establish a connection to the public, by using words that identify them as a group.

To sum up, this speech remains one of the most popular speeches of Barack Obama (Thomas, 2009, p. 137), one of the speeches that made him a well-known figure of the democrat American party. It is very important to mention the fact that a good speech can make one visible on the political arena, but a charismatic leader has to have some natural qualities, as Obama has. The limitation of this research is the fact that a comparison with future speeches would have revealed whether or not, this speech was the starting point of a new charismatic leader.

All in all, this speech made Obama very popular on the political American scene, as he managed to deliver a strong message and he established a strong connection with the public, transforming him in a very charismatic political actor.

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APPENDIX A

**Table 3:** Total word count according to textalyzer.net.

Total word count :	1135
Number of different words :	691
Complexity factor (Lexical Density) :	60.9%
Readability (Gunning-Fog Index) : (6-easy 20-hard)	8.6
Total number of characters :	11896
Number of characters without spaces :	6775
Average Syllables per Word :	1.56
Sentence count :	127
Average sentence length (words) :	17.43
Max sentence length (words) :	72
<i>( when we send our young men and women into harm s way we have a solemn obligation not to fudge the numbers or shade the truth about why they re going to care for their families while they re gone to tend to the soldiers upon their return and to never ever go to war without enough troops to win the war secure the peace and earn the respect of the world)</i>	
Min sentence length (words) :	1
<i>( america)</i>	
Readability (Alternative) beta : (100-easy 20-hard, optimal 60-70)	57.3

Source: Own chat.

APPENDIX B



**Figure 1:** Word cloud of the speech (most frequent words of the speech).

Source: Own figure.