

Authoritarian Pulse: A Model for Measuring Left- and Right-Wing Discursive Authoritarianism in Presidential Publications on X

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Abstract— For decades, research on authoritarianism focused almost exclusively on its right-wing variant (RWA), relegating the systematic study of left-wing authoritarianism (LWA) to a marginal position that has only recently begun to be reversed. This imbalance has left political science without analytical frameworks capable of classifying and comparing, within a single instrument, the discursive authoritarianism of both ideological orientations a critical limitation in a context in which Latin American presidents of both left and right employ the platform X as a privileged channel of communication. This article proposes Authoritarian Pulse, an integrated scale ranging from -5 to +5 that unifies the classification of left- and right-wing discursive authoritarianism across five analytical dimensions, designed for the monthly measurement of presidential discourse on X. The instrument was applied to the publications of Petro, Boric, Sheinbaum, Noboa, Bukele, and Milei during February 2026, using the Gemini Flash 2.5 API in two sequential phases: ideological filtering and classification on the scale. The findings reveal that Petro and Sheinbaum are located in the progressive left (mode -2), Milei in the right with incipient authoritarian features (mode +3), Boric as the most pluralist profile in the corpus, and Bukele as a case of ideological ambiguity that challenges conventional taxonomies, confirming the instrument's capacity to discriminate between authoritarian variants of different orientations on a single axis.

Keywords— Left-wing authoritarianism; right-wing authoritarianism; presidential discourse; X (Twitter); computational social science; Latin America.

Introduction

Political communication has undergone a structural transformation with the consolidation of social media as privileged channels of interaction between governing authorities and citizens. In a global environment in which heads of state resort with increasing frequency to digital platforms to announce government decisions, confront the opposition, and mobilize their electoral bases, the social network X (formerly Twitter) has positioned itself as the predominant space for direct presidential discourse (Samuel-Azran et al., 2018; Fasce & Avendaño, 2025). This mediatization of the exercise of power raises substantive questions for political science: to what extent does the digital discourse of Latin American presidents reproduce

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authoritarian patterns identified in the literature? Is it possible to systematically classify, at scale, the degree of discursive authoritarianism, both left-wing and right-wing, present in the publications of heads of state?

Authoritarianism, understood as the tendency to favor the coercive imposition of values and hierarchical social organization, has been the subject of renewed scholarly interest over the past two decades. Although the tradition of studying right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) was consolidated through the seminal work of Altemeyer in the 1980s, the systematic study of left-wing authoritarianism (LWA) has only recently achieved empirical maturity (Costello et al., 2022; Nilsson, 2024). Both variants share a psychological core defined by dogmatism, punitive attitudes toward dissidents, and a preference for strong authority figures; however, they mobilize these traits in accordance with divergent ideological values (Fasce & Avendaño, 2020; Manson, 2020). Despite advances in the conceptualization and measurement of authoritarianism, a significant gap persists in the application of these frameworks to the analysis of digital political discourse, particularly in the Latin American context, where executives of opposing ideological orientations deploy authoritarian rhetorical strategies through the same platforms.

This article has a twofold purpose. First, it constructs Authoritarian Pulse, a classification model of discursive authoritarianism that integrates the theoretical dimensions of LWA and RWA documented in recent literature, operationalized as a scale ranging from -5 (extreme left-wing authoritarianism) to +5 (extreme right-wing authoritarianism), designed for the monthly measurement of presidential discourse on X. The concept of pulse alludes to the periodic and dynamic nature of the measurement: just as the physiological pulse reveals the state of the cardiovascular system at a given moment, Authoritarian Pulse seeks to capture the state of the authoritarian discourse of Latin American executives in each observation period, enabling the longitudinal monitoring of trends and variations. Second, this model is applied to the empirical analysis of the publications of six incumbent Latin American presidents, Gustavo Petro (Colombia), Gabriel Boric (Chile), Claudia Sheinbaum (Mexico), Daniel Noboa (Ecuador), Nayib Bukele (El Salvador), and Javier Milei (Argentina), during February

2026, using automated classification via the Gemini Flash 2.5 language model API. The article is structured in five sections, first, the discursive characteristics of left- and right-wing authoritarianism are reviewed; second, existing proposals for the ideological classification of authoritarianism are examined; third, the Authoritarian Pulse scale is presented; fourth, the methodological design is described; and fifth, the results are presented.

2. Authoritarian Discourses

The analysis of authoritarian political discourse has acquired particular relevance in the contemporary context of ideological polarization and erosion of democratic norms. Available evidence indicates that both the left and the right of the political spectrum deploy rhetorical strategies with a shared authoritarian substrate—intolerance toward dissent, discursive construction of enemies, and demands for group conformity—though they differ substantially in their motivations, the groups toward whom they direct their aggression, and the mechanisms through which they legitimize their positions (Fasce & Avendaño, 2020; Costello et al., 2022; Nilsson, 2024). In general terms, left-wing authoritarian discourse is organized around social justice, equality, and the denunciation of structural privileges, while right-wing discourse is organized around security, tradition, and the defense of national identity (Duckitt, 2022; Lane et al., 2023). The following subsections examine each variant based on recent scholarly production.

2.1 Left-Wing Authoritarian Discourse

Costello et al. (2022), in a study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, proposed a tripartite model of LWA comprising three dimensions: anti-hierarchical aggression, top-down censorship, and anti-conventionalism. These dimensions find discursive expression in rhetoric that justifies the use of force against existing social structures, in the suppression of dissenting perspectives, and in the systematic rejection of norms perceived as reproducing inequality. Subsequent studies have confirmed the robustness of this model across diverse contexts (Lambert et al., 2024; Petrović & Ninković, 2025).

A core component of left-wing authoritarian discourse is its articulation with identity politics and perceived grievance. Love and Sharman (2025) identified the perception of victimization and the belief in the necessity of drastic measures in response to structural injustices as robust predictors of LWA. This orientation translates, at the discursive level, into narratives that emphasize systemic oppression, identify groups perceived as privileged, and legitimate radical actions by invoking social justice as a supreme value. Fasce and Avendaño (2025)

corroborated this association through a correlational study with social media users, in which left-wing identity politics showed a significant relationship with authoritarian attitudes.

With respect to rhetorical strategies, Samuel-Azran et al. (2018) observed that left-wing discourse predominantly relies on apparent rational appeals (logos), constructing arguments with the appearance of empirical grounding. Nevertheless, this apparent rationality coexists with mechanisms of moral panic: political opposition is framed as an existential threat to democracy through the invocation of fears associated with totalitarian regimes and nationalist indoctrination. This tension between surface rationality and underlying emotionality constitutes a rhetorical pattern that, under the guise of defending democratic values, may lead to practices of censorship and intolerance.

Lane et al. (2023) examined the moral foundations of LWA and identified a pattern they termed tribal egalitarian discourse. Although this discourse promotes equality as a guiding principle, it operates through mechanisms of group cohesion that reproduce authoritarian dynamics: demands for ideological conformity, sanctioning of internal dissidents, and hostility toward groups considered obstacles to equality. The authors noted that this discursive modality has gained cohesion and social penetration, particularly in contexts of intense mobilization for social justice.

At the psychological level, Krispenz and Bertrams (2024) reported significant associations between LWA and traits of the dark personality triad, particularly narcissism and psychopathy, suggesting that a portion of left-wing authoritarian discourse may respond to egocentric motivations rather than a substantive commitment to equity. Deverson et al. (2025) demonstrated that psychological distress acts as a moderator, intensifying the adoption of punitive and censorial positions. Regarding discursive control mechanisms, Conway et al. (2023) documented the use of egalitarian narratives that function simultaneously as instruments of dissent suppression. This suppression also operates through strategies of semantic reinterpretation and the narrowing of the meaning of concepts such as democracy, freedom, and rights, aimed at controlling the terms of public debate.

2.2 Right-Wing Authoritarian Discourse

The study of right-wing authoritarian discourse has a considerably more extensive theoretical and empirical tradition. Altemeyer's tripartite model, comprising authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism, continues to constitute the predominant reference framework (Nilsson, 2024; Duckitt, 2022). At the discursive level, these dimensions manifest through rhetoric that extols adherence to established

norms, the defense of traditional values, and aggression directed toward those constructed as threats to the conventional social order.

Fasce and Avendaño (2020), in a comprehensive analysis of authoritarianism published in *Personality and Individual Differences*, identified social conservatism as the strongest predictor of RWA. This finding is reflected discursively in narratives oriented toward the preservation of the status quo, resistance to progressive change, and the defense of established social hierarchies. Nikolov (2024) provided complementary evidence by showing that sociodemographic variables such as age, educational level, and rurality moderate RWA scores, suggesting that right-wing authoritarian discourse adapts to the particularities of each social context.

A distinctive characteristic of this discursive variant is its recourse to the rhetoric of fear. Duckitt (2022) established that RWA is activated in response to perceived threats to security and social stability, generating anti-democratic attitudes and behaviors. Rhetorically, this translates into the construction of a threatening environment in which any deviation from traditional norms is presented as an existential risk demanding firm responses. Adrián-Ventura et al. (2025) provided convergent neurobiological evidence by identifying structural brain correlates associated with fear processing and cognitive rigidity in individuals with high RWA scores.

The nationalist dimension of this discourse was documented by Radkiewicz (2016), who analyzed the relationship between authoritarianism and ethnocentric attitudes, RWA discourse tends to reinforce exclusionary national identities, articulated around cultural homogeneity and distrust toward what is perceived as foreign. Batur and Tolstrup (2024) identified the emphasis on patriotism and the display of governmental achievements as central discursive tools for consolidating the legitimacy of power. Pascale (2019) complemented this perspective by examining the instrumentalization of language in contexts of ascending right-wing authoritarianism, describing how discourse amplifies resentments, designates scapegoats, and legitimizes actions that erode democratic norms. A relevant finding by Winter et al. (2022) nuances this characterization by documenting that even individuals on the left can exhibit support for authoritarian submission when they perceive threats of great social magnitude, suggesting that the rhetoric of fear and the demand for order possess an activation potential that transcends ideological boundaries.

Conway et al. (2021) contributed an integrative perspective by analyzing the paradox of individuals with authoritarian traits operating in societies with predominantly anti-authoritarian norms. The authors observed that, in Western democracies, authoritarian attitudes are more frequently associated with

conservatism, though they may equally manifest in individuals of liberal orientation. Lilly et al. (2025), through latent profile analysis, identified differentiated typologies of authoritarians that combine LWA, RWA, and social dominance orientation in complex configurations, demonstrating that the discursive expressions of authoritarianism exceed conventional binary categories.

3. Proposals for the Ideological Classification of Authoritarianism

The ideological classification of authoritarianism has been approached from two main methodological traditions: unidimensional models, which locate authoritarian attitudes along a single left–right axis, and multidimensional models, which incorporate additional axes to more faithfully represent the complexity of the phenomenon. This section reviews the scales, categories, and differences that distinguish both approaches.

3.1. Unidimensional Classification Models

Unidimensional models constitute the oldest and most consolidated tradition in the field. They operate on the assumption that authoritarian attitudes can be located on a single continuum extending from the left to the right of the political spectrum, with specific instruments designed to measure each pole. Despite having generated a robust empirical body of evidence, criticisms of their explanatory capacity have driven the evolution toward more complex approaches.

The Right-Wing Authoritarianism scale developed by Altemeyer has constituted the predominant instrument for several decades. According to Duckitt's (2022) review, this scale operationalizes the construct through three categories: authoritarian submission (disposition toward obedience of established authorities), authoritarian aggression (hostility toward those who transgress conventional norms), and conventionalism (adherence to traditional norms and values). Balakrishnan (2020) endorsed this tripartite structure as the defining framework of the construct in the psychological tradition. In the cross-cultural domain, Vilanova et al. (2018) adapted the full scale to the Brazilian context and confirmed its factor structure, while Vilanova et al. (2023) developed an abbreviated version that preserves the instrument's validity and facilitates its application in large-scale studies. Nikolov (2024) provided evidence on the influence of sociodemographic variables, age, educational level, rurality, on RWA scores, showing that the instrument captures relevant variations, albeit within a framework that subsumes attitudinal diversity under a single continuum.

The development of scales for the left-wing pole of authoritarianism has been more recent and subject to greater

Dimension	RWA Scale	LWA Scale
Core categories	Authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, conventionalism (Duckitt, 2022; Balakrishnan, 2020)	Anti-hierarchical aggression, top-down censorship, anti-conventionalism (Costello et al., 2022)
Primary motivation	Social conservatism, threat sensitivity, normative adherence (Fasce & Avendaño, 2020)	Perceived grievance, psychological distress, anti-hierarchical aggression (Love & Sharman, 2025)
Object of aggression	Individuals who deviate from conventional norms or threaten security (Nilsson, 2024)	Established authorities and groups perceived as privileged (Fasce & Avendaño, 2025)
Personality profile	Cognitive rigidity, low openness to experience, social dominance orientation (Adrián-Ventura et al., 2025)	Narcissism, psychopathy, negative urgency, elevated trait anxiety (Krispenz & Bertrams, 2024; Bird et al., 2022)
Self-presentation	Predominantly null relationships with opportunistic tactics (Hart et al., 2024)	Use of opportunistic and egotistical self-presentation tactics (Hart et al., 2024)

Table 1. Comparison between RWA and LWA Scales

controversy. Costello et al. (2022) proposed an instrument that operationalizes LWA in three categories: anti-hierarchical aggression (support for the violent overthrow of existing structures), top-down censorship (suppression of dissent through institutional mechanisms), and anti-conventionalism (rejection of traditional norms associated with the reproduction of inequalities). Building on this basis, Costello and Patrick (2023) employed machine learning techniques, genetic algorithms and ensemble methods, to develop two abbreviated measures of LWA with adequate psychometric properties.

Lambert et al. (2024) evaluated measurement invariance of the 13-item Left-Wing Authoritarianism Index (LWAI-13) and demonstrated its equivalence across groups differentiated by sex, age, and educational level in a US sample. In Latin America, Troncoso-Tejada et al. (2025) validated a 9-item version (LWA-9) in Chilean university students. Petrović and Ninković (2025) developed an LWA scale in the post-communist Serbian context, incorporating psychological and economic dimensions absent from instruments designed in Western societies. Krispenz et al. (2025) extended the cross-cultural evidence by examining LWA in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, identifying variations in the expression of the construct across these societies.

Although both measurement traditions share the premise of a single axis, they present substantive differences in their constitutive categories, underlying motivations, and the psychological profiles they capture. Whereas the RWA scale is organized around submission, conventionalist aggression, and cognitive rigidity (Adrián-Ventura et al., 2025; Balagtas et al., 2023), the LWA scale captures anti-hierarchical aggression, narcissism, and negative urgency (Krispenz & Bertrams, 2024; Bird et al., 2022). Hart et al. (2024) documented that individuals with high LWA scores employ opportunistic and egotistical self-presentation tactics, a relationship absent in RWA. Table 1 synthesizes the main divergences documented in the literature.

Despite the robustness of individual instruments, unidimensional models present relevant limitations. Alves and Porto

(2022) demonstrated that a bifactorial model of political ideology, distinguishing between economic and sociocultural dimensions, offers better validity evidence than single-axis models. Colacrai et al. (2024) ratified this insufficiency by showing that economic conflict and social affinity operate as relatively independent dimensions in digital communities. Conway et al. (2018; 2021) argued that the historical difficulty in identifying LWA was partly due to unidimensional frameworks that conceptualized authoritarianism as an exclusively conservative phenomenon. De Regt et al. (2011) provided empirical evidence from 13 Eastern European countries corroborating the independent existence of LWA.

3.2. Multidimensional Classification Models

Multidimensional models constitute a theoretical and methodological evolution designed to overcome the restrictions of single-axis approaches. These frameworks incorporate two or more dimensions, typically an economic axis and a sociocultural axis, or combinations of authoritarianism and social dominance, to classify political attitudes with greater precision. Their development has been driven by conceptual advances and innovations in computational statistics.

Lilly et al. (2025), in a study published in the *European Journal of Personality*, applied latent profile analysis (LPA) using simultaneously the scores of LWA, RWA, and social dominance orientation (SDO). The results revealed four differentiated profiles, Low Social Dominators, Moderate RWA, LWA, and High Social Dominators. Each profile exhibited its own demographic and personality characteristics, demonstrating that authoritarianism is configured in patterns that do not conform to the conventional left–right dichotomy.

Colacrai et al. (2024), in a study presented at the ACM Web Conference, operationalized a bidimensional framework based on the Political Compass applied to Reddit communities. This model distinguishes an economic axis (left–right) from a sociocultural axis (libertarian–authoritarian). The findings

Model	Axes / Dimensions	Categories or profiles	Method	Reference
Latent profiles LWA × RWA × SDO	Left-wing authoritarianism, right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance	Low Social Dominators, Moderate RWA, LWA, High Social Dominators	Latent Profile Analysis (LPA)	Lilly et al. (2025)
Political Compass	Economic axis (left–right), sociocultural axis (libertarian–authoritarian)	Four quadrants: left authoritarian, right authoritarian, left libertarian, right libertarian	Network analysis in digital communities	Colacrai et al. (2024)
Bifactorial ideology model	Economic dimension, sociocultural dimension	Independent combinations of economic and sociocultural positions	Confirmatory factor analysis	Alves & Porto (2022)
Tribal politics	Political orientation, authoritarian traits, group identity	Tribal profiles defined by group loyalty and normative conformity	Cross-cultural correlational analysis	Cuevas et al. (2024)
Computational multimodal	Multiple ideological dimensions and polarization	Multidimensional classifications of political polarization	Natural language processing and machine learning	Sinno et al. (2022)

Table 2. Comparison of multidimensional models of authoritarianism classification

showed that intergroup conflict is structured predominantly around the economic axis, while social affinity operates independently. Alves and Porto (2022) provided convergent evidence for a bifactorial model that separates economic attitudes from sociocultural ones, enabling the identification of economically progressive but socially authoritarian individuals, a combination frequent in Latin American contexts that unidimensional models classify imprecisely. Sinno et al. (2022) reinforced this perspective through a multimodal computational approach, arguing that the detection of political ideology requires the simultaneous consideration of multiple dimensions.

Cuevas et al. (2024) proposed a framework that integrates political orientation with authoritarian traits, cross-cultural interactions, and common identity factors. Their concept of tribal politics posits that classifications of authoritarianism must contemplate the psychosocial mechanisms of group identity, intragroup loyalty, outgroup hostility, and normative conformity, that underlie authoritarian attitudes at both poles of the spectrum. Table 2 presents a comparison of the main multidimensional proposals.

In synthesis, left-wing and right-wing authoritarian discourse share a psychological substrate defined by cognitive rigidity, emotional reactivity, and a punitive disposition, but diverge in their motivations, their targets of aggression, and their rhetorical strategies. Classification proposals have transitioned from unidimensional models, with separate RWA and LWA scales articulated in differentiated tripartite categories, toward multidimensional frameworks that integrate economic and sociocultural axes, latent profiles, group identity dynamics, and advanced computational techniques (De Regt et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2023; Fasce & Avendaño, 2020; Duckitt, 2022; Lilly et al., 2025).

4. Authoritarian Pulse: An Ideological Classification Scale for Discourse on X

Building on the review of authoritarian discourse (Section 2) and existing classification proposals (Section 3), this section presents Authoritarian Pulse, an integrated scale designed for the periodic measurement of discursive authoritarianism in publications on the X platform. The instrument synthesizes the discursive dimensions documented in the literature—rhetorical strategies, legitimation mechanisms, objects of aggression, and degrees of authoritarian intensity—into a unified system that enables the placement of each publication on a continuum extending from extreme left-wing authoritarianism to extreme right-wing authoritarianism, with a central zone of democratic-pluralist equilibrium. Its design as a monthly measurement tool enables the longitudinal monitoring of presidential discourse, capturing both static positions and dynamics of ideological displacement over time.

4.1. Structure and Visualization of the Scale

The scale operates over a range of integers from -5 (extreme left-wing authoritarianism) to +5 (extreme right-wing authoritarianism), with 0 as the point of democratic-pluralist equilibrium. The design is grounded in three theoretical decisions derived from the review, first, the adoption of a single integrated axis, rather than separate LWA and RWA scales, which allows for direct comparability between discourses of both poles, in accordance with the principle of authoritarian symmetry documented by De Regt et al. (2011) and Conway et al. (2023); second, the incorporation of specific discursive indicators for brief and digital content, attending to the rhetorical particularities of social media (Fasce & Avendaño, 2025; Samuel-Azran et al., 2018); and third, the gradation

of intensity across five bands per ideological pole, based on evidence that authoritarianism constitutes a continuum rather than a dichotomous phenomenon (Lilly et al., 2025; Costello et al., 2022).

The scale is structured into 11 levels representing degrees of increasing authoritarian intensity from the center toward each pole. Table 3 presents the complete configuration of the instrument, with the scores, labels, and discursive indicators corresponding to each level.

4.2. Justification of the Unidimensional Model for the Analysis of Authoritarian Discourse

The adoption of a unidimensional model for the classification of authoritarian discourse on the X platform constitutes a methodological decision that requires justification vis-à-vis the multidimensional alternatives reviewed in Section 2. The following presents the theoretical and operational arguments that underpin this choice, as well as the analytical dimensions that the model integrates for the evaluation of each publication.

First, the nature of the object of study favors a unidimensional approach. Publications on X are brief texts, with a maximum of 280 characters in standard posts, that, due to their formal constraints, tend to express ideological positions in a condensed and polarized manner, reducing the multidimensional variability observable in more extensive texts. As documented by Sinno et al. (2022), ideology detection in brief formats benefits from parsimonious classification schemes that avoid overparameterization. Second, the principle of authoritarian symmetry established by De Regt et al. (2011) and reinforced by Conway et al. (2023) theoretically supports the possibility of locating left- and right-wing authoritarianism on the same continuum, insofar as both variants share a common psychological core, dogmatism, aggression, and demands for conformity, that differs fundamentally in the ideological direction of aggression and the legitimation mechanisms employed. Third, the choice of a single axis responds to an operational criterion, automated classification through LLMs requires clear and unambiguous instructions, and a simple ordinal scale facilitates the classifier model's consistency compared to the complexity of multidimensional schemes that might generate inconsistent assignments in the processing of large data volumes (Costello & Patrick, 2023).

Nevertheless, the adoption of a unidimensional model does not imply disregard for the complexity that multidimensional frameworks capture. The proposed scale integrates, within each level, indicators that reflect multiple dimensions of authoritarian discourse, object of aggression, rhetorical strategy, legitimation mechanism, tolerance for dissent, and intensity of language, operating as a composite index that synthesizes multidimension-

ality into a single ordinal score. This design draws inspiration from the logic of Lilly et al.'s (2025) latent profile analysis, which demonstrated that authoritarian configurations, despite their internal complexity, can be empirically differentiated into discrete and orderable profiles. Similarly, the scale incorporates evidence from Alves and Porto (2022) and Colacrai et al. (2024) on the relative independence of economic and sociocultural axes, by incorporating indicators of both dimensions into the description of each level without requiring their separate measurement.

The scale's pertinence for the analysis of authoritarian discourse is additionally grounded in the convergence of the five analytical dimensions that the literature has identified as constitutive of the phenomenon. These dimensions, derived from the findings reviewed in Sections 1 and 2, operate as complementary criteria that, evaluated in conjunction, enable the placement of each publication at the corresponding point on the continuum.

The first dimension, object of discursive aggression, identifies toward whom the hostility expressed in the publication is directed. At the negative pole of the scale (LWA), aggression is oriented toward established authorities, economic elites, groups perceived as privileged, and institutions associated with the preservation of the status quo (Costello et al., 2022; Fasce & Avendaño, 2025). At the positive pole (RWA), it is directed toward those who transgress conventional norms, migrant populations, ethnic or sexual minorities, and actors constructed as threats to security or national identity (Nilsson, 2024; Radkiewicz, 2016). In central positions, discursive aggression is minimal or channeled toward specific policies and ideas without the demonization of persons or collectives.

The second dimension, dominant rhetorical strategy, evaluates the type of predominant persuasive appeal in the publication. Left-wing authoritarian discourse tends to employ apparent rational appeals (logos) combined with mechanisms of moral panic (Samuel-Azran et al., 2018), while right-wing discourse predominantly relies on emotional appeals based on fear (pathos) and the construction of a threatening environment (Duckitt, 2022; Pascale, 2019). Central positions are characterized by evidence-based argumentation, recognition of complexity, and openness to counter-argument.

The third dimension, legitimation mechanism, examines how the publication justifies its position. At the left-wing authoritarian pole, legitimation is constructed through the invocation of social justice, equality, and the denunciation of privileges as absolute values that admit no qualification (Lane et al., 2023; Love & Sharman, 2025). At the right-wing authoritarian pole, it operates through appeals to security, tradition, patriotism, and the preservation of national identity

Value	Label	Discursive indicators
-5	Extreme left-wing authoritarianism	Explicit exhortation to revolutionary violence; physical or symbolic elimination of dominant classes; apology for state terrorism in the name of equality; absolute denial of any opposition's legitimacy; dehumanizing language against groups perceived as privileged; defense of total concentration of state power; justification of judicial and extrajudicial persecution of opponents.
-4	Moderate left-wing authoritarianism	Delegitimization of non-aligned institutions (judiciary, media, academia); discursive polarization that reduces debate to an oppressor-oppressed dichotomy; promotion of social and professional cancellation of dissidents; moral panic narrative that frames all opposition as an expression of fascism; instrumentalization of identity politics to silence dissenting voices; defense of state intervention without institutional checks and balances.
-3	Left with incipient authoritarian features	Tendency toward the moral disqualification of political opponents; frequent use of pejorative ideological labels; confirmatory bias that dismisses nuances in opposing positions; emphatic defense of redistributive policies with limited openness to dialogue with conservative perspectives; rhetoric of perceived grievance that justifies exceptional measures.
-2	Progressive left	Emphatic defense of redistributive and social justice policies; direct critique of structural inequalities; use of inclusive and rights-based language; limited disposition to dialogue with conservative perspectives; tendency to oversimplify opposing positions, though without resorting to explicitly authoritarian strategies.
-1	Center-left	Reformist discourse with emphasis on the expansion of social rights and inclusion; moderate critique of inequalities; recognition of democratic institutions as the framework for action; openness to debate with a defined preference for progressive solutions.
0	Democratic-pluralist equilibrium	Discourse that acknowledges the legitimacy of diverse ideological positions; appeal to dialogue and deliberation; respect for democratic institutions; evidence-based argumentation; absence of authoritarian discursive strategies from either pole.
+1	Center-right	Predominantly institutional discourse emphasizing stability, order, and individual responsibility; preference for free-market policies and traditional values; recognition of plurality with an inclination toward conservative solutions.
+2	Conservative right	Emphatic defense of traditional values, family, and religion as pillars of the social order; direct criticism of progressive policies; discourse organized around order and security; limited disposition to dialogue with left-wing perspectives, though without resorting to explicitly authoritarian strategies.
+3	Right with incipient authoritarian features	Tendency toward the moral disqualification of left-wing opponents; frequent use of labels such as <i>communist</i> or <i>socialist</i> in a pejorative sense; confirmatory bias; preference for punitive responses with little consideration of structural determinants; rhetoric of fear that constructs threats to national security.
+4	Moderate right-wing authoritarianism	Discursive polarization organized around an order-chaos dichotomy; delegitimization of non-aligned institutions (press, NGOs, international organizations); recurrent designation of scapegoats (migrants, minorities); promotion of harassment and intimidation of journalists and opponents; conspiratorial narrative that frames all criticism as betrayal of the nation; defense of heavy-handed measures and militarization of internal security.
+5	Extreme right-wing authoritarianism	Explicit exhortation to violence against ethnic, religious, or political minorities; defense of the concentration of executive power without checks and balances; apology for genocide or the physical elimination of the adversary; denial of fundamental human rights; dehumanizing language grounded in notions of racial or civilizational superiority; defense of dictatorial regimes as a governance paradigm.

Table 3. Authoritarian Pulse Scale: values, labels, and discursive indicators

(Baturó & Tolstrup, 2024; Duckitt, 2022). Central positions ground their arguments in democratic institutions, empirical evidence, and the recognition of pluralism.

The fourth dimension, degree of tolerance for dissent, evaluates the discourse's disposition to recognize the legitimacy of opposing positions. The extreme values of both poles (-5 and +5) are characterized by the total denial of the adversary's legitimacy and a call for their symbolic or physical elimination. Moderate values (-4 and +4) exhibit generalized intolerance, expressed through institutional delegitimization and the demonization of the adversary. Incipient values (-3 and

+3) display moral disqualification and the use of pejorative labels. Non-authoritarian positions (-2 to +2) present variable dispositions toward dialogue, albeit with defined ideological preferences. The value 0 represents maximum deliberative openness (Conway et al., 2021; Lilly et al., 2025).

The fifth dimension, intensity of authoritarian language, evaluates the authoritarian charge present in the vocabulary, metaphors, and discursive constructions of the publication. Extreme levels (-5 and +5) employ dehumanizing language, calls to violence, and denial of fundamental rights. Moderate levels (-4 and +4) resort to the demonization of the adversary,

the construction of enemies, and the justification of exceptional measures. Incipient levels (-3 and +3) display bias and disqualification without reaching dehumanization. Non-authoritarian positions (-2 to +2) maintain a register ranging from firm ideological activism to argumentative balance, without employing authoritarian discursive strategies (Costello et al., 2022; Krispenz & Bertrams, 2024; Adrián-Ventura et al., 2025).

The Authoritarian Pulse scale proposed here constitutes an analytical instrument that requires empirical validation through its application to corpora of real publications and the assessment of its inter-coder reliability. Its design integrates findings from the literature on the discursive dimensions of left-wing authoritarianism (Costello et al., 2022; Lane et al., 2023; Krispenz & Bertrams, 2024) and right-wing authoritarianism (Duckitt, 2022; Nilsson, 2024; Pascale, 2019), as well as methodological innovations in computational ideological classification (Sinno et al., 2022; Costello & Patrick, 2023; Colacrai et al., 2024). Its implementation through large language models with structured classification schemes, and its vocation for monthly measurement, represent a promising avenue for the systematic and large-scale monitoring of discursive authoritarianism on digital platforms.

5. Methodological Design

The platform X (formerly Twitter) has consolidated itself as the privileged channel of direct political communication for heads of state in the twenty-first century. Unlike other social networks oriented toward visual content or informal social interaction, X operates as a space for real-time public debate in which leaders announce government decisions, confront the opposition, mobilize their electoral bases, and construct narratives of legitimation. Recent research has documented that presidential publications on X not only reflect but amplify authoritarian discursive tendencies, by operating in a brief format that favors polarization, ideological simplification, and the construction of enemies (Samuel-Azran et al., 2018; Fasce & Avendaño, 2025). This centrality of X in Latin American presidential communication justifies both its selection as the primary source of the analytical corpus and the design of Authoritarian Pulse as a monthly measurement instrument adapted to the particularities of this platform.

The corpus consists of the original publications issued between February 1 and 28, 2026, by the official accounts of six incumbent Latin American presidents: Gustavo Petro (@petrogustavo, Colombia), Gabriel Boric (@GabrielBoric, Chile), Claudia Sheinbaum (@Claudiashein, Mexico), Daniel Noboa (@DanielNoboaOk, Ecuador), Nayib Bukele (@nayibbukele, El Salvador), and Javier Milei (@JMilei, Argentina).

The selection of these leaders responds to a criterion of ideological diversity that enables the assessment of the scale’s discriminative capacity in heterogeneous political contexts: the corpus includes presidents typically located on the left of the spectrum (Petro, Boric, Sheinbaum), in right-wing liberal or conservative positions (Noboa, Milei), and in a governance model that is difficult to classify under conventional categories (Bukele).

No.	Country	X Account	President
1	Colombia	@petrogustavo	Gustavo Petro
2	Chile	@GabrielBoric	Gabriel Boric
3	Mexico	@Claudiashein	Claudia Sheinbaum
4	Ecuador	@DanielNoboaOk	Daniel Noboa
5	El Salvador	@nayibbukele	Nayib Bukele
6	Argentina	@JMilei	Javier Milei

Table 4. Latin American presidents included in the analytical corpus

Data collection was carried out via the X API, applying filters that ensure the representativeness of direct presidential discourse. Only the original publications of each account holder were included, excluding retweets, replies to other users, and third-party shared posts. This criterion ensures that the corpus reflects the discourse produced by each president or their official communications team, minimizing the noise generated by the amplification of external content. The collection period spans 28 days (February 1–28, 2026), a temporal window sufficient to identify stable discursive trends and conjunctural variations.

The analytical processing of the corpus was carried out using the API of the Google Gemini Flash 2.5 language model, which enabled the programmatic integration of the classifier into an automated batch-processing workflow. The selection of this model and its programming interface was driven by three operational reasons: the API’s capacity to process large volumes of text with reduced response times and controlled computational costs; the documented performance of Gemini Flash 2.5 in content classification tasks in Spanish; and its compatibility with structured prompting schemes that allow for detailed classification instructions. The methodological strategy was based on an expert prompt designed from the Authoritarian Pulse scale developed in Section 4, incorporating the complete operational definitions of the 11 levels of the scale (Table 3) and the five analytical dimensions (Section 4.2) as evaluation criteria. This design follows the logic of computational ideological classification approaches documented by Sinno et al. (2022) and the strategy for instructing LLMs through structured schemes described by Costello and Patrick (2023).

The analysis was structured in two sequential phases. In the first phase, termed ideological filtering, each publication

in the corpus was evaluated through a prompt instructing the model to determine whether the content has sufficient political-ideological charge to be classified. The model assigned each publication one of two categories, ideological, when the publication contains political positioning, public policy proposals, critique or defense of governance models, references to ideological values, or confrontation with political opponents, or non-ideological, when it is limited to protocol information, institutional greetings, commemorations, agenda communications, or personal content without discernible political charge. Publications classified as non-ideological were excluded from subsequent analysis. This prior filtering is essential to prevent informational noise from distorting the ideological averages of each president, given that a significant proportion of presidential publications on X corresponds to protocol or informational content without identifiable ideological positioning.

In the second phase, termed ideological classification, publications identified as ideological were subjected to a second expert prompt instructing the model to classify each one on the -5 to +5 scale developed in Section 4. The classification prompt incorporates the operational definitions of each scale level, the specific discursive indicators of each category, and the five analytical dimensions as an evaluation framework. For each publication, the model assigns an integer value within the range along with a brief justification that enables the subsequent audit of the classification and the identification of error patterns. The combination of both phases, ideological filtering and classification on the scale, constitutes a processing pipeline that maximizes classification precision by eliminating informational noise prior to the assignment of ideological values.

Once the ideological publications were classified, two daily descriptive statistics were calculated for each presidential account: the arithmetic mean and the mode of the values assigned to each day's publications. Additionally, the daily standard deviation was computed as an indicator of discursive dispersion. The preliminary exploration of the data revealed that the arithmetic mean, as a central tendency measure sensitive to extreme values, was susceptible to distortion by outlier publications particularly on days with low publication volume, where a single tweet with an extreme authoritarian charge could significantly displace the average. In view of this finding, the decision was made to adopt the daily mode as the principal indicator of analysis.

This decision is grounded in both statistical and substantive considerations. From a statistical standpoint, the mode constitutes the most appropriate central tendency measure for ordinal variables, as is the case with the proposed ideological classification scale, given that it does not presuppose equidistance between the instrument's levels nor is it affected

by the distributional asymmetry that characterizes political discourse on digital platforms. From a substantive standpoint, the mode captures the predominant ideological position of presidential discourse on each day, that is, the discursive register to which the president resorts most frequently, which is more informative than an arithmetic mean that may yield intermediate values corresponding to no real category on the scale. As Costello and Patrick (2023) have noted in the context of authoritarianism measurement, ordinal ideological classification scales are interpreted with greater validity through measures that respect the categorical nature of the data. The mode satisfies this requirement by identifying, for each day, the scale category in which the greatest proportion of each president's publications is concentrated.

The results are presented through a time series of the daily ideological mode for each president over the 28 days of the analyzed period. This visualization enables the identification of patterns of discursive stability or volatility, the detection of conjunctural events that generate displacements in the modal position, and the comparison of the relative position of the six presidents on the -5 to +5 continuum. Additionally, the general mode for the period, the global arithmetic mean, and the standard deviation are reported as aggregate indicators that enable the contextualization of the observed temporal dynamics.

The methodological design presents limitations that should be made explicit. First, classification through LLMs, although scalable and reproducible, may introduce biases derived from the model's training data, meaning that the results require validation through human inter-coder agreement on a stratified random sample of the corpus. Second, the proposed scale was designed specifically to capture the authoritarian dimension of discourse and does not claim to encompass the full ideological spectrum in its economic, social, and cultural dimensions; its analytical scope is circumscribed to the discursive indicators defined in Section 4. Third, the analysis of X publications captures exclusively the official digital discourse of heads of state, which may differ from that deployed in other communicative spaces, press conferences, legislative speeches, interviews. Nevertheless, the documented centrality of X in contemporary Latin American presidential communication confers analytical relevance to the selected corpus and supports its use as a primary source for the systematic assessment of left- and right-wing discursive authoritarianism in the region.

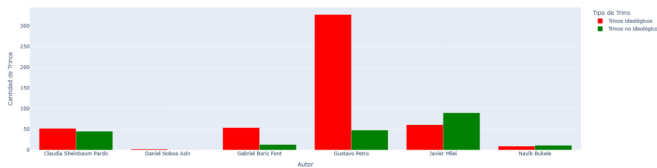
6. Results

The processing of the corpus through the Gemini Flash 2.5 model API yielded a total of 713 original publications issued by the six presidents during February 2026. The application of Authoritarian Pulse proceeded in the two planned phases:

ideological filtering identified the proportion of publications with political-ideological charge relative to those of a protocol or informational character, and classification on the -5 to +5 scale produced the ideological placement of each filtered publication. Results are presented below in the sequential order of the analytical processing.

Figure 1 presents the absolute volume of ideological and non-ideological tweets by presidential account. The most striking finding is the marked asymmetry in the volume of discursive production: Gustavo Petro concentrates the largest number of ideological publications in the corpus (approximately 325), a figure that substantially surpasses that of the other presidents. Javier Milei ranks second (approximately 60), followed by Gabriel Boric and Claudia Sheinbaum (approximately 50 each). At the opposite extreme, Nayib Bukele (9 total publications) and Daniel Noboa (2 publications) record minimal activity on the platform during the period. This distribution suggests that the use of X as a channel of direct political communication varies drastically among the region's leaders, which is consistent with Baturo and Tolstrup's (2024) evidence on the heterogeneity of executives' communicative strategies in authoritarian and democratic contexts.

Figure 1. Volume of political and non-political tweets by account (February 2026)



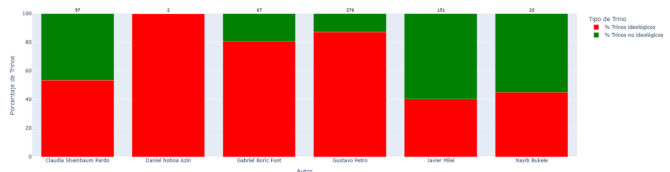
Source: Author's own elaboration.

It should be noted that the case of Daniel Noboa, with only 2 ideological publications during the analyzed period, does not reach the minimum threshold of observations required to produce statistically reliable inferences or to establish valid comparisons with the other presidents in the corpus. Although his data are included in the figures and tables for descriptive completeness, the indicators reported for Noboa, mode, standard deviation, and assigned category, must be interpreted with extreme caution and cannot be considered representative of his discursive profile. The study's conclusions are therefore grounded in the analysis of the remaining five presidents.

Figure 2 complements this information by presenting the percentage proportion of ideological and non-ideological tweets by author. Daniel Noboa and Gabriel Boric record the highest rates of ideological content (close to 100% and 80%, respectively), indicating that their publications on X are predominantly political. Gustavo Petro maintains a

high proportion of ideological content (approximately 87%), while Claudia Sheinbaum presents a greater balance between ideological and non-ideological publications (approximately 55% ideological content). Javier Milei exhibits a minority proportion of ideological content (approximately 40%), and Nayib Bukele is at a similar level (approximately 45%). This finding suggests that presidents such as Milei and Bukele, frequently associated with a polarizing discourse, devote a significant portion of their activity on X to non-ideological content, promotion of governmental achievements, institutional communications, interaction with followers, which nuances the image of permanent polarization attributed to them in public debate.

Figure 2. Percentage of political and non-political tweets by author (February 2026).



Source: Author's own elaboration.

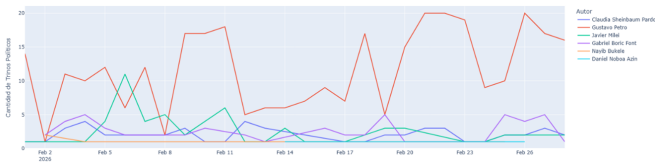
Figure 3 shows the daily evolution of the volume of political tweets by author throughout February 2026. Petro maintains a sustained and high level of production throughout the month, with peaks reaching 20 ideological publications per day. Milei exhibits more concentrated activity in the first week of the month, with a subsequent decline. Boric shows irregular production with sporadic peaks. Sheinbaum, Bukele, and Noboa maintain low and relatively stable volumes. This temporal dynamic reveals that Petro employs X as an almost permanent political communication channel, a pattern that, in light of the literature on left-wing authoritarian discourse, can be interpreted as a continuous exercise in the discursive construction of enemies and the legitimization of power through constant occupation of the digital space (Lane et al., 2023; Pascale, 2019).

The central results of the study are concentrated in Figures 4 and 5, which present the daily mode of the ideological level by author. Figure 4 offers the integrated comparison of the six presidents, while Figure 5 disaggregates the time series of each president into an individual panel. The analysis of these visualizations reveals three differentiated discursive patterns.

First, Gustavo Petro is consistently located at the negative pole of the scale, with an overall mode for the period of -2 (progressive left) and frequent fluctuations toward values of -4 (moderate left-wing authoritarianism). His time series shows notable stability in the range of -2 to -4, with punctual episodes of approach to the center (0) that do not sustain themselves.

This pattern is congruent with the characteristics of left-wing authoritarian discourse documented by Costello et al. (2022): anti-hierarchical aggression directed against economic elites and non-aligned institutions; top-down censorship expressed in the delegitimization of media and branches of the state that question governmental action; and anti-conventionalism observed in the systematic rejection of norms associated with the prevailing socioeconomic order.

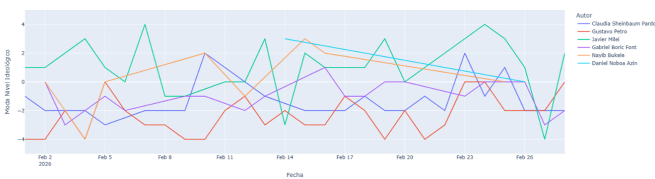
Figure 3. Daily volume of political tweets by author (February 2026).



Source: Author's own elaboration.

Additionally, the extraordinary volume of Petro's discursive production (328 ideological tweets in a single month) is consistent with what Lane et al. (2023) termed tribal egalitarian discourse: the permanent occupation of the communicative space operates as a group cohesion mechanism that demands ideological conformity and discursively sanctions dissidents. The rhetoric of perceived grievance identified by Love and Sharman (2025) as a predictor of LWA is equally visible in Petro's discourse, which constructs narratives of structural victimization that justify exceptional measures of governance. Claudia Sheinbaum shares with Petro a mode of -2, but her lower standard deviation (1.37 vs. 2.18) reveals a more contained and consistent discursive profile.

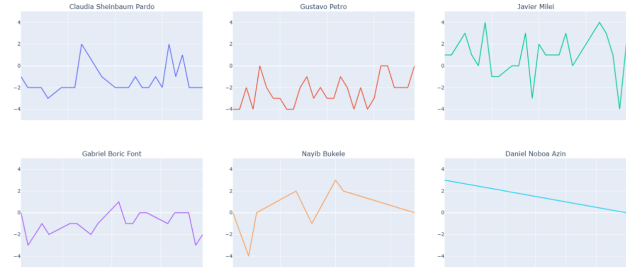
Figure 4. Daily mode of ideological level by author, comparative view (February 2026).



Source: Author's own elaboration.

This difference suggests that, while both presidents are located in the progressive left field, Sheinbaum resorts less frequently to anti-hierarchical aggression and institutional delegitimization strategies that characterize Petro's incursions into moderate left-wing authoritarianism. This finding is consistent with the distinction between moral panic as a discursive strategy and progressive reformism as an ideological positioning: whereas Petro employs both registers in alternation, Sheinbaum remains predominantly in the latter.

Figure 5. Daily mode of ideological level by author, individual view (February 2026).



Source: Author's own elaboration.

Second, Javier Milei is positioned as the only president whose overall mode is located at the positive pole of the scale, with a value of +3 (right with incipient authoritarian features). His time series exhibits the greatest volatility in the group, with oscillations ranging from values close to -1 to peaks of +4 (moderate right-wing authoritarianism). This pattern reflects the characteristics of right-wing authoritarian discourse identified by Duckitt (2022) and Nilsson (2024): fear rhetoric, construction of existential threats to the nation, moral disqualification of the left-wing adversary, and preference for punitive responses. Milei's standard deviation (2.15) confirms the high variability of his discourse, which could be interpreted, following Conway et al. (2021), as the expression of authoritarian traits operating within a formally democratic normative context, generating discursive tensions between institutional rhetoric and authoritarian impulses.

Third, Gabriel Boric, Nayib Bukele, and Daniel Noboa share a mode of 0 (democratic-pluralist equilibrium), though with differentiated temporal dynamics. Boric shows the lowest standard deviation in the corpus (1.18), indicating the greatest discursive consistency in the group; his time series fluctuates predominantly between -2 and 0, with sporadic incursions toward +1, configuring a profile of moderate left with a pluralist tendency. Bukele, despite a mode of 0, presents an erratic time series oscillating between -4 and +3, with a standard deviation of 2.04 that reveals significant discursive inconsistency; this result is particularly relevant given that Bukele is frequently classified as a right-wing authoritarian leader, yet his discourse on X during the analyzed period does not conform to this categorization, instead displaying a pattern of ideological ambiguity that makes stable placement on the scale difficult. Regarding Noboa, as noted earlier, his 2 ideological publications are insufficient to derive analytical conclusions about his discursive position, and his inclusion in this group is exclusively due to the coincidence of his mode with the value 0 and should not be interpreted as evidence of a discursive profile comparable to that of Boric or Bukele.

Author	No. tweets	Avg. likes	Avg. RT	Ideol. mode	SD	Category
Claudia Sheinbaum	52	5,354	1,672	-2	1.37	Progressive left
Daniel Noboa	2	3,562	900	0	2.12	Democratic-pluralist equilibrium
Gabriel Boric	54	3,705	844	0	1.18	Democratic-pluralist equilibrium
Gustavo Petro	328	5,454	2,083	-2	2.18	Progressive left
Javier Milei	61	13,731	2,148	+3	2.15	Right with incipient authoritarian features
Nayib Bukele	9	27,921	5,349	0	2.04	Democratic-pluralist equilibrium

Table 5. Summary of ideological and interaction indicators by president (February 2026)

An additional finding that merits attention is the relationship between the level of digital interaction and ideological position. The data in Table 5 reveal that Bukele records the highest average of likes (27,921) and retweets (5,349), despite having one of the lowest output levels in the corpus (9 ideological tweets). Milei ranks second in interaction (13,731 average likes). This pattern suggests that publications with greater authoritarian charge—or, in the case of Bukele, with greater ideological ambiguity—generate higher levels of interaction on the platform, a phenomenon that may be associated with X’s algorithmic logic, which tends to amplify polarizing content (Fasce & Avendaño, 2025).

7. Conclusions

The findings of the present study enable a productive dialogue with the theoretical and empirical frameworks reviewed in Sections 2 and 3, while offering a preliminary assessment of the analytical capacity of Authoritarian Pulse as a monthly measurement tool for presidential discourse. The discussion is organized around four axes: the correspondence between the observed discursive patterns and the theoretical dimensions of left- and right-wing authoritarianism, the pertinence of the adopted unidimensional model, the challenges posed by cases of ideological ambiguity, and the implications of Authoritarian Pulse for the longitudinal monitoring of discursive authoritarianism on digital platforms.

The discursive profile of Gustavo Petro constitutes the case exhibiting the greatest correspondence with the dimensions of LWA documented in the literature. His mode of -2 (progressive left), combined with frequent incursions toward values of -4 (moderate left-wing authoritarianism), reproduces with notable fidelity Costello et al.’s (2022) tripartite model, anti-hierarchical aggression manifests in permanent discursive confrontation with economic elites and non-aligned institutions; top-down censorship is expressed in the delegitimization of media and branches of the state that question governmental action; and

anti-conventionalism is observed in the systematic rejection of norms associated with the prevailing socioeconomic order. Additionally, the extraordinary volume of Petro’s discursive production (328 ideological tweets in a single month) is consistent with what Lane et al. (2023) termed tribal egalitarian discourse: the permanent occupation of the communicative space operates as a group cohesion mechanism that demands ideological conformity and discursively sanctions dissidents. The rhetoric of perceived grievance identified by Love and Sharman (2025) as a predictor of LWA is equally visible in Petro’s discourse, which constructs narratives of structural victimization that justify exceptional measures of governance.

Claudia Sheinbaum shares with Petro a mode of -2, but her lower standard deviation (1.37 vs. 2.18) reveals a more contained and consistent discursive profile. This difference suggests that, while both presidents are located in the progressive left field, Sheinbaum resorts less frequently to anti-hierarchical aggression and institutional delegitimization strategies that characterize Petro’s incursions into moderate left-wing authoritarianism. This finding is consistent with the distinction between moral panic as a discursive strategy and progressive reformism as an ideological positioning: whereas Petro employs both registers in alternation, Sheinbaum remains predominantly in the latter.

At the opposite pole of the scale, the profile of Javier Milei confirms the characterizations of RWA described by Duckitt (2022) and Nilsson (2024). His mode of +3 (right with incipient authoritarian features) and his incursions toward +4 (moderate right-wing authoritarianism) reproduce the discursive mechanisms of fear rhetoric: construction of existential threats to the nation, moral disqualification of the left-wing adversary through pejorative labels, and preference for punitive responses. The high volatility of his time series (SD = 2.15) is particularly relevant in light of Conway et al.’s (2021) analysis of the paradox of individuals with authoritarian traits operating in normatively democratic environments: Milei’s oscillations between values close to the center and peaks of right-wing

authoritarianism can be interpreted as the tension between the institutional constraints of the Argentine democratic system and the authoritarian impulses underlying his discourse. The neurobiological evidence of Adrián-Ventura et al. (2025), which associates RWA with cognitive rigidity and fear processing, offers a complementary interpretive framework for understanding the persistence of threatening rhetoric in Milei's discourse.

The case of Gabriel Boric deserves particular attention for his position at the center of the scale (mode 0) with the lowest standard deviation in the corpus (1.18). This result indicates that Boric, despite being habitually located on the left of the Latin American spectrum, deploys a discourse on X that conforms predominantly to democratic-pluralist equilibrium, with moderate incursions toward the progressive left (-2) and center-right (+1). His profile constitutes the discursive antithesis of authoritarianism according to the operational definitions of Costello et al. (2022) and Duckitt (2022), low aggression, recognition of plurality, institutional argumentation. This finding converges with evidence from Lilly et al. (2025) on the existence of low-authoritarianism profiles that do not conform to the LWA/RWA dichotomy, and reinforces the scale's discriminant validity by demonstrating that it does not force the assignment of authoritarian positions when the discourse does not exhibit them.

The case of Nayib Bukele poses the most significant challenges for the ideological classification of authoritarian discourse. His mode of 0 (democratic-pluralist equilibrium) contrasts notably with the academic and journalistic characterizations that place him as a leader with consolidated authoritarian tendencies. However, the standard deviation of 2.04 and the amplitude of his oscillations (between -4 and +3) reveal that this central mode conceals considerable discursive variability. This pattern is interpretable in light of the conceptual distinction between authoritarianism and illiberalism proposed by Waller (2023; 2024), Bukele could represent a case of illiberalism that does not manifest predominantly through discourse on X, but rather through governance practices that escape textual analysis. Alternatively, as Pappas (2023) suggests, populism as democratic illiberalism can combine a publicly moderate discourse with restrictive institutional practices, which would explain the divergence between the discursive classification and the qualitative assessment of his administration. Glasius (2023) warned precisely that authoritarian practices manifest in both democratic and non-democratic regimes and that their analysis requires going beyond public discourse, a caveat that the results of the Bukele case reinforce empirically.

From a methodological perspective, the results provide preliminary evidence on the pertinence of the unidimensional classification adopted by Authoritarian Pulse. The scale effectively differentiated three zones of the continuum, left-wing

authoritarianism, democratic-pluralist equilibrium, and right-wing authoritarianism, with theoretically coherent assignments. Nevertheless, the Bukele case evidences an inherent limitation of unidimensional models noted by Alves and Porto (2022) and Colacrai et al. (2024), the compression of multiple ideological dimensions into a single axis can generate central values that mask high internal discursive heterogeneity. In these cases, the standard deviation operates as an indispensable complementary indicator that allows for the distinction between genuine discursive centrism (as in Boric, with $SD = 1.18$) and strategic ideological ambiguity (as in Bukele, with $SD = 2.04$). Future iterations of Authoritarian Pulse could formally incorporate the standard deviation as a component of the monthly report, alongside the mode, to offer a more complete representation of each president's discursive dynamics.

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