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The Bolsonaro Government's Communication: Twitter Quanti-Quali Analysis (2019 - 2022)

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Abstract

This study investigates the pressure capacity of neoconservative evangelical groups in the formulation of public policies in Brazil during the Bolsonaro government (2019-2022). The main objective was to identify recurring themes in the speeches made on Twitter (now X) by political figures linked to the government and religious leaders, seeking to understand the dynamics of influence and the relationship between the religious agenda and governmental actions. The research employed a mixed methodology, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis of 72,750 tweets collected between January 2019 and December 2022, using the Twitonomy program for collection and MAXQDA software for analysis. The corpus included statements from Jair Bolsonaro, his sons Eduardo and Carlos, ministers of Education and Women, Family and Human Rights, as well as religious leaders such as Marco Feliciano and Silas Malafaia. The results revealed that religious themes, such as "God" and "customs" agendas, gained prominence mainly in electoral years, and that the relationship between religious groups and the government was based more on neoconservative political identity than on specific religious principles. The analysis demonstrated that the vocal support of religious leaders was based more on defending neoconservative identity than on pressure for the implementation of specific moral or religious agendas.

Keywords: Evangelicals; Neoconservatism; Bolsonaro Government; Social Media; Brazilian Politics.

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1. Introduction

One of the major debates in social sciences in recent decades concerns the theory of secularization, strongly defended by Berger (1985) in The Sacred Canopy. The author argued that secularization is the process of removing religious power from cultural and societal spheres, resulting in religious pluralism that would weaken monopolies of meaning and lead to the privatization of religion. Berger (2000) later revised his position, recognizing the existence of a desecularization characterized by the growth of religious "conservative, orthodox, or traditionalist movements" (p. 13).

Casanova (2006) proposes a more nuanced approach, distinguishing three aspects of secularization: institutional differentiation, decline in religious beliefs, and privatization of religion. For the author, only the first aspect would be universal in modernity. This aspect is what is understood today as secularism[*] .

Mariano (2011) analyzes "Brazilian secularism," characterized by a formal separation between state and church, but with persistent religious influence in the public sphere. The author points out that "without the secularization of the Brazilian state and the state guarantee of religious freedom, Pentecostalism could hardly enjoy the conditions necessary to achieve such numerical, media, and political success" (MARIANO, 2002, p. 20). Thus, Brazil presents itself as a fertile field for the study of relations between the state and the church, especially considering the change in the actions of evangelical groups after redemocratization.

During the 1986 Constituent Assembly, evangelicals mobilized around a religious moralism focused on attacks on communism, sexual activities, and reproductive rights, and protection of the family (PIERUCCI, 1987, 1989). This conservative position was maintained in subsequent terms, intensifying with the numerical growth of evangelicals and changes in their form of political action (CARVALHO; SIVORI, 2017), culminating in massive support for Jair Bolsonaro in 2018.

Evangelical support for candidates has been a constant in Brazilian politics since redemocratization. There was support for Collor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Lula, and Dilma Rousseff, always based on moral agendas. The first major division occurred in 2002, when the Assembleia de Deus and Quadrangular

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[*] The principle of secularism is understood here as the formal separation between the state and religious groups, as presented in Brazil since the 1891 constitution, but which encompasses a set of processes throughout history that present a range of tensions and, in the case of Brazil, are more closely related to evangelical and Catholic groups. For more information on the discussions surrounding the concepts of secularization and secularism, we suggest the studies by:
CATROGA, Fernando. Entre Deuses e Césares: Secularização, laicidade e religião civil. Coimbra: Almedina, 2010.
WILLAIME, Jean-Paul European Integration, Laïcité and Religion, Religion, State and Society, 37:1-2, 23-35, 2009.
SILVA, Luis Gustavo Teixeira da Silva. Secularism of the State: analytical-conceptual dimensions and their normative operating structures. Sociologies, Porto Alegre, year 21, no. 51, May-Aug, pp. 278-304, 2019.
And for the specific case in Brazil, we suggest the studies by:
CAMURÇA, Marcelo Ayres. CAMURÇA, M. A. "The question of secularism in Brazil: a mosaic of configurations and an arena of controversy." Horizonte, vol. 15, no. 47: 855-886, 2017.
_____. An evangelical power in the Brazilian state? Electoral mobilization, parliamentary action, and presence in the Bolsonaro government. Revista NUPEM, Campo Mourão, v. 12, no. 25, p. 82-104, Jan./Apr., 2020.
MARIANO, Ricardo. Brazilian secularism. Catholics, Pentecostals, and secularists in dispute in the public sphere. Civitas, Porto Alegre, v. 11, no. 2, p. 238-258, May-Aug. 2011.
_____. Expansion and political activism of conservative evangelical groups: Secularization and pluralism under debate. Civitas: Porto Alegre. v. 16, n. 4, p. 710-728, Oct.-Dec., 2016.
BOSSIO, María Pilar García. Secularism as a problem. Its use in thinking about state organizations. Religion & Society; 38(2); 148-173; 2018.
TANAKA, Marcela. "Secularization, Secularism, and Public Space: How to Think About Contemporary Brazilian Politics in Light of Religion?" Religion & Society, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 169-188, 2020.

supported José Serra, while the Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus supported Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (BURITY, 2006, p. 198).

With Dilma Rousseff, the scenario changed due to the abortion agenda used in 2010. During her term, she faced strong opposition from the Evangelical Parliamentary Front due to moral issues, the result of a conservative Christian ethos (TADVALD, 2015), culminating in the segment's support for the 2016 impeachment and subsequent support for Jair Bolsonaro's candidacy in 2018.

The Bolsonaro government is recognized as belonging to a group of far-right governments that align themselves with neoconservative religious values and groups, similar to Donald Trump in the United States, Marine Le Pen in France, and Viktor Orbán in Hungary (LÖWY, 2019).

In this context, the specialized literature identifies transformations in evangelical political action. Almeida (2017) points to a "conservative wave" that articulates religious values with right-wing political positions. Machado (2018) analyzes how the Christian discourse on "gender ideology" has become central to contemporary political disputes, mainly focused on conservative positions[†] .

Brazilian neoconservatism, as analyzed by Almeida (2018), articulates economic liberalism with moral conservatism, using religious symbols for political legitimacy. This combination differs from traditional conservatism in its adaptation to capitalist modernity.

However, Prandi and Santos (2017) demonstrate that, despite the visibility of the evangelical caucus, there is significant heterogeneity in the evangelical electorate, questioning generalizations about uniform political behavior.

Thus, this study contributes to the debate on secularization, adding to discussions about religious influence on the state, both in the actions of elected politicians with religious capital and in the use of religious precepts to mobilize public debate.

[†] For this work, extensive research on the evolution of the concept of conservatism and its discussions is not necessary; given the time frame of the research and its object of study, the concept of conservative as presented by Almeida (2017) is taken as a reference, a term in dispute and which in Brazil stems from four forces: economic; moral; security; and interational. Economic, because it presents itself as meritocratic and entrepreneurial, linked to the theology of prosperity propagated by neo-Pentecostal denominations, thus perpetuating the given economic and social structure (SMITH, 2019; ARAGUSUKU, 2019), which in both cases appears to be a contradiction, given that a large part of the population negatively affected by neoliberal policies belongs to the evangelical segment. Moral, in the sense of defending against the advances of secularism in behaviors and values, which would result, according to the author, in an attempt to enforce Pentecostal morality in the legal order, with Marco Feliciano and Silas Malafaia among the protagonists of these actions. Security, in the sense of presenting a more repressive and punitive stance by the state security apparatus, linked to "the reduction of the age of criminal responsibility, the disarmament law, the anti-terrorism law, the incarceration policy, the militarization of part of public administration, among others" (ALMEIDA, 2017, p. 22). Interational, in the sense of how the conservative movement relates to other groups and, in this sense, Almeida points to the mobilization of the terms revenge, phobia, and hatred in the conservative wave. For a more extensive and in-depth discussion of the concept, we recommend as a starting point:
SOUZA, Jamerson Murillo Anunciação de. Ideological trends in conservatism. Thesis (Doctorate). Federal University of Pernambuco: Pernambuco. (2016).
CAZETTA, Felipe. Conservative intellectuals and the struggle for power: Le Bon, Sorel, Action Française, and Lusitanian Integralism. History (São Paulo) [online], v. 36, n. 00, e2, 2017.
Lacerda refers to the text FRESTON, Paul. Protestants and Politics in Brazil: from the Constituent Assembly to Impeachment. Campinas: Thesis (Doctorate). State University of Campinas: São Paulo, 1993.
CHESNUT, R. Andrew. Born Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

2. Research Objectives

This study sought to understand the relationship between neoconservative evangelical groups and the Bolsonaro administration, analyzing whether these groups sought to pressure the government to formulate public policies[‡] or whether they act more as political support groups . To this end, it was necessary to identify the most recurrent themes in the discourses of political and religious leaders on social media, as well as to analyze the evolution of these themes over time during the presidential term. The relevance of the study is justified by the need to understand the relationship between groups and religious groups in a democratic context.

3. Research methods and methodology

This research, conducted between 2019 and 2022, adopted a mixed methodological approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analysis to understand the discursive dynamics between political and religious actors. The methodological design is based on the content analysis proposed by Bardin (2011), adapted to the digital environment of social networks. The corpus consisted of tweets from twelve individuals, categorized into three distinct groups:

Religious leader (1): Silas Malafaia, an evangelical pastor with over 1.8 million subscribers on YouTube and 1.5 million followers on Twitter, known for his conservative political views.

Political-religious leaders (4): Marco Feliciano (Federal Deputy), Damares Alves (Minister of Women, Family, and Human Rights), André Mendonça (Attorney General and later Minister of Justice), Milton Ribeiro (Minister of Education).

Political leaders (7): Jair Bolsonaro (President), Eduardo Bolsonaro (Federal Deputy), Carlos Bolsonaro (City Councilor), Ricardo Vélez Rodrigues (Minister of Education), Abraham Weintraub (Minister of Education), Cristiane Britto (Minister of Women, Family, and Human Rights), Victor Godoy Veiga (Minister of Education).

The selection of participants was based on criteria of political relevance during the period studied, potential influence on social media, representation of different segments (religious, political-religious, political), and active participation on Twitter during the period analyzed[§] .

[‡] This work will use the concept of public policy as defined by Souza (2006), since "public policy is the stage at which democratic governments translate their electoral purposes and platforms into programs and actions that will produce results or changes in the real world. [...] public policies, once designed and formulated, unfold into plans, programs, projects, databases, or information and research systems. When put into action, they are implemented and then subjected to monitoring and evaluation systems" (2006, p. 26).

[§] It is worth remembering that the Bolsonaro family included President Jair Bolsonaro and his first lady Michelle Bolsonaro, Senator Flávio Bolsonaro, Federal Deputy Eduardo Bolsonaro, and Rio de Janeiro City Councilman Carlos Bolsonaro. It is also important to highlight Michelle Bolsonaro's role in bringing the presidency closer to evangelical groups, as well as the role of Renan Bolsonaro, who in 2021 was investigated for political influence peddling but was found innocent in 2022 by the Federal Police investigation, even though the latter accused ABIN of interfering in the investigations. However, for this stage of the research, it was decided not to include Michelle, Flávio, and Renan in the study. The reason for this choice was that Michelle and Renan are not institutionally involved in politics, which in no way detracts from their participation, but at this stage of the research

Data collection was performed using the Twitonomy program, which uses Twitter APIs (currently X) for data extraction. The total period covered January 2019 to December 2022, resulting in 72,750 tweets collected[**] .

The tweets were organized into document sets by author and year, allowing for longitudinal and comparative analyses[††] . For example, "Jair Bolsonaro 2022" constitutes a set of spreadsheets containing all of the president's tweets in the year 2022. The analysis was conducted using MAXQDA software, which specializes in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods data analysis. The process included identifying the terms most used by each participant and period, applying an exclusion list to remove articles, pronouns, and other irrelevant terms; grouping terms by theme (e.g., "god," "God," "divinity" grouped as "God"), allowing for a more accurate analysis of thematic relevance; identifying the most frequent contexts of use of the terms, such as "God" used in the context of "blessing" or "care"; using Pearson's R coefficient to identify correlations between terms, revealing patterns of discursive association; and, finally, comparison of thematic evolution over the four years, identifying seasonal patterns and trends.

4. Development and Results

The total corpus of 72,750 tweets was distributed as shown in Table 1, with the Bolsonaro family accounting for approximately 56% of total publications: Eduardo Bolsonaro (25%), Carlos Bolsonaro (18%), and Jair Bolsonaro (13%). Silas Malafaia and Marco Feliciano also had high numbers, with 13% and 12%, respectively.

Compilation of Tweets by year (2019–2022)						
Name	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total	%
President Jair Bolsonaro	2216	2587	1982	2432	9217	13
Dep. Eduardo Bolsonaro	3081	5029	4512	5474	18,096	25
Dep. Marco Feliciano	1509	3588	2114	1472	8683	12
Minister Abraham Weintraub	2754	1928	0	0	4682	6

on institutional relationships, it is not necessary. Flávio was disregarded because, for a bill to be approved, it must first pass through Congress, and this sector is already covered by Eduardo Bolsonaro.

[**] In 2019, 703 tweets from Jair Bolsonaro's ministerial team were deleted, with Eduardo Bolsonaro, Jair Bolsonaro, Damares Alves, and Abraham Weintraub responsible for 436 of them (Metropoles.Com, 2023, https://www.metropoles.com/brasil/li-o-que-voce-apagou-os-tweets-deletados-da-gestao-bolsonaro.Acesso on 07/15/2023). Assuming that this average of 109 deleted tweets per person per year is maintained and extending it to 2022 for the profiles monitored (Jair Bolsonaro, Eduardo Bolsonaro, Carlos Bolsonaro, Marco Feliciano, Damares Alves, and Silas Malafaia were monitored for four years, while those responsible for the Ministry of Education and the AGU were monitored according to their terms of office, and Cristiane Britto was added when Damares Alves had to step down to run for election), it would be possible to reach a total of 3,924 tweets, bringing the total number of tweets to 76,674; assuming that none of the deleted tweets were captured by the search, it is possible to estimate a margin of error of 0.11% with a 99% confidence level for the data presented on the topics that will be discussed below. It should be noted that this projection of deleted tweets is most likely higher than the total, given the proportionality that each profile represents in the total number of posts.

[††] The search was performed on any word longer than one (1) character, with differentiation criteria by documents, by "higher level" document groups and document sets, in addition to lemmatized and non-lemmatized searches, each specified in the text; in all cases, links, email addresses, numbers, and the exclusion list with prepositions, articles, emoticons, authors' names, and other insignificant terms were ignored.

Minister André Mendonça	430	361	89	0	880	1
Minister Cristiane Britto	0	0	0	168	168	0
Minister Damares Alves	1478	1695	1145	936	5254	7
Minister Milton Ribeiro	0	196	1382	265	1843	3
Minister Ricardo Velez	154	0	0	0	154	0
Min. Victor Godoy	0	0	0	711	711	1
Pr. Silas Malafaia	2068	2925	2456	2165	9614	13
Councilman Carlos Bolsonaro	2609	2890	2194	5755	13,448	18

1 TABLE: Compilation of tweets per year. Own source

4.1. Longitudinal Thematic Analysis

To conclude this study, let us return to what Marco Codebò wrote, which we believe applies to Tenda dos Milagres: “Archival novels perform the same type of meaning-making operations performed by the records, archives, and inventories that characterize bureaucratic archival practices” (Codebò, 2010, p. 14), or what Echevarría (2011, p. 8) says about the history of these types of novels being the history of the escape from authority and that they are part of a subplot.

Analysis of the frequency of terms over the four years revealed thematic consistency, with significant variations only at specific moments. The ten most frequent terms remained relatively stable, with some occasional changes related to current events.

5. Evolution of the 10 most frequent terms per year				
6. Position	7. 2019	8. 2020	9. 2021	10. 2022
11. 1	12. Brazil	13. Brazil	14. Brazil	15. Brazil
16. 2nd	17. Govern	18. President	19. President	20. President
21. 3rd	22. President	23. Govern	24. Govern	25. Brazilian
26. 4th	27. Country	28. Brazilian	29. People	30. People
31. 5	32. Power	33. God	34. Brazilian	35. Govern
36. 6th	37. Good	38. People	39. Power	40. Power
41. 7th	42. God	43. Power	44. Country	45. God
46. 8th	47. Work	48. Country	49. Vaccinate	50. Good
51. 9	52. Brazilian	53. Good	54. Good	55. Country
56. 10th	57. Family	58. Work	59. God	60. Democracy

TABLE 2: Evolution of the 10 most frequent terms per year. Own source.

The year 2019, the first of the presidential term, was characterized by the establishment of the government agenda. Among the 10 most frequently used terms, only two were related to traditionally evangelical themes: "God" (7th position) and "Family" (10th position).

Contextual analysis revealed that "God" appeared mainly as the expression "God bless" (64 times, 8.5% of the total in 2019) and linked to the "Assembly of God" (46 times, 6.1%). The most frequent users were Silas Malafaia, Marco Feliciano, and Eduardo Bolsonaro. "Family," on the other hand, appeared linked to the idea of "comfort" on 31 occasions (4.1%).

The low correlation between "God" and "family" (R = 0.24) suggests little numerical relationship between these terms traditionally associated with conservative religious groups, as shown in Table 3.

Pearson's R correlation: God and Family - 2019							
	Power	Country	President	Govern	Brazil	God	Family
Power		0.435	0.435	0.446	0.567	0.360	0.302
Country	0.435		0.485	0.675	0.685	-0.214	-0.055
President	0.435	0.485		0.523	0.566	0.082	-0.051
Govern	0.446	0.675	0.523		0.563	-0.028	0.052
Brazil	0.567	0.685	0.566	0.563		-0.035	0.040
God	0.360	-0.214	0.082	-0.028	-0.035		0.242

TABLE 3: Pearson's R correlation: God and Family. Own source.

The year 2020 was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and municipal elections. The term "God" rose to 5th place, accompanied by increased activity from religious leaders Silas Malafaia and Marco Feliciano (31% of publications compared to 22% in 2019).

Marco Feliciano and Silas Malafaia aligned themselves with the government during the pandemic, defending the maintenance of economic activities and criticizing social isolation measures. The term "family" was replaced by "people," indicating a change in discourse strategy. In this context, the term "God" appears as "God bless" with 153 appearances (12.7%), "Thank God" with 77 appearances (6.3%), and linked to the term "Brazil," with 67 appearances (5.5%), and "People," with 59 appearances (4.9%). In the case of the correlation between "Brazil" and "God," there is a high significance (R = 0.6).

Pearson's R correlation: God and other terms from 2020					
	Brazilian	President	Govern	Brazil	God
Brazilian		0.668	0.656	0.769	0.641

President	0.668		0.621	0.759	0.401
Govern	0.656	0.621		0.779	0.546
Brazil	0.769	0.759	0.779		0.600
God	0.641	0.401	0.546	0.600	

TABLE 4: Pearson's R correlation: God and other terms in 2020. Own source.

In 2021, the term "God" declined to 10th place, demonstrating the declining influence of conservative religious groups. The analysis revealed that 54.72% of mentions came from Malafaia (203) and Feliciano (110), confirming the pattern of religious leaders as government spokespersons.

The correlation between "Brazil" and "President" strengthened significantly, rising from 0.759 in 2020 to 0.815 in 2021, evidencing a growing attempt to associate Bolsonaro with the country, as shown in Table 5.

Pearson's R correlation: God and other terms in 2021					
	Brazil	President	Govern	People	God
Brazil		0.815	0.786	0.336	0.270
President	0.815		0.830	0.382	0.347
Govern	0.786	0.830		0.270	0.211
Population	0.336	0.382	0.270		0.699
God	0.270	0.347	0.211	0.699	

TABLE 5: Pearson's R correlation: God and other terms in 2021. Own source.

In the 2022 election year, "God" returned to 7th place. A significant change in the use of the term was observed, with Eduardo and Carlos Bolsonaro accounting for 37.9% of the mentions, demonstrating the instrumental use of religion in electoral strategy. However, the term does not show a high correlation with any other significant term, as shown in Table 6. And the term "democracy" entered the ranking of most used terms, replacing "vaccinate," reflecting the electoral debate centered on democratic defense.

Pearson's R correlation: God and other terms in 2022					
	God	President	People	Brazilian	Brazil
God		0.511	0.643	0.460	0.477
President	0.511		0.328	0.391	0.766
Population	0.643	0.328		0.652	0.391

Brazilian	0.460	0.391	0.652		0.604
Brazil	0.477	0.766	0.391	0.604	

TABLE 6: Pearson's R correlation: God and other terms in 2022. Own source.

The correlation analysis using Pearson's R coefficient revealed consistent patterns over the four years. The steady growth in the Brazil-President correlation indicates a deliberate strategy to associate Bolsonaro with national symbols. The increase in the God-President correlation in 2022 confirms the electoral use of religion.

61. Evolution of the main correlations				
62. Correlation	63. 2019	64. 2020	65. 2021	66. 2022
67. Brazil-President	68. 0.566	69. 0.759	70. 0.815	71. 0.766
72. God-President	73. 0.082	74. 0.401	75. 0.347	76. 0.511
77. God-Family	78. 0.242	79. -	80. -	81. -
82. Brazil-Governance	83. 0.563	84. 0.779	85. 0.786	86. -

TABLE 7: Evolution of the main correlations. Own source.

On the other hand, analysis of terms related to sexual and reproductive rights ("LGBT," "Gay," "Gender," "Feminism," "Homosexual") revealed a consistent downward trend, with Eduardo Bolsonaro consistently being the most frequent user, followed by Silas Malafaia and Marco Feliciano, which was normally used in contexts that sought to defend against the "left."

87. Evolution of the frequency of LGBT terms		
88. Year	89. Total Mentions	90. Annual Variation
91. 2019	92. 157	93. -
94. 2020	95. 133	96. -15.3%
97. 2021	98. 125	99. -6.0
100. 2022	101. 65	102. -48.0

TABLE 8: Evolution of the frequency of LGBT terms. Own source.

The contexts of use were predominantly negative, associating these terms with "gender ideology" and positioning them as threats to traditional values.

4.2. Patterns of Action by Religious Leaders

The analysis identified three main patterns in the actions of religious leaders: Government Defense, Institutional Antagonism, and Electoral Mobilization. Religious leaders acted predominantly in defense of the government, not pressing for specific agendas. Silas Malafaia and Marco Feliciano acted as government

spokesmen, reproducing official narratives. Also, coordinated attacks on the Supreme Court, the press, and opposition governors characterized religious-political discourse. The Supreme Court was particularly targeted, being presented as a threat to religious freedom. In addition to the intensification of activities in election years (2020 and 2022), with calls for fasts, demonstrations, and religious events with explicit political content.

In this sense, the research identified clear seasonality in religious themes. In non-election years, such as 2019 and 2021, there was less use of religious terms, with a focus on administrative and economic issues, in addition to religion as an element of support, not mobilization. In election years, such as 2020 and 2022, there was a significant increase in religious references, use of the motto "God, Country, Family, and Freedom," and the instrumentalization of Christian symbols.

5. Discussion of Results

The results confirm the central hypothesis that the relationship between neoconservative evangelicals and the Bolsonaro government was based more on political identity than on specific religious principles. The low correlation between religious terms and the decline in the use of traditional moral agendas indicate that vocal support did not translate into effective pressure for specific policies. This finding is in line with the literature on neoconservatism (ALMEIDA, 2018), which identifies religion as one element with t of a broader ideological constellation, including economic liberalism, political authoritarianism, and cultural nationalism.

Furthermore, the rise in religious terms in election years (2020 and 2022) suggests the strategic instrumentalization of religion for electoral purposes. The increase in the God-President correlation from 0.347 in 2021 to 0.511 in 2022 demonstrates the calculated use of religious symbols. This instrumentalization is not a uniquely Brazilian phenomenon, finding parallels in the global right-wing populisms analyzed by Löwy (2019) and in the strategies of leaders such as Viktor Orbán in Hungary and Donald Trump in the United States.

Contrary to the common perception of evangelical influence, the data show limited pressure to influence public policy formulation. Several factors may explain this limitation: the heterogeneity of the evangelical group, internal divisions within the neoconservative collective identity, and the system of checks and balances in Brazilian democracy (SOARES, 2025).

First, the Brazilian evangelical community is not a monolithic bloc. Internal divisions over economics, security, and even moral issues have limited its ability to exert unified pressure. In addition, military, economic, and technical groups within the government compete with religious influence.

The results contribute to the debate on secularization in Brazil, demonstrating that, even under a government with strong evangelical support, the secular nature of the state, at least in the discursive field, remained preserved given the low evangelical pressure against the government, so that political identity prevailed. This finding supports Mariano's (2011) thesis on "Brazilian secularism," characterized by formal separation with persistent symbolic influence, but within democratic institutional limits.

Therefore, the research identified the role of religion in Brazilian political polarization, serving more as an identity marker than as a source of pressure for specific policies. This polarization, although it seems intense at the discursive level, did not show itself in reality. The pattern observed suggests that religion, in the contemporary Brazilian context, operates more as a resource for political mobilization than as a source of autonomous political authority, as well as a defender of previously established political identities.

6. Conclusions

This research analyzed 72,750 tweets from politicians and religious leaders during the Bolsonaro administration, revealing specific patterns in the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Brazil.

Religious themes gained prominence mainly in election years, confirming their instrumental use. The God-President correlation increased significantly in 2022 (0.511), contrasting with lower values in non-election years. There was also a consistent reduction in the discussion of sexual and reproductive rights, with a decline between 2021 and 2022, demonstrating that traditional moral themes were not central even in a conservative government.

Leaders such as Silas Malafaia and Marco Feliciano acted more to defend the government than to press for specific agendas, functioning as political spokespersons in religious language. The steady growth of the discursive association between Bolsonaro and national symbols far exceeded religious correlations.

The results challenge simplistic interpretations of desecularization, demonstrating that contemporary religious influence operates within secular frameworks, competing with other sources of authority and identity, such as politics. The research confirms, at least in terms of communication, that Brazilian neoconservatism articulates religion with other ideological elements, with political, not religious, identity being the determining factor.

However, further studies are needed to verify whether Brazilian democratic institutions have demonstrated the ability to resist extreme religious pressures, maintaining formal secularism even under a government with strong religious rhetoric. The Brazilian case illustrates the structural limitations of religious populism in constitutional democracies, where checks and balances restrict radical transformations. Thus, social networks have emerged as a central space for the articulation between religion and politics, but their influence has been limited to the symbolic plane and, even there, to the defense of a political identity.

This research has therefore demonstrated that despite the vocal support of evangelical leaders and the use of religious symbols in election campaigns, the pursuit of effective pressure was limited. The relationship was based more on neoconservative political identity than on specific religious principles.

The findings question narratives about “theocracy” or “confessional state” in Brazil, indicating that religious influence, although present, operates within democratic institutional limits. The secular nature of the Brazilian state has been preserved in terms of communication, with religious influence manifesting itself mainly on a symbolic level, but in a less significant way. These results contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between religion and politics in contemporary Brazil, highlighting complexities that transcend simplistic dichotomies between secular and religious.

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