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Original Research

The Violence in Peruvian Fundamentalist Catholic Discourse: Case Studies on X (Twitter)

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Abstract: Research into the impact of the X network (previously known as "Twitter") on the dissemination of ideas and political perspectives has surged in recent years. These studies provide crucial insights into the mobilization of public opinion, particularly within specific contexts of sociopolitical conflicts. In many cases, there is a marked polarization that is encouraged in the opinions of people who manage to have an impact on their publications. Recent political polarization in Peru has also resulted in protests. The last one experienced a high degree of violence in December 2022 and January 2023, which prompted a series of tweets from practicing Catholics whose public profiles coincided with publications that had a violent tone, even endorsing the use of weapons. The visibility of Peruvian practicing Catholics on X (formerly Twitter) gives the impression that the typical Catholic does not see conflicts between the practice of a faith, whose fundamental message rests in urging forgiveness and peace, and encouragement to violence.

Keywords: *Twitter, Latin America, Discursive Violence, Peruvian Catholicism, Religious Discourses*

Introduction

During the past several years, critical studies on the discourses that proliferate in social networks have increased ostensibly. Critical discourse studies (Khosravinik 2017) and the growing field of research on technology and digital media have helped to identify numerous aspects of what is occurring at the communicational level in varied communities around the globe (Erdogan-Ozturk and Isik-Guler 2020). The rise of social collectives and their use of social media as a recruiting tool[1] has become increasingly visible, not only reinforcing alliances but also highlighting social and political activism (Al-Rawi 2017; Arafa and Armstrong 2016). In this scenario, each social network has found its specificity in the public space of the digital era (Arafa and Armstrong 2016). Due to its features, particularly the X network (formerly Twitter) allows

[1] This is the case of numerous people gathered through social network as Facebook according to the process started by the Fan Page "The Syrian Revolution 2011 against Bashar Assad" (Al-Rawi 2017), and similarly were the different social collectives gathered after the call of *Movimiento por una vivienda digna* in Madrid, in 2005 (Caldevilla et al. 2019); in Peru, movements like *No a Keiko* or *Con mis hijos no te metas* and other socio-political collectives run through social media "as their spinal expression channels" (Gil 2021, 24).

for interactions that result in different reactions, ranging from the advocacy of connections for the protection of community rights (O'Loughlin et al. 2017; Xiong et al. 2019; Rathnayake 2021) to the public opinion–dominant indiscriminate development of hate speech (Erdogan-Ozturk and Isik-Guler 2020; Hamdi 2022). Nevertheless, the use of X (formerly Twitter) as a political tool is undeniable (Caldevilla et al. 2019).

Using X (formerly Twitter) as a platform for gaining followers for diverse purposes has also encompassed the dissemination of religious beliefs, often related to political stances and occasionally including extremist views (Hamdi 2022; Bogen et al. 2022; Torregrosa et al. 2020). The link between social networks and the spread of ideologies has increased the polarization of the political and cultural spheres. Even though the phenomenon is not new, it is likely that in the last decade, activism in such networks has exacerbated polarization dynamics (Darwish 2019; Di Tella et al. 2021). However, as we shall see later, the relationship between politics and religion is more evident in the Christian realm, primarily in conservative perspectives (Ravecca et al. 2022).

It should be noted that the relationship that exists between digital public opinion, which has access to a global scope, and affectivity, which arises as a correlative expression of the staging of ideas and emotions, is another aspect that underpins the interactions that take place on social networks. This link cannot be overlooked (Arias 2016) and is addressed in this study.

While radicalism and its connection to political ideologies are phenomena that exist in Peru and other regions of Latin America, the number of studies that use social network analysis to explore political phenomena is still incipient. Analysis of spiritual or religious movements is much less common. A recent study is among the few that focus on the strategies of right-wing political campaigns in Latin America. What ultimately emerges from them, or what defines them, is what we call "hate speeches." According to numerous researchers, the term encompasses any form of communication that encourages intolerance and exclusion. This includes ethnocentrism, racism, and sexual discrimination, particularly directed at marginalized and vulnerable populations, as well as at everyone who holds a different opinion (Matamoros-Fernández and Farkas 2021; Díez-Gutiérrez et al. 2022; Ravecca et al. 2022).

The relationship that radical right-wing movements have with populist traits is also worth mentioning; these have been discussed in previous studies. Guerrero-Solé et al. (2021) analyze the radical right-wing party Vox phenomenon in Spanish politics during the 2019 elections. The gap between sociopolitical and economic studies and approaches to culture and subjectivity is further highlighted by Ravecca et al. (2022) in their detailed analysis of several Latin American countries, where they also highlight the growing integration of both dimensions in discourses that are typically more radical. Thus, any movement that embodies the wide definition of "social justice" is vilified as a threat to traditional values. One such example of this is the *Con mis hijos no te metas* movement, which has been rather significant in Peru at various points in recent years. In general, this movement is meant to be critical of the incorporation of gender perspectives into curricula as well as the progressive groups that

support these reforms. These viewpoints, on closer inspection, depict an intellectual landscape strikingly comparable to that recognized in the US during the "Trump era" (Mirrlees 2018).

Studies like that of Ravecca et al. (2022), which examine Peruvian reality, also discover enough data in the X (formerly Twitter) network analysis to establish a connection between the propagation of hate speech and radical viewpoints in this nation's digital public sphere. One of them, along with other cases in Ibero-America, examines *#FraundeEnMesa*, whose original error of the hashtag *fraunde* instead of *fraude* was pointed out by the authors, which brought together the accusations of electoral fraud made by Fujimori's supporters against Pedro Castillo, the winner of the 2021 elections (Díez-Gutiérrez et al. 2022). Another study that addresses the communications path taken by another former president of Peru, Martín Vizcarra, adds a factor that, although not a crucial component of the discussion in this piece, seems worth highlighting: the influence of people who take on communicational leadership in social networks and the manipulation of content that is shared and goes unchallenged but circulates throughout the world as "post-truth" (Arbaiza et al. 2021). One of the ideas presented therein seems pertinent to this study: the influence of the so-called tweets is dependent more on the affectivity or emotion generated by the discourse on the beliefs of those who read them than on the accuracy or objectivity of the information (Bashir et al. 2021; Arbaiza et al. 2021). Consequently, an amalgam of real-life occurrences entwined with made-up material disseminated by the opinion leader is referred to as a "pseudo-event." It is not about providing accurate information but rather about endorsing opinions and viewpoints without further unbiased backing (Caro 2016, quoted in Arbaiza et al. 2021).

After gathering all of the approaches that support the current study and form its background, it is critical to highlight the appropriate subject of this analysis. This study chose a critical political context that gave rise to the polarizations that these discourses tend to generate in this type of context. An early area of interest was examining the ways in which Christian religious beliefs and certain political discourses from a particular segment of the so-called traditional right—a phrase that is still too limited for a satisfactory interpretation—intertwine in the Peruvian context.

Since exposing the entire history of the long process of constructing the "Peruvian Catholic right" is impossible, we will highlight three key events. The first is the one carried out by the Latin American bishops who decided to come together as an association (CELAM) in order to establish the Second Vatican Council's directives. The second, in parallel, is Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez promotion of a new approach to theology based on praxis, such as social and political actions. His social science background and the strong opposition he faced from the ecclesiastical authorities caused this "liberation theology" to become overshadowed during the 1990s in favor of a more conservative tendency and against the "theology of liberation," which Pope John Paul II stood for. Third, Pope Francis, years later, gave renewed impetus to both the Second Vatican Council and liberation theology. The

resurgence of tensions sped up the polarization process, consolidating the "Catholic right" that had begun to emerge during John Paul II's lengthy pontificate.

This study has selected a political crisis scenario, which allows us to show these polarizations through the discourses that circulated during these circumstances. This setting was the attempted self-coup by the former president, Pedro Castillo, which, on December 7, 2022, led to the ascent to power of his vice president, Dina Boluarte. This scenario sparked a wave of countrywide protests that ultimately claimed the lives of sixty-six people: forty-eight civilians, one police officer, six military members, and eleven civilians due to incidents involving road blockades (Defensoría del Pueblo 2023). In fact, the local institution of the *Defensoría del Pueblo*[2]'s study casts doubt on the involvement of the government authorities at the time.

In this context, there were polarized opinions regarding the limits of Boluarte's decisions as the current president. Not everyone supported her rise to power after President Castillo's vacancy since they considered that the self-coup attempt's acts were legitimate. Other groups, however, believed that President Castillo's acts violated the constitutional order, so they backed his immediate vacancy and detention. While the protests targeted several regions of the country, the agora that today is X (formerly Twitter) was also the scene of overflowing opinions, some of which varied between the political and the religious. These are the discourses that this research is analyzing.

Methodology

A qualitative methodological approach was used in the research. Above all, the chosen X (formerly Twitter) discourses are analyzed through hermeneutic methodologies. Thus, the tweets were analyzed as a complete text, in which context and meaning were acknowledged. The tweets were then connected within a larger discourse that has its own context and meaning. In other words, tweets are understood as a complete text, but also as part of a larger discourse constructed through the user's continuous interaction. The interest of the research lies in these discourses. In addition to identifying these discourses, the discursive strategies that the users employed to give them more authority were also noted. Using these methods, this study showed the meanings of these discourses, the strategies employed to reinforce them, and the justifications for violence.

The process of gathering data started with the selection of X (formerly Twitter) profiles according to certain attributes. Initially, the profile needed to be owned by a person of Peruvian nationality. Second, they had to identify as a Catholic believer. This identity could be referenced in a tweet or show up in their X (formerly Twitter) biography. Third, accounts that consisted primarily of retweeting material were disqualified; instead, the profile had to provide original content. Fourth, although there were political themes in this content,

[2] *Defensoría del Pueblo* is the Spanish name of the Ombudsman's Office of Peru.

account profiles that belonged to politicians or other positions of elected office were not considered. Fifth, a sizable portion of people follow them.

Based on these attributes, eight profiles were chosen. The profile was coded in order to safeguard the users' identities. The account code, creation date, and follower count are displayed in the following table:

Table 1: Selected X (Formerly Twitter) Profiles

Code	*Creation Date*	*Followers*
Profile 1	August 2012	65.6k
Profile 2	May 2013	9856
Profile 3	May 2018	7968
Profile 4	October 2017	2587
Profile 5	October 2018	26.5k
Profile 6	March 2021	9681
Profile 7	June 2009	77.4k
Profile 8	April 2009	46.1k

Some of these profiles are active on other social networks or in conventional media. However, the current study was limited to the discourses that they posted on X (formerly Twitter). Here, it is important to note an internet phenomenon adjacent to social networks: "influencers." These users have achieved a certain level of notoriety within their networks, as evidenced by the number of followers and views they receive for their content. They can use this popularity for social, political, or commercial purposes. Although some of the selected profiles could be classified as "influencers," the interest of this study was the discourse they constructed. Thus, the person behind the profile is not deemed relevant and could be the subject of another study. For that same reason, we only share the demographic information about these profiles listed previously.

Using a Tweet Scraper Bot provided by the website botster.io, tweets were taken from the eight profiles. The date of the extraction was April 8, 2023. The tweets that fell between December 7, 2021, and January 7, 2023, were chosen from the ones that the bot retrieved. The period was selected, taking as reference December 7, 2022, the date of the attempted self-coup by former Peruvian President Pedro Castillo. As stated differently, tweets posted a year prior to and a month after were collected. Additionally, tweets that did not fit either the political or religious macrocategories were eliminated. A manual classification was carried out with the use of the ATLAS.ti 23 software. Every tweet may fall under one or more of the headings. The following is the total number of tweets that were examined:

Table 2: Examined Tweets

Code	*Number of Extracted Tweets*	*Number of Analyzed Tweets*
Profile 1	277	99
Profile 2	585	18
Profile 3	504	16
Profile 4	1,000	123
Profile 5	493	98
Profile 6	1,000	264
Profile 7	372	44
Profile 8	1,000	50
Total	*5,231*	*712*

It is acknowledged that technical elements, such the algorithm that determines what information to display to users, can be considered when studying a social network. Due to their ability to generate a greater number of reactions, both positive and negative, polarizing is typically promoted by social media algorithms on sites like X (formerly Twitter). However, this role is not considered in this article, as this research focuses more on the posted content than on the number of reactions or whether X's (formerly Twitter) algorithms were used to boost it. That would have to be researched in another study. Thus, the tweets selected and examined are not necessarily the most well liked or reacted to from the selected profiles.

Results

The research we conducted allowed us to identify recurring themes in the discourses that were evaluated. Depending on the characteristics of the people tweeting, these categories are repeated in subtle ways. We were able to eventually reconstruct the social personas of these performers based on this classification. Consequently, the definition and description of the following categories as a preliminary analytical exercise were taken into consideration:

Confessionality (About Christian Beliefs)

Tweets openly characterize and reveal religious behaviors and content, defying the belief of contemporary society that confines religion to the domain of private life. They are an outward confession that might take on a moral, remorseful, or even radical tone at times. In this regard, Profile 1 interrogates these practices around December 28[3]:

[3] All of the tweets' original text is in Spanish, whose version can be read in the corresponding notes.

> Yesterday was December 28, Day of the Holy Innocents. Tragic date of reflection and prayer. The fact that it is "Day of the Holy Innocents" does not make it "April Fool's Day," which is celebrated in the English-speaking world on April 1st. That is the day of jokes, not this one. How alienated they can be. 🤦‍♀️[4]

During a series of tweets regarding politics and daily life, Profile 1 interprets December 28 as a "tragic date" and says that "Day of the Holy Innocents" does not make it "April Fool's Day." In addition to expressing their beliefs clearly, Profile 1 backs them up with the unquestionable historicity of a "tragic date."

Under a similar religious logic, Profile 1 constructs a simple creed:

> 1. I believe in God the Father, Almighty. 2. I believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord. 3. I believe in the Holy Spirit. 4. I believe in the immaculate conception and purity of Mary, our mother. 5. I believe in the Holy Catholic Church and the communion of her saints. 6. I believe in eternal life. Nothing more.[5]

A creed is a statement of agreement, or better yet, communion, with a particular group that proclaims and confesses its religion. Even if they are conveyed in a condensed form, shared dimensions and elements are utilized in this type of personal creed. They convey a religious experience within a common set of beliefs with this gesture. On the other hand, by defining it with "non-negotiable" boundaries, the writer of this tweet enforces a belief system. His final suggestion, "Nothing more," seems more like a statement of subjectivity than a unifying belief system. This creed is practiced the day following the annual *Marcha por la Vida*, which is coordinated on March 25 by conservative Catholic and evangelical organizations, although it is unclear what really inspires them. Ultimately, this creed accords equal weight to many facets or concepts of the Catholic faith.

Another example of faith exposition is found in Profile 2:

> I am not a lover of any other culture that is not Christian; only in the Catholic Church do I find the truth. I pray for the conversion of its children, including the Qataris. However, God is not a God of scandals or repression; the way to him is free, without scorn.[6]

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[4] "Ayer fue 28 de Diciembre, Día de los Santos Inocentes. Fecha trágica, de reflexión y oración. Que sea 'Día de los Inocentes', no lo hace 'April Fool's day', que se celebra en el mundo anglo el 1ero de abril. Ese día es el día de las bromas, este no. Qué alienados pueden ser."

[5] "1. Creo en Dios Padre, Todopoderoso. 2. Creo en Jesucristo, Nuestro Señor. 3. Creo en el Espíritu Santo. 4. Creo en la Inmaculada Concepción y pureza de María, Nuestra Madre. 5. Creo en la Santa Iglesia Católica y la comunión de sus santos. 6. Creo en la vida eterna. Más nada."

[6] "Yo no soy amante de ninguna otra cultura que no sea Cristiana, solo en la iglesia Católica encuentro la verdad, rezo por la conversión de sus hijos incluidos los Qatarís, sin embargo, Dios no es un Dios de escándalos ni de represión, el camino hacia él es libre, sin escarnios."

These claims articulate the belief and its form: it is portrayed as a true culture, although we are unsure of what that actually entails beyond an ethereal metaphysics of truth. In fact, the referenced concept is widely held and forms a foundation for societal norms.

Advocacy of Conservative Sexual Values

It is clear from the analysis that another set of tweets criticize gender theory and/or sexual practices contrary to their traditional beliefs. This further demonstrates how religious institutions—particularly the Catholic Church and, to a lesser extent, evangelical churches—remain prominent public figures in much of Latin America and continue to hold influence over the states (Vaggione et al. 2015). Gender ideology and sexual practices that do not only rely on the biological binary of male and female are rejected. It is acknowledged that traditional family values can only thus be upheld. This viewpoint has a propensity to support a sexuality that is oriented toward biology. As Profile 2 indicates,

> The problem of an anti-family and severely caudillist era is that the essence of being is lost as a consequence; common people and "referents" are all looking for their caudillo (hero) at all times. Milei, Laje, Marquez, Elon Musk, Giorgia Meloni, Bukele, Trump, Bolsonaro, etc.[7]

In the midst of a crisis against traditional family values, Profile 2 challenges a *caudillista* style that is halfway between politics and religious confession. A metaphysics that is inherent in the prevailing culture is linked to the religious confession. Thus, the tweet presents itself as countercultural.

As for Profile 7, they contend:

> "Marriage equality" has never sought to equalize rights but to destroy the essential institutions of human beings. Light variants of "gender diversity," "multiparental family," "new masculinities," "fur babies," "trans children," and other atrocities that our children will suffer.[8]

The strength of the argument is derived from the supporting evidence for its own claims. It is, as in other instances, a critique of the prevailing Catholic metaphysics, to which another

[7] "El problema de una era anti familia y gravemente caudillista, es que se pierde en consecuencia la esencia del ser; gentes comunes y 'referentes', todos, buscando su caudillo (héroe) en todo momento. Milei, Laje, Márquez, Elon Musk, Giorgia Meloni, Bukele, Trump, Bolsonaro, etc." All these names refer to the most radical position of the Catholic right in the Latin American region. The "caudillo" is a political boss or overlord and is a common name for political chiefs fighting for power after the process of "decolonization" in Latin America since the nineteenth century onward.

[8] "'Matrimonio igualitario' jamás ha buscado igualar derechos sino destruir instituciones esenciales del ser humano. Variante light de 'diversidad de género', 'familia multiparental', 'nuevas masculinidades', 'perrhijos', 'niños trans' y demás atrocidades que sufrirán nuestros hijos."

argues for the identity of institutions or the essence of the human being. It is often believed that the Catholic faith upholds the institution of the conventional family.

Praise of Military-Police Institutions

These are tweets that, particularly when discussing citizen demonstrations, support and/or extol the virtues of military-police institutions. Because they maintain public order, the lives of members of the military forces are sometimes deemed to be more precious than those of demonstrators. Profile 5 tweets in a language that is fairly provocative[9]:

> To the average patriotic Peruvian, it causes PRIDE to see the police deployed in the center to protect us; to the reds[10], it gives them diarrhea because they cannot conceive of the idea that their marches every day are a failure.[11]

The concept of the "average patriotic Peruvian" is an abstraction, once more, akin to the metaphysical core upheld in earlier tweets. This tweet mocks and supports a social structure that is similar to the status quo. Does this tool support other forms of argumentation?

Skepticism Against Human Rights Institutions

There is also a subset of tweets that disparage national or international organizations that work to protect human rights. These organizations are typically perceived as cogs in a machine that subverts societal structure. In this sense, Profile 8 exposes what he believes feeds these human rights organizations and, as he makes clear to us, their hypocrisies. On December 15, 2022, among the fervor of societal disputes, he makes the following observation:

> I see several NGOs claiming to defend "human rights" salivating. They are generating cases to live on for the next 30 years.[12]

He further adds (alluding to the policies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic):

> In the time of [president] Vizcarra, they would put you in jail for walking your dog 100 meters from your house. And the human rights organizations didn't give a damn.[13]

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[9] The original capital letters have been maintained.

[10] The reds meaning communists; red being a stereotypical color associated with communism.

[11] "Al Peruano patriota promedio, le causa ORGULLO ver a la Policía desplegada en el centro para protegernos, a los rojos les da diarrea, porque no conciben la idea de que sus marchas cada día son un fracaso."

[12] "Veo a varias ONGs que dicen defender 'derechos humanos' salivando. Están generando casos para vivir los siguientes 30 años."

[13] "En la época de[l presidente] Vizcarra te metían preso por pasear a tu perro a 100 metros de tu casa. Y a las ONGs de derechos humanos les importó un pepino."

Profile 8 criticizes, in general, the organizations that protect human rights while implying that these institutions pursue other types of interests. Thus, the work produced by these organizations is presented as though it were a component of the citizen protests against the government, even though there is no supporting data to defend this claim.

On the other hand, Profile 4 tweets:

> Exactly, vandals and terrorists are trampling on the human rights of good citizens and our brave police and military.[14]

In this case, the tweet criminalizes the protest by subverting the roles, associating the mere fact of the protest with "terrorism" and, consequently, as the violation of human rights; at the same time, the actions of the armed forces and the violence they evoke are praised.

Identification of the Political Enemy

This category includes some tweets that highlight people who, because of their differing political stances, inspire hostility and disapproval. They specifically employ rhetorical devices for this purpose. Profile 6, for instance, demonstrates a significant sentiment against Colombian President Gustavo Petro on December 8, 2022:

> Mr. Terrorist. Mind your own business. Nobody called you here. Worry about the economic disasters in your country; you haven't even been in office for a year, and you have already multiplied poverty. https://t.co/sNYqySfCcH.[15]

Epithets are employed to portray the opponent as vile. A day later, against another adversary, he argues:

> You just don't have the brains to do it as a linguist https://t.co/Sv9hcZ9klo.[16]

Our aim is to highlight the manner in which this type of tweet identifies the opponents, namely, by using derogatory language, disparaging remarks, or slanted depictions of their behavior.

Discussion

Apart from the aforementioned classifications, there exists a collection of persuasive tools designed to pinpoint the political adversary with the intention of undermining their

[14] "Exactamente, los vándalos y terroristas están pisoteando los derechos humanos de los ciudadanos de bien y de nuestros valerosos policías y militares."
[15] "Señor terrorista. Métase en sus asuntos. Aquí nadie lo llamó. Preocúpese de los desastres económicos en su país que no tiene ni un año de gobernar y ya multiplicó la pobreza."
[16] "Es que no te da el cerebro para hacerlo como lingüista."

legitimacy. Arguments like "ad hominem" (the justification for degrading the individual), "ad absurdum" (the justification for mocking the adversary), "ad baculum" (the justification for using force), and "ad verecundiam" (the justification for authority) may be found on these sites. There are several examples, as though X (formerly Twitter) had the ability to normalize rising levels of violence as a reflexive need.

Our purpose is not to examine failures in logical argumentation but to briefly highlight them as an exercise that would clarify a method of operation. A fallacy, according to Irving Copi's referential research, is the kind of argument that seems reasonable at first but, on closer examination, is disproven to be so (Copi and Cohen 2013).

Ad Hominem

"Literally, argument against the man" (Audi 1995, 374):

- Profile 6: "You just don't have the brains to do it as a linguist." The metonymy, brain instead of intellect, alleges a lack of intelligence and hence invalidates any argument, regardless of the adversary mentioned.
- Profile 4: "Go march, coward. Such a macho man in Twitter. Social scum, you and your damn ideology. Go march and be something coherent that you are sending people to, then take power and continue stealing like the good communist you are. March, or are you afraid?"[17] Even if the assertion is based on fact, resorting to insults is not convincing or coherent as an argument.
- Profile 7, in the context of the December 2022 protests: "I subscribe. Any asshole servile to the power of the day can be appointed prefect https://t.co/g0RISOLjDJ."[18] In a context where insults (ad hominem) are common, it is hard to distinguish one fallacy from another. Even if he has invested in it, the tweet's sender clearly lacks authority because of his attitude.

Ad Absurdum

Proof by contradiction or absurdity:

- Profile 1, about Zaria Arias, an adherent of Peru Libre, the ruling party: "Hey Zaira, seriously, stop shoveling. What parallel reality are you living in? So, ladies, take folic acid during pregnancy; we don't want any more of this:

[17] "Vaya a marchar cobarde, desde Twitter bien machito. Escoria social tú y tu maldita ideología. Vaya a marchar y sé algo coherente que estás mandando a la gente para luego tomar tú el poder y seguir robando como buen comunista que eres. Marcha, ¿o tienes miedo?"

[18] "Suscribo. Cualquier imbécil servil al poder de turno puede ser nombrado prefecto."

https://t.co/iASCBVmCLw."[19] Without excluding the possibility of a fresh ad hominem resource, the joke is primarily one of derision: folic acid deficiency impairs the healthy growth of the embryo within the mother's womb.

- Profile 2: "Jaime [Bayly, a famous TV presenter] is a disgusting man who firmly adheres to the gender perspective and minimizes sex education to 'how to shake the penis after ejaculation'."[20] Again, a parody is used to distort an argument (gender theory) to bolster an absurd argument that ignores the complexity of the issue. In addition to being hideous, the caricature mocks all viewpoints.
- Profile 5 on the December 2022 protests: "Lefties: 'The protests are peaceful; the police are doing violence against the poor protesters of the people.' 'The poor protesters', setting fire to a Judicial Power headquarters in Arequipa."[21] With evident mockery, the author of this tweet wants to make it clear that the protests are violent while the police are in charge of containing the damage.

Ad Baculum

"Argument to the club" (Audi 1995, 374):

- Profile 4 against Vladimir Cerrón, a current fugitive[22]: "Hey, coward, why are you NEVER seen in the streets? Very macho from Twitter, in the end, even Vero Mendoza[23] has more balls than you. When will you go out and bathe in tear gas, or are you afraid of being kicked out of the protests? March, coward! #QueNoTeEngañen: https://t.co/q6UNsCejpu."[24] There is a definite resort to force and violence via insult, which is also sometimes confused with ad hominem: coward, macho, and worthless.

[19] "Oye Zaira, en serio deja de paltear. ¿En qué realidad paralela vives? Por eso, señoras, tomen ácido fólico en el embarazo, no queremos más de esto."

[20] "Jaime es un impresentable que cree firmemente en el enfoque de género porque reduce la educación sexual a 'cómo se debe agitar el pene después de eyacular'."

[21] "Zurdos: 'Las protestas son pacíficas, la policía está violentando contra los pobres manifestantes del pueblo'. 'Los pobres manifestantes', incendiando una sede del Poder Judicial en Arequipa"

[22] Cerrón is a politician who was a candidate for second vice president in the winning ticket of the Peruvian presidential election of 2021, alongside Pedro Castillo and Dina Boluarte. However, he was removed of the ticket by the electoral courts on criminal charges of corruption. Nevertheless, he tried to influence President Castillo after winning. In October of 2023, he was sentenced to imprisonment for corruption, but has so far remained fugitive.

[23] Politician from the Left and related to the ruling party before the events analyzed in this article occurred.

[24] "Oye, cobarde, ¿por qué NUNCA se te ve en las calles? Muy machito desde Twitter, al final hasta Vero Mendoza tiene más huevos que tú. ¿Cuándo saldrás a bañarte en gas lacrimógeno?, ¿O tienes miedo que te boten de las protestas? ¡Marcha, cobarde! #QueNoTeEngañen."

Ad Verecundiam

"Argument to reverence or respect" (Audi 1995, 375):

- Profile 2: "Pro-drug legalization or Catholic; both are impossible."[25] Although this could be a false dilemma, it is based on the notion that a non-traditional mentality cannot coexist with the authority of Catholicism. It tries to enforce the importance of truth and genuine authority, but beneath the surface, it displays a skewed perception of the Catholic faith.
- Profile 2: "Tomorrow, all Catholics or not, we are all called to the fast that the Pope mentioned, a fast of prayer and compassion for those who suffer. No country is a saint of devotion, nor is my country; however, it is always good to implore God for his mercy in the face of so much evil in the world."[26] In a world that has grown up, according to theologian Bonhoeffer (1973), this X (formerly Twitter) user suggests a fast because the Pope says so. Although there has been a solidarity argument as well, it pales under the figure of the Pope.

The way in which the arguments are presented demonstrates not only a lack of argumentative progress but also disdain for an opponent who is unworthy of attention. In this regard, by ignoring the enemy's arguments, the aforementioned X (formerly Twitter) users are reducing their presence to that of a ghost. Their words are taken out of context and without the subtleties that would make them laugh. In the vernacular of Peru, this cunning fashion is known as *cacha* or *cachita*,[27] and it perfectly signifies laughing (Gamero 2010). Laughing here is the same as bare fangs, which two opponents exchange when fighting over territory, prey, or children. As the first stage of a violent process, mockery serves as a precursor to aggressiveness.

To the aforementioned, however, it is important to add the following: how do these remarks, which clearly alter the political and religious landscape, relate to religious confession? Since politics and religion coexist in public life, three hypotheses are quickly put forth as a result of the discussion: First, political commentary and religious confessions are contained within airtight containers within the group of X (formerly Twitter) users and their tweets. Second, political commentary and religious confession are blended together in the X (formerly Twitter) group and their tweets. Third, even though the collection of X (formerly Twitter) users and their tweets may be identified as separate places, these domains interact and trade a shared ideological foundation that can be identified: a persecutory tactic.

[25] "Pro legalización de drogas o Católico; ambas cosas, imposible."

[26] "Mañana todos los católicos o no estamos llamados al ayuno que el Papa hizo mención, un ayuno de rezo y compenetración por quienes sufren; ningún país es santo de devoción, ni mi país, sin embargo, siempre es bueno implorarle a Dios por su piedad frente a tanta maldad en el mundo."

[27] Peruvian jargon for irony.

Since the tweets we have examined oscillate between religious confessions and public-political activities, the first and second hypotheses may be immediately eliminated. We are able to rule out both hypotheses since some of these phrases are hard to place in either category. It is then important to clarify the kind of interaction—or even collusion—that takes place between the two domains once we have acknowledged this evidence. A persecutory approach similar to both sectors is apparent with the identification of the political opponent as a general strategy that develops gradually and painstakingly. The three following examples can strengthen this idea:

- Profile 6: "Easy, you are next":[28] https://t.co/Yfjgw08s3U. Then, in the same day: "We saw you, rabid red.":[29] https://t.co/qUELpBk82J.
- Profile 3: "No wonder all the reds, purples, and cronies have come out to complain about the LUM,[30] although if it were the other way around, they would scoff and demand compliance."[31]
- Profile 4: "Hypocrite! Opportunistic! Cynical! Continue…":[32] https://t.co/gXgIBraO9G

X (formerly Twitter) users engage in adversarial tagging, fostering a hostile environment for those who may face social disdain. If one pays close attention, this will not happen without giving the impression that a group of people have discovered a victim on whom to exact their vengeance. Potential victims are used for a "sacred" purpose that is created by human action (Tarot 2008, 412). This is what René Girard defines in his theory of the scapegoat, in which the "sacred" generates a compulsion to seek victims to sacrifice and thus calm the anguish produced by a social crisis. Consequently, the sacred always requires a sacrifice. Girard recognizes that this compulsion to seek sacrificial victims is sustained by the imitative attitude, which is a condition of culture: "There is little nothing in human behavior that is not learned, and all learning comes down to imitation. If people suddenly stopped imitating, all cultural forms would vanish" (1978, 17). This insight is essential to comprehending these annotations and their rigorous link with a theological worldview.

[28] "Tranquila, sigue usted."

[29] "Ya te vimos, roja rabiosa."

[30] The *Lugar de la Memoria, Tolerancia e Inclusión Social* (LUM) is a museum dedicated to preserving the memory of the subversive conflict led by the terrorist groups *Sendero Luminoso* and *Movimiento Revolucionario Tupac Amaru* (MRTA) in the 1980s and 1990s. These circumstances resulted in indiscriminate repression and the sacrifice of innocent lives on the pretext that they were members of the subversive movements. The LUM has faced harsh criticism ever since it was established and has even been accused of providing cover for terrorists.

[31] The tweet alludes to the colors of some political parties related to the stereotype color of "communist" (red). "No es raro que todos los rojos, morados y compinches hayan salido a reclamar por el LUM, aunque si fuera al revés se burlarían y exigirían que se cumplan las normas."

[32] "Hipócrita! Arribista! Cínica! Continúen…"

The starting point is found in cultures that are not only constructed by mimesis (Girard 1986) but that also employ this same process to express or suppress the inherent violence of social interaction. Girard emphasizes that there has been a mistake and, most importantly, an omission about the function of imitation throughout the history of hominization, which he recalls happening several times: "If the mimetic in man does indeed play the fundamental role that everything points to for it, there must necessarily exist an acquisitive imitation or, if one prefers, an appropriative mimesis whose effects must be studied and whose consequences we must weigh up" (Girard 1978, 17).

We are neither special nor distinctive because we are inside the dynamic of a *mimesis* of appropriation—not only wanting what the other wants but also having what the other has. The violence reaches a tipping point, known as the mimetic crisis, which can be overcome only by eliminating the other. Therefore, the start of reciprocal violence is the mimesis of appropriation.

Indeed, the reciprocal aggression of all against all that results from the mimesis of appropriation is what happens during the hominization process. The sacred whispers that an atoning sacrifice should be made in order to avert this disaster. It is true that all of this happens as a result of unconscious processes. Based on Girard's theory about the social containment role of the sacred, we may thus conclude that the tweets' alternation, which forces us to navigate a variety of public spaces—religious and political—leads to the same end: the survival of a society that, in the absence of explicit social laws, can always turn to the sacred in order to protect itself. Throughout the entire process of hominization, the holy has imparted knowledge sufficient to guide a society that was civil in the past or, like the current one, to transform any threat to the group as a whole into violence against a single victim: "it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (John 11:50, quoted in Girard 2001, 36). This is a totalizing vision, a metaphysical impression that biases X (formerly Twitter) users in favor of a victim.

As a result, being persecutory, the common denominator of the violence in the tweets only serves to highlight the desire to make a sacrifice, the pretense of achieving a certain power, and the hunger that the sacred has ingrained in the identity. This is seen in the analyzed tweets, which solidify the enemy's identity and progressively deepen societal division in an effort to set up a willing victim. The tweets exhibit a never-ending quest for and fulfillment of emissary death.

A question that one can raise is whether selecting a single victim is the only option available or whether it will always come down to this, in which case our scholarly contribution will amount to pointing out a recurring and unavoidable prophecy. The explanation is that history will always repeat itself as long as the metaphysical paradigm of the holy is imposed as the dominant one. In this way, the tweets and the tweeters themselves portray a belief system devoid of fractures, wherein every potential break is instantly denounced as contradicting the system as a whole. Either the holy is appropriated in its entirety, or it is minimized. It is exactly what it is in its entirety.

Conclusion

Social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) are used as a conduit to express political-religious ideas that support the status quo of an authoritarian-leaning political order in socially tense situations like the one analyzed between December 2022 and January 2023. Religious and political motivations interact with and reinforce each other to strengthen public opinion in Peru, where, unlike other countries, religion and the church are not separated from politics or the state, respectively. When a segment of the public perceives that both their interests and the political stability are threatened, religion emerges rather than retreating from its position. This research elucidates how division and an unstable political environment came to be in the nation amid violent events that revealed unhealed scars from a relatively recent history: terrorism at the end of the twentieth century. This response stems from traditional Catholic ideals, which, in the guise of defending them, make apparent by their derogatory language an underlying dread of a replay of past terrorist acts of bloodshed. As a result, any outside danger that upsets the established order is called "terrorist" or "communist." Therefore, gender ideology and abortion are grouped together as new progressive principles. Simultaneously, a great deal of the rhetoric in the examined tweets displays a persistent polarization that extends beyond problematic environments like the one this study examined.

From this analysis, it can be inferred that Catholic practitioners' prominence in X (formerly Twitter) public opinion is essentially consistent with conservative viewpoints that refute various assertions regarding the social nature of contemporary society made by organizations commonly referred to as "progressive." As a result, concepts such as gender theory, equality, and human rights ideals are criticized for being incompatible with Christian doctrine. Similarly, the analyzed X (formerly Twitter) accounts display their most aggressive side during a political crisis, when they turn to erroneous defenses intended to undermine the credibility of people they have established as "enemies" and use derogatory remarks, caricatures, and other derogatory language to generally dehumanize those who disagree with them.

The discrepancies displayed in the speech of X (formerly Twitter) users who profess to be Catholics with the qualities of Christian practice and those who support inclusionary rather than exclusionary values are apparent, although that is not the goal of this work. The Catholic X (formerly Twitter) users examined for this study utilize erroneous discursive techniques to violently disqualify their "enemies," which dehumanize the other and foster an atmosphere of exclusion that incites violence. This would raise doubts about the effectiveness of the consistency between Christian discourses in public social networks and their ideals.

As a result, the use of religion in the public domain of X (formerly Twitter) reveals that a segment of Catholics justifies armed aggression by using verbal abuse. Due to the repercussion on social media, this viewpoint becomes the public face of the Catholic faith. It dominates and establishes itself as the referent of the Catholic viewpoint with no opposition.

It is portrayed as an apologetic speech, but it also contains a violent accusation that, when used in the public sphere of X (formerly Twitter), has the opposite impact of a "defense" and may further heighten criticism and rejection of the faith. Put simply, it creates the appearance that religion always resorts to violent means of forcing itself when it enters the public domain.

Since this is a unique and groundbreaking examination of religious discourse in Peru's digital public sphere, no prior local research has been discovered that would enable us to compare the methodology and evolution of our theory. Another drawback is that our study has been restricted to the discourse of Catholicism, which is the predominant religion in Peru. Although the findings of this article should be restricted to the Catholic religion, a more comprehensive examination of the viewpoints of other belief systems might widen them.

Ultimately, it would be crucial to adhere to these recommendations by using them in additional circumstances that are similar to the one on which this study is focused. This would allow for the establishment of more expansive criteria that may be used to challenge or support the findings of this investigation. Similar to this, the methodology used has only looked at a limited number of publications during a particular conjuncture; therefore, in order to reach a wider conclusion regarding the violent trait as a component of the Catholic identity of the profiles under study, we would need to expand the analysis by looking at a greater number of publications during other times that do not fall within the conjuncture selected for this work. Furthermore, applying quantitative methodology may complement the results on this phenomenon.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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