Political Charisma Revisited,
and Reclaimed for Political Science

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As it stands today, the study of political charisma suffers from three serious defects: the general ambiguity surrounding the concept; the indefiniteness of its empirical referents; and dissociation from democratic theory. The scale of the first problem becomes evident from the indiscriminate use of the term in everyday as well as academic parlance.[1] Ever since "charisma" entered through journalism into public discourse, it has become loaded with countless unnecessary and misleading connotations. Despite some recent attempts towards conceptual clarification (e.g., Eatwell 2006), charisma still is commonly perceived as a "'you' ll know it when you see it' dynamic personality often defined as magnetic and inspiratorial" (Gibson et al 1998, p. 11). As the term is thus applied "to virtually every situation in which the popularity of a political or any public personality is involved" (Bensman & Givant 1975, p. 570), it has been reduced into "a debased, floating signifier" (Smith 2000, p. 102). Finally, since political charisma has mostly been studied with reference to non-democratic leaders, we know precious little of its emergence and consequences in contemporary democratic politics.

As the foregoing defects have, regrettably, deprived charisma of its potential analytical usefulness in political science research, it is no wonder that many authors have proposed dropping the concept from our epistemological vocabulary. If accepting, for instance, as Schweitzer (1974, p. 150) does, that "charisma" is "either overextended or useless for empirical research," one is bound to concur with the remark that "it is by no means clear that 'charismatic leader' is a meaningful analytical distinction" (Ake 1966, p. 4). Why, then, not altogether dispose with the concept as a fuzzy and useless one? Friedrich (1961, p. 23) has already declared that in contemporary politics "charismatic leadership is of minor importance simply because the faith in a transcendent being is not sufficiently strong or general to provide an adequate basis for

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[1] Rather ironically, "charisma" was introduced into journalism as early as 1947 by Columbia sociology professor Daniel Bell. In an anecdote related by himself, Bell was at that time working for *Fortune* as an anonymous staff writer and used the word, despite his executive editor's wish, in an article about John L. Lewis. "The great scavenger [was] Time magazine. Nobody there knew the meaning of the word, but one of their editors spotted it in Fortune and since Time, at that time, had a guidebook rule that one esoteric word a week had to be introduced into the magazine to annoy the reader, they chose charisma and rode it to a fare-thee-well" (Bell cited in Lingeman 1968).

legitimizing any political leadership." Others have been even more reproving: "Perhaps the total elimination of the charisma concept in serious discussions would be salutary. In any case, its disappearance in analyses of large-scale political phenomena would seem to be beneficial" (Spinrad 1991, p. 310).

This paper intends otherwise. It seeks, firstly, to offer a new conceptualization of political charisma based on the purely political (rather than psychological or sociological) aspects of this phenomenon; having already seized the object, our second aim will be to make it operational by providing meaningful empirical criteria for identifying those leaders who fall within the area of political charisma, and examining the effects of such leadership on actual-life politics; and, thirdly, we aim to help bringing charisma back into democratic theory, and also suggest some research areas that seem worth exploring further. In effect, this paper asks: What is political charisma, and what makes it analytically important? Who can be said to be charismatic leaders? How does charisma relate to contemporary liberal democracy? In trying to answer these questions, no starting point seems more appropriate than Weber's own analysis on the subject.

Reconstructing political charisma

The earliest use of the word *charisma*, or *charism*, is to be found in theology and denotes a free gift or favor given by God (*New Testament*, esp. "Romans" 1, 12 and "Corinthians" 12). Prophecy, for instance, was the charism that enabled its possessor to foretell the future and utter divinely inspired warnings. This idea persisted until Max Weber finally succeeded to rid charisma from its theological undertones and give it a distinctly political tint. For him, charisma was above all a power term meant to denote an authority type that was distinct from either the traditional or the legal-rational ones. Unfortunately, however, Weber failed remarkably to treat this concept in a consistent and unequivocal way. "Weber's writings on charisma," an author has commented, "are typically Weberian. They are suggestive, elusive, brilliant, and fragmentary" (Smith

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2000, p. 101). More confusingly, despite an early infatuation with charisma in his writings on the sociology of religion and law (Weber 1993), Weber later systematically refrained from exploring the relationship between charismatic leadership and democratic institutions.[2] Finally, in his more mature political writings, he became skeptical about charisma, stressed its irrational character, and practically reduced charismatic leadership to the plebiscitary power of democratically elected demagogues. He also became a firm believer of the idea that "the 'decline of charisma' was a major historical tendency" (Bendix 1977, p. 326).

History, to be sure, has disproved Weber's expectation. In today's world, charisma, rather than being eclipsed by ordinary democratic politics, is still alive and well. To some, political charisma is even desired (e.g., *The Economist* 2005; 2006). It is therefore worth revisiting charisma by keeping in mind what has so often gone missing, namely, that Weber's intention in studying this phenomenon was to describe one of his three *legitimate* types of authority, as well as the conditions under which such an authority is possible to emerge in competitive pluralist systems.[3] Having said that, and granting that "a concept *is* its intention, for [it] encompasses all its characteristics or properties" (Sartori 1984, p. 40), our attempt to reconstruct charisma will try to follow Weber's spirit by examining charisma within the context of contemporary democratic politics.[4]

Our argument is that, in order to make sense of political charisma in democracy, one should begin from what is at the core of this concept, namely, its *extraordinariness*. As Weber already knew, charisma *is* important because, while emerging in ordinary

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[2] For an analysis of the possible explanations behind this omission, see Andreas Kalyvas (2002, esp. p. 90-98).

[3] For a noteworthy attempt towards examining charisma as a particular linkage between voters and politicians, and a source of legitimacy for the latter, see Kitschelt (2001).

[4] Seen from this perspective, the plethora of existing analyses of charisma based on leaders who captured and exercised power in no democratic ways, as are Lenin, Mao, Castro, Pol Pot and their likes, seems rather excessive, or even redundant. It is, nonetheless, quite reasonable to examine the charismatic bases of authority of non-democratic leaders participating in democratic electoral contests such as Mussolini (Gentile 1998) and Hitler (Kershaw 1998) or, more recently, Le Pen, Zhirinovsky, Haider (Eatwell 2002; Pedahzur and Brichta 2002), and Milošević (Vujačić 1995).

democratic systems, it constitutes a type of leadership displaying extraordinary features. In fact, the notion of "extraordinariness" appears in Weber's two – and most oft-quoted – formulations of charisma, each of which, however, has led students of this phenomenon to diverse conceptualizations and opposite methodological directions. In the first instance, Weber defined charisma as "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" (Weber 1978, p. 241, 1113). In a second instance, the same author presented charisma as resulting from collective "anxiety and enthusiasm" amidst "unusual, especially political or economic situations, or from extraordinary psychic, particularly religious states, or from both together" (Weber 1978, p. 1117, 1121). Be that as it may, extraordinariness seems to be the key for understanding political charisma – "an extraordinariness constituted by the high intensity with which certain vital, crucial qualities are manifested, in contrast with the low intensity with which they appear in the ordinary round of life" (Shils 1965, p. 201). The problem is that this notion, in Shils no less than in Weber, suffers from fuzziness as it leaves unclear which qualities are "extraordinary" enough to elevate their possessors to charismatic status.

Weber's ambiguous treatment of the subject has by and large led subsequent students of political charisma to account for its extraordinariness in two ways: either by reducing this notion to a set of personal or psychological characteristics possessed by certain individual leaders (e.g., Lindholm 1990; Khurana 2002; King 2002) or, conversely, by attributing it to unusual, crisis-ridden situations creating an appropriate environment for the emergence of charismatic leadership (Willner 1984, p. 42-61). As it should be obvious, the former approach is more common in cognitive psychology and modern organization science, while the latter is more widespread in sociology. Yet, charisma cannot be fully understood merely as the direct outcome of personal attributes or exogenous structures. To emerge and develop, besides gifted leaders and external crises, charisma indicates an intense interplay between agencies and structures involving personal incentives and strategic choices of individual and collective subjects,

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such as political elites, mobilized masses, organized political movements, or parties, and, crucially, electoral contests; the formation of new political identities through symbolic narratives, conflicting worldviews, and hegemonic struggles for new legitimacy; above all, it presupposes a fair amount of creative politics aiming at genuine institutional alteration and, inevitably, radical political change. To unpack political charisma, therefore, we need to focus on the specific mechanisms that make it possible. This way, besides being able to provide better explanations of charismatic leadership emergence, we are also certain to reclaim charisma for political science and rekindle its theoretical significance. Charisma is primarily a *political*, not a social, let alone psychological, phenomenon. Therefore, to follow an old advice by Bendix and Lipset (1957, p. 87), instead of starting analysis with personal attributes or sociological states of affairs and examining how they affect charismatic politics, we should rather start with clearly defining charisma and then examining how *it* affects society.

The extraordinariness of charismatic leadership becomes particularly clear when compared to ordinary leadership (i.e., Weber's "legal-rational" authority) and has two features: the personal character of rule and its radical nature (see *Table 1*). Ordinary leadership, on the first hand, is typically impersonal and values procedural moderation. It involves an organization of offices which are hierarchically organized and regulated by common rules, norms, and procedures. In such a rule-bound system of bureaucratic domination there becomes established in society "a spirit of formalistic impersonality [operating] *sine ira et studio*" (Weber 1978, p. 225). On the other hand, extraordinary, or charismatic, leadership is always personal and pursues a radical political program. These are, we think, the two core elements of political charisma, on the basis of which we may now define it as *a distinct type of legitimate leadership that is personal and aims at the radical transformation of an established institutional order*.

Table 1. Two types of leadership in democracy

	ORDINARY (Legal-rational)	EXTRAORDINARY (Charismatic)
Rulership	Impersonal	Personal
Rule aims	Moderation	Radicalism

However minimal, this definition tells us precisely which are the key characteristics of charismatic leadership but remains open about its causes, means, and outcomes. Even so, as these characteristics are to a large extent intuitive, they still have to be defined – and if possible measured – with precision (see the following analysis). At the end, we are expected to produce an "index of charismaticness" ready to be applied to any leader for assessing his/her charisma, or lack of it.

Charismatic personalism

The personal aspect of charismatic leadership becomes manifest in at least three distinct, empirically testable, and readily measurable aspects: the almost absolute and centralized control exercised by a single leader over some political party or other mass organization; the great, and unmediated, emotional passion that accompanies the leader-led relationship, which may create deep social divisions; and the delegative and missionary – as opposed to deliberative and procedural – character of such relationships.

To begin with the first of the foregoing aspects, whereas ordinary democratic leadership involves established hierarchies, institutional checks and balances, decentralized decision-making, and collective responsibility, charismatic leadership

exhibits highly centralized authority structures, the absence of clear bureaucratic characteristics, and the leader's untrammeled control over subordinates. In charismatic parties, or movements, "the division of labor is constantly redefined at the leader's discretion, career uncertainties are considerable, no accepted procedures exist, and improvisation is the only real organizational 'rule'" (Panebianco 1988, p. 146). In the absence of veto players (Tsembelis 2002, p. 35), the leader is also the sole agenda setter and free from any constraints in the selection of goals, means, and tactics.

The next distinctive feature of personalist leadership resides in the particular relationship that develops between leader and led. In definitional liberal democracy, such a relationship is expected to be indirect and mediated through impersonal institutions, as well as reliant upon impassionate and undramatic narratives. In contrast, charismatic leadership is characterized by the direct allegiance and loyalty of followers to the person of the leader. In its purest form, "charismatic leadership involves a degree of commitment on the part of the disciples that has no parallel in the other types of domination" (Bendix 1977, p. 300; Weber 1978, p. 242). Quite typically, such relationships are full of emotional passion (Madsen and Snow 1991; Goodwin et al 2001), stand on high moral grounds (Durkheim 1995; Burns 1978, p. 20), and are self-righteous in that the leader's program is presented as heralding a bright new world. The "emotional seizure" of the masses (Schweitzer 1974, p. 157) is perhaps the most readily observable characteristic of charismatic power.

Linked to the previous one, the final feature of personalist leadership in democracy is its delegative character. Contrasted to liberal (i.e., purely representative or "deliberative") pluralism, delegative democracy is being understood as one resting "on the premise that whoever wins election … is thereby entitled to govern as she or he sees fit, constrained only by the hard facts of existing power relations and by a constitutionally limited term of office" (O'Donnell 1994, p. 59). In reality, the politics of delegation point to an authoritarian-cum-missionary type of rule which, in case of failure to enhance social aggregation and rally the entire social body around newly-

founded institutions, is likely to cause deep polarization by pitting some part of society against another.

Charismatic radicalism

The second core characteristic of political charisma is radicalism. Charismatic leaders emerge in society as a true radical force seeking to destroy traditional patterns and disturb legal-rational and procedural ones: "It has been written … but *I* say unto you." Whereas both traditional and legal authorities mean to preserve the established institutional order, charismatic rule militates against it.[5] In this sense, the charismatic "is always a radical who challenges the established practice by going to the 'root of the matter'" (Bendix 1977, p. 300) and sets himself "in conscious opposition to some established aspects of the society in which he works" (Parsons 1964, p. 64).

What does charismatic radicalism consist of? Given that our present concern is about the emergence of charisma in democracy, such radicalism can be neither about the complete overthrow of the political system (which would amount to revolution) nor about the simple substitution of some particular set of policies with another (which would classify as political reformism). Radicalism rather refers to "a distinct … program of social change looking toward systematic destruction of what is hated, and its replacement by … a society logically demonstrated as true and good and beautiful and just" (Kallen cited in Bittner 1963, p. 929). In the continuum from revolution to reformism, radicalism thus occupies an intermediate position and entails the legal, normally non-violent, subversion of an established institutional framework in order to replace it with a new – allegedly better – one.

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[5] "Both [traditional and legal-bureaucratic] types of authority are, for Weber, modes of organization appropriate to a settled permanent system. Though subject, like all human arrangements, to change, they are of specifically 'routine' character. *The charismatic type differs in precisely this respect*" (Parsons 1964, p. 64; emphasis added).

Radical politics thus involves a two-pronged strategy: the subversion of an existing legitimate authority system and the institution in its place of an entirely novel one. The first prong of the strategy, institutional subversion, entails the complete delegitimation of the previous authority structures "by attacking their symbolic and motivational foundations … in order to weaken the sources of internal obedience and tacit consent upon which the existing social order is based" (A. Kalyvas 2002, p. 83). When the attacks against the established order are not facilitated by the latter's own deficiency and unworkability (as it was, for instance, the case of the French Fourth Republic circa the mid-1950s), they typically focus on its unethical, unfair, and unjust nature (Moore 1978; Gamson 1992). The second prong of charismatic radicalism, authority re-institution, involves no less than the imposition of a novel hegemonic order in the classical Gramscian sense (Gramsci 1971; also Laitin 1986), from which new legitimacy will be derived for constituting anew the political community.

During this process, charismatic leaders present as creative artists who "objectify new relationships" and provide new symbolic and normative foundations for a fresh cycle of politics to commence (Tucker 1977, p. 385, 386). Thus, in a process recalling Schumpeter's (1950 [1942], p. 83) notion of "creative destruction," radical leaders, by winning both symbolic and real political battles, always create new institutional structures. "When this creativity is particularly original, when it helps to articulate or to objectify new groupings and new relationships, we describe [the leader who engages in it] as 'charismatic'" (Cohen 1970, p. 30).

The various items making up the two key components of charismatic leadership, personalism and radicalism, can now be summarized in checklist form as it appears in *Table 2*. On the basis of this list, by simply ticking the items independently, one can now assess the "charismaticness" of individual political leaders in our contemporary liberal democracy.

***Table 2.* Index of charismaticness**

Personalism

1. Absolute control over party/movement; power centralization	☐
2. Leader-led relationship; unmediated & emotional, often divisive	☐
3. Missionary politics and extra-institutional authority delegation	☐

Radicalism

4. Subverting by delegitimation some old authority structure	☐
5. Instituting a novel authority structure; new hegemony	☐

Thus far, we have purified charisma from the psychological and sociological connotations it has long been related to, and reinstated it as a political power term. We have, moreover, placed our analysis of charisma firmly within the context of democratic politics and emphasized the role of extraordinary leadership in a political system which, normatively, is based on political ordinariness. In this way, charisma has been both elevated to analytical significance and effectively reclaimed for political science. Concepts, however, "are not only elements of a theoretical system, but equally tools for fact-gathering, data containers" (Sartori 1970, p. 1052). It remains, therefore, to establish a relation between our novel conceptualization of charisma (i.e., the meaning of the term) and what we observe in the real world of politics (i.e., the term's empirical referents).

Assessing charisma empirically

In this section, we are going to apply our criteria of charismaticness in real life by examining a fairly diverse sample of leaders who have figured prominently in postwar and contemporary European (more particularly, Southern European) politics. Our total set includes five democratic leaders from both Right and Left; some who appeared in

times of crisis and others who exercised their charisma in times of relative normalcy; leaders serving either as presidents or as prime ministers; some who left a positive legacy and others with a rather mixed one. Their differences apart, all five leaders won impressive electoral victories and enjoyed uncommonly long tenures in office in their respective countries. Yet, success at the polls, no matter how impressive, does not constitute evidence of political charisma (as, on the other hand, the lack of electoral success cannot disprove charismatic authority[6]) (cf. van der Brug and Mughan 2007, p. 31-2). From our sample, only three leaders are found to display the properties appearing in *Table 2*, thus entering the area of political charisma (Charles de Gaulle, Constantine Karamanlis, and Andreas Papandreou), while the other two fail to meet our criteria of charismaticness (François Mitterrand and Felipe González). The difference is this: whereas the latter leaders led successfully already established political parties and sought to preserve (by improving) the existing institutional order in their respective countries, the former ones acted extraordinarily in that, without deviating from democratic norm, they built personally-controlled political organizations *and* used them for applying radical political programs, thus causing fundamental changes in their own societies. Needless to say, the analysis that follows does not intend to provide thorough and detailed accounts of the leaders mentioned; it only means to illustrate, in a necessarily succinct way, the theoretical points already made in preceding pages.

Extraordinary democratic politics

In France, first, hardly one month after his newly-founded party had gained a large majority of seats in the parliament (November 1958), Charles de Gaulle also won the presidential election with an impressive 78.5 percent of the votes. Thereafter, de Gaulle remained the undisputed leader of France until his retirement from politics in 1969. In

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[6] This is to say that, leaders who fit all items for "personalism" in our index of charismaticness and also pursue a radical political program, but fail to materialize it for lack of sufficient electoral support, still classify as charismatic.

Greece, the first democratic elections of 1974 were a triumph for Constantine Karamanlis and his party who secured over 54 percent of the votes and 220 seats out of 300 in the parliament. After serving as prime minister for six years, Karamanlis moved to the presidency of the Greek Republic for two full terms. Andreas Papandreou's electoral record was no less impressive. He not only succeeded to lead his young party to power by a stunning 48.2 percent of the vote in 1981; he moreover was able to cling to power for almost ten (alternate) years in spite of a poor government record.

Let us now turn to what we have identified as the core elements of political charisma, that is, personal authority and political radicalism, and try to analyze their empirical manifestations in the world of real-life politics. We begin with the first element which consists in the almost absolute control of a single leader over a party or movement. In such a condition, the latter constitute "a cohesive dominant coalition held together by loyalty to the leader... [who thus] has the same effect as a powerful extensive bureaucracy: all key decisions are made at the top of the organization – i.e. by the charismatic leader" (Panebianco 1988, p. 146) and serve his own political purposes.

The parties created by both de Gaulle and Karamanlis in their respective countries may serve as model cases. Shortly before critical elections, each of these leaders built a political party with the purpose of supporting his radical political program. De Gaulle, first, shortly before the general elections of 1958, created the Union of the New Republic (UNR), a party whose "only reason d'être was to serve de Gaulle" and his ideas (Panebianco 1988, p. 148; Charlot 1970). Similarly, Karamanlis, only a few weeks before the founding elections of Greece's new democratic regime, created New Democracy (ND), and subsequently tried to give it a working organizational structure. Nonetheless, as long as Karamanlis remained the party leader, ND remained subservient to him; during that period, there was not a single case of internal dissent, let alone defection from ND to other party.

Papandreou founded PASOK almost simultaneously with ND, but, unlike Karamanlis and de Gaulle, he imposed full personal control over the party only after a

fierce internal struggle against the majority of the party cadres who, in the earlier phase of party development, demanded collective leadership, internal democratic procedures, and accountability to the party base. To win, Papandreou needed to expel, or co-opt, the majority of those cadres. In the aftermath of those struggles, "PASOK [became] Andreas Papandreou. … The leader's authority radiate[d] through all the components and forces of the party, endowing them simultaneously with cohesion and homogeneity" (Elephantis 1981, p. 107).

The second distinctive feature of personalism in charismatic authority is a relationship between leader and led which is deeply emotional and founded on exclusively personal ties. This holds true for all three leaders who enjoyed enormous and profoundly emotional grass-roots support. All are remembered amidst huge and delirious crowds with whom they had established unmediated communication: de Gaulle towering over the mass of his supporters in the famous *bains de foule* throughout France that he so much enjoyed; Karamanlis jubilantly received as a messiah in the Athens airport on July 24, 1974; Papandreou addressing from balconies what a witnessing author once described as "a boiling ocean of exuberant humanity" (Hitchens 1992, p. 1).

There is, moreover, a strong sense of mission and political morality in what charismatic leaders do and what they stand for. De Gaulle and Karamanlis stood for nothing less than France and Greece respectively. As an author put it for de Gaulle, "He *was* France. Even the words that he used – '*rassemblement*', *grandeur*', '*independence*', '*ordre*' – conveyed a sense of national cohesion" (Williams 1993, p. 429). The same can be said for Karamanlis who, significantly, chose the following epigram for his tomb: "To justify my passage from this world, I dedicated my life in the service of the Greek people." In Papandreou's case there certainly was "an unmistakable sense of mission and genuine ideological commitment in the manner he and his lieutenants approached their tasks" (Iatrides 1992, p. 130).

The last feature of personalism in charismatic authority is its delegative character in the sense that the leader is not constrained by existing institutions but is accountable only to the electorate which gave him, or her, the mandate to govern. Both de Gaulle and Karamanlis explicitly demanded from their country-fellows to follow their lead. In the elections of 1962 President de Gaulle in a nationwide broadcast asked for a majority to be given to the UNR otherwise he threatened to resign. Similarly, Karamanlis, addressing a massive pre-electoral rally in Athens said: "You brought me here on 24 July to save the country that was in danger. But if you are not going to give me the ample majority that I need to accomplish my mission, then why did you bring me?" Papandreou, even at a time of low political tide for him, was still in a position to proclaim: "There exist no institutions; only the people exist."

Coming now to the second feature of charisma, political radicalism, it should be recalled that it involves no less than the full substitution of an established institutional and symbolic political system with a new one. As it will be shown in the brief accounts that follow, this is exactly what our three leaders did in their respective countries. Here, analysis will proceed by individual leader in chronological order.

Charles de Gaulle, resistance leader and liberator of France in the 1940s, was called back to power in May 1958 in the middle of general political crisis. The Fourth Republic was plagued by long-term instability, and marred by the defeat of the French army in Indochina and the inability to tackle the Algerian question. De Gaulle was determined to change it all. Once he assumed power, he swiftly dismantled the dysfunctional regime and, in its place, built the Fifth Republic, which was based on a new constitution granting extraordinary powers to the President. "The change in the constitution," notes Williams (1993, p. 392), "had been achieved in a curious, almost off-hand way. There had been no revolution, as in 1789, or general violence, as in 1848, or defeat in war, as in 1871 and 1940. There was no particular economic discontent." The revision of the constitution in 1962 provided for the election of the president by universal suffrage. The second achievement of de Gaulle was the final resolution of the

colonial question with France's prompt extrication from Algeria. Finally, de Gaulle pursued a series of bold foreign policy innovations aimed at defining a new international role for France (what was aptly termed *la politique de grandeur*). Those included the independence from the United States and, most notably, France's exit from NATO's military command; the development of a nuclear arsenal; and the active encouragement of European integration around the renewed cooperation between France and Germany.

In July 1974, Constantine Karamanlis was offered the mandate to lead Greece away from authoritarianism and into political pluralism. But what kind of democracy would that be? The easiest solution would be the restoration of the pre-authoritarian political system, which was based on a tripolar structure of power (consisting of the government, the King, and the army) and the marginalization of the anti-system parties (Meynaud 1965). Karamanlis, however, had been at that system's helm for too long (as prime minister from 1955 to 1963 heading the right-wing ERE party) to know that, in the new political environment, resurrecting the *status quo ante* was simply impossible. Instead, by intent and design, he introduced a radically different political arrangement based on new motivational and legitimating foundations. The most important feature of the new political arrangement was the replacement of the tripartite power structure by one based exclusively on the elected government. For this to succeed, however, Karamanlis had first to neutralize the army and organize a referendum for abolishing the monarchy (December 1974). Meanwhile, the legalization of the Communist Party, as well as any other party of the far left whose operation had been suspended in the past, helped transform the non-participatory pre-authoritarian system into one that was all-inclusive and fully participatory. New democratic politics was crystallized in the constitution of 1975, which, besides the government, also provided for a strong president. Moreover, Karamanlis encouraged the formation of strong and durable political parties for incorporating society, and promoted two-partyism for both easing ideological polarization and producing strong governments. In foreign affairs, besides his efforts to relax the tension in relations with Turkey, Karamanlis, unbendingly, pursued a

pro-european policy, which earned Greece full membership in the European Community as early as 1981.

In the early post-authoritarian period in Greece, Andreas Papandreou proposed his own radical program in direct antithesis to Karamanlis's newly-founded institutional framework. In his methodical effort to delegitimize his opponent, Papandreou accused Karamanlis for political autocracy, and held him responsible for growing social inequality and the continuing dependence of Greece upon foreign interests (including the European Community). Instead, Papandreou's program called for thorough change ("allaghi") that would be "inescapably linked with the socialist transformation of the Greek society ... [and whose] basic and permanent aim should remain the change of the political system and not its conservation" (Papandreou 1976, p. 231-2). Using unconventional language and inimitable personal style, Papandreou called for a new political and socio-economic system based on socialism, participatory egalitarianism, and national independence. He became the champion of society's less privileged sectors by promising the nationalization of many industries, the creation of cooperatives throughout the country to organize the production and distribution of agricultural goods, and sharply increased social welfare schemes. No less radical was his reorientation with regard to foreign relations. Here, Papandreou seemed to reject the essence of Greece's policy since World War II, "which has been based on strong ties with the United States, active participation in the Atlantic alliance, and integration into Western Europe's political and economic institutions, especially the European Community" (Iatrides 1992, p. 127). Instead, Papandreou advocated Greece's complete withdrawal from NATO and insisted on maintaining only a "special relation" with the European Community; he, moreover, called for the abolition of all special privileges granted to foreign capital and for intransigence vis-à-vis Turkey.

Ordinary democratic politics

To be sure, in modern liberal democracy, political charisma is a rare phenomenon. Since most democratic leaders pursue moderate politics within existing institutional frameworks, they clearly fall outside the charismatic area. This is so because in our time "politics is *more* than the politician... [No] matter how powerful the modern Prince may be, he is tied to a course of action which is, as such, more powerful than his personal will" (Sartori 1965, p. 33). Sometimes, however, the boundary between charismatic and non-charismatic may become blurred, as it happens for instance with that type of authority which Ansell and Fish term "non-charismatic personalism" to denote (moderate) parties that are based on their leaders' personal legitimacy (Ansell and Fish 1999). This section addresses the boundary problem through the exposition of two leadership cases which prima facie appear as fuzzy referents to our conceptualization of charisma. The two leaders are François Mitterrand and Felipe González, who, although have invariably been described by many authors as charismatic, do not seem to fit in our classificatory scheme. To be sure, both leaders display impressive electoral records. Mitterrand won two elections for the French presidency, in 1981 and 1988, thus serving at that post for fourteen consecutive years; and González won four consecutive elections (in 1982, 1986, 1989 and 1993) before his defeat in 1996. As it will be shown, however, none displayed the extraordinary characteristics required by our "index of charismaticness" (*Table 2*) to gain access to the charismatic leader class: nearly absolute personal authority while at the same time pursuing a radical political program. The cases of Mitterrand and González will thus help us set clear boundaries between charismatic and non-charismatic leadership and ward against fuzzy membership.

François Mitterrand assumed the leadership of the French Socialist Party (PS) in 1972 after a series of unsuccessful electoral results and soon breathed into it new life. In terms of organization, he promoted young party cadres committed to his ideas, while in terms of ideology he advocated an orthodox socialist program and forged an alliance with the Communists (Gaffney 1990). The PS however remained divided between rival factions which Mitterrand, rather than bringing under his full and undisputed control,

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simply tried to neutralize. His "entire political career and genious", writes an author, "has consisted in synthesizing (or merely maintaining in juxtaposition) factions and policies which are logically contradictory" (Howarth 1984, p. 584). While a candidate for the presidency, Mitterrand so much distanced himself from the party that any communication between it and his personal campaign team was lost. After Mitterrand's election to the presidency in 1981, the PS was effectively transformed into "a *parti de godillots* (party of bootlickers)" that remained subservient to the president (Samuels 2002). As a president, Mitterrand divided the French society without ever cultivating a direct and personal relationship with particular sectors in it. To Tiersky's (1995, p. 112) words, "Some believe him to be a statesman; others call him a lucky careerist. By turn, Mitterrand is described as either a past-master Machiavellian and France's most detested politician or one of contemporary Europe's most durable, original, and successful leaders."

Be that as it may, Mitterrand's policies were anything but radical. Very early in his presidency, he abandoned socialist economics and rejected collaboration with the Communists. In foreign affairs, Mitterrand's pro-European policy and pursuit of European integration along a Franco-German axis was so indistinguishable from the policy of his predecessor that Stanley Hoffmann (1984, p. 57) has called it "gaullism by any other name." Mitterrand worked within existing institutions and, particularly during "cohabitation" (his sharing of power with a conservative government in 1986-88 and again from 1993 to 1995), fully abided by the constitutional rules and promoted France's bipartisan democracy.

Like Mitterrand, Felipe González played a key role in reshaping the Spanish socialist party (PSOE), unifying its factions, and leading it to electoral success. During the 1980s, the PSOE was characterized by remarkable internal coherence and the absence of open intraparty dissent (Gillespie 1989). But González was not a solo player. He performed his political deeds in closed partnership with Alfonso Guerra – "supremo of the party apparatus and 'fixer' *extraordinaire*," personal confidant and, later, deputy

prime minister. Until the partnership between the two men broke up in 1991, it was Guerra who, in addition to his influence upon policy-making, exercised real control over the party. This is not, of course, to underestimate González's own personal authority in Spanish politics. In point of fact, so indispensable was he as either party leader or prime minister (or both) that he repeatedly threatened the Spaniards with his resignation had they failed to consent to his policies. The first such instance was in 1979 when he actually resigned from the position of PSOE secretary general in order to enforce the abandonment of Marxism and its substitution with ideological moderation. In 1986 he threatened to resign unless the Spaniards voted favorably for NATO membership and again in 1990 if the protests against Guerra (whose brother had been involved in a scandal) did not subside. For the most part of his premiership, González remained very popular in Spain heading the politician popularity polls. Like Mitterrand, too, González was anything but a radical. Once in power, he embraced political moderation, abandoned much of the social democratic policies of his electoral program (Share 1988), and campaigned for Spain's membership in NATO, thus reversing his party's traditional commitment to nonalignment.

Conclusions and further research areas

This paper, initially prompted by the puzzles raised from the atypical emergence of charismatic politics in the otherwise ordinary political system that our contemporary democracy is supposed to be, has aimed to revive the study of political charisma by reconstructing this "blighted concept" (Spinrad 1991) and rendering it applicable to empirical research. It has been argued that charisma points to extraordinary moments in democracy where personal authority holds sway over collective procedures and political moderation gives way to radical action. In such a conceptualization, it has also been shown that, electoral success notwithstanding, very few renowned leaders can be said to be charismatic.

We defined political charisma as *a distinct type of leadership which is personal and aims at the radical transformation of an established institutional order*. This definition has at least three merits: conceptual clarity; affinity to contemporary democratic theory; and predominance of the political over the personal or social aspects of charismatic emergence. Conceptually, first, the new definition carries unambiguous meaning and adequate denotational capacity with respect to the term's empirical referents. To the extent that we know the core characteristics of political charisma, we can easily agree on which leaders are charismatic and which are not. Second, as a legitimate form of authority, political charisma is dissociated from non-democratic, coercive regimes, and re-introduced as a critical variable in the analysis of ordinary liberal democracies. Unlike the latter, which are based on impersonal institutions and procedural moderation, charismatic authority is *extraordinary* precisely because it involves personal authority and radical politics. Third, unlike previous definitions of political charisma that have placed emphasis on either society's psychological predispositions towards some leader with exceptional personal qualities or on mass social responses to some external crisis, our definition reinstates charisma as a power term and exposes its most purely political manifestations.

Thus unambiguously defined, and made operational for empirical research, political charisma may be employed rewardingly as key analytical category in several areas of current political science research. By way of concluding, let us refer to just three such areas. The first is the emerging field of leadership studies which, to a large extent, still remains influenced by social psychology and psychoanalysis, organization theory, and sociology. As Peele (2005, p. 190) explains, this happens because political scientists remain skeptical about the concept of leadership as non-pertaining to "the premises of evidence, comparison, quantification, and establishing counterfactuals." Our new conceptualization of charisma, not only is free of such defects, but also provides new insights in such research sub-areas as the personification of authority (e.g., Mughan 2000) or, more particularly, the "presidentialization of politics," a phenomenon meant to describe systems offering "far more executive power resources

to the leader of the executive while, at the same time, giving him or her considerable autonomy vis-à-vis the political parties in parliament" (Poguntke & Webb 2005, p. 4).

A related area of research concerns populism – itself a notoriously unclear and fuzzy concept. Kurt Weyland (2001) has defined populism as "a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers." Taking into account that such populist strategies are often based upon radical anti-establishment ideologies (e.g., Schedler 1996; Mudde 2005), populism is somehow akin to political charisma. To be sure, as the present analysis has plainly made clear, most charismatic leaders are not populists. What however a future analysis may plausibly ask is whether all populist leaders *are* charismatic. If that proves to be the case, we might as well prefer to abandon the concept of populism for being superfluous to analysis.

Another large area of research in which political charisma and charismatic leadership seem promising is that of radical mass movements and contentious politics. In general, social movements have mostly been examined as bottom-up phenomena arising when there exist in society favorable conditions for mass collective action, resources ready to be mobilized, or appropriate symbolic frames (cf., McAdam et al 1996). What is missing from most of those approaches is individual agency. Political leaders, in particular, are considered to act as simple "intermediaries, as tacticians and foci of events rather than as independent shapers of the course and the outcome of contention" (Aminzade et al 2001, p. 127). It may however be the case that mass action originates from above rather than from below (cf., Barker et al 2001; Pappas 2008). This is clearly the case of charismatic leaders who, by blending strong personal authority with a radical message, engage in symbolic action for building mass political organizations and, ultimately, cause radical political change in their respective societies.

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