

RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IN LATIN AMERICA:

MEASURING DIGITAL LATIN AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

This capstone project was completed as the final requirement for the Master of Arts in Latin American Studies from the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) at Georgetown University's Walsh School of Foreign Service (SFS). We dedicate this work to our first- and second-year colleagues in the program and to our faculty advisors, whose guidance and support made this project possible.

Our deepest gratitude goes to Dr. Yevhen Fedchenko and the StopFake team, whose support greatly contributed to our research. We are thankful for the mentorship provided by our faculty advisor, Dr. Juan Luis Manfredi, Georgetown's Prince of Asturias Distinguished Visiting Professor, whose expertise in Journalism and Media, Latin American Affairs, and Propaganda studies guided us throughout this endeavor. Additionally, we extend our appreciation to Dr. Angelo Rivero Santos for his oversight during this process and his ever-valuable insights.

We are indebted to Dr. Jenny Guardado for her instrumental assistance in the quantitative aspect of our project, particularly her guidance while we were refining our methodology, and her advice on how to employ Stata software to analyze our data. Special recognition goes to Pablo Moral Martín, a seasoned journalist specializing in social media, disinformation and rhetorical processing at the National Distance Education University (UNED). His assistance significantly shaped our methodology section. Furthermore, we express our gratitude to Tara Sonenshine, a distinguished U.S. diplomat, Emmy-award winning journalist, and current Edward R. Murrow Professor of Practice in Public Diplomacy at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Her advice on methodology and analysis enriched our research. Lastly, we extend our appreciation to our friends and family for their support throughout this challenging yet rewarding journey.

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Capstone Partner Organization and Deliverables



For this capstone project, we collaborated with StopFake, a Ukrainian fact-checking organization dedicated to debunking Russian disinformation. Co-founded and led by Yevhen Fedchenko, StopFake.org is composed of journalists, professors, and students operating from the Mohyla School of Journalism in Kyiv. The organization was established in March 2014, following Russia's annexation of Crimea.

StopFake actively publishes articles, analytical reports, and columns focused on countering Russian disinformation. Our research, centered on Russian influence in Latin America, was specifically aimed at gauging the extent of the pro-Russian narrative's penetration into the Latin American and Spanish-speaking public via digital platforms, specifically Twitter (now known as X). StopFake graciously offered to publish our work due to its relevance to their mission. StopFake's commitment to the Latin American region is well-demonstrated by its recent partnership with Television Martí aimed at combating Russian disinformation in Cuba. (U.S. Agency for Global Media, 1)

We provided two deliverables to our capstone partner organization. First, we granted access to our PowerPoint presentation. Second, we prepared a concise document detailing our analysis and findings, to be published in English.

Introduction

Russian influence in Latin America is a complicated and multifarious topic; Russian interest there dates back to the late-Tsarist period and became especially acute during the Cold War (Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture, 1). In the post-Soviet era, concerns about Russian activity returned to the forefront as a geopolitical factor and policy concern for the United States. Presently, the renewed animosity between Russian President Vladimir Putin's Russia and the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) alliance, growing recognition of Russia's influence campaigns in other regions, and, most recently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have once again brought focus onto Russian activity in the region. (U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, 1)

On December 6, 2016, Vladimir Putin, by Presidential Decree, enacted a new "Doctrine of Information Security," replacing an earlier one which he had approved in 2000. This 38-point document effectively made the securitization of "the information sphere" a matter of official Russian state policy. (Security Council of the Russian Federation, 1) While the Doctrine ostensibly refers to maintaining the security of Russia's information ecosystem domestically, Russian actions, as well as certain passages within the Doctrine itself, belie that notion. Perhaps most notably in this regard was Russia's interference in the 2016 United States elections. Volume One of the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence's Bipartisan Report states that, from 2014 to at least 2017, "The Russian government directed extensive activity against the U.S. election infrastructure... at [both] the state and local levels[s]." (U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Press, 1) Based on the framing logic of President Putin's Doctrine of Information Security, it directly follows that Russia would seek to create an information environment

conducive to Russian security interests, not only domestically, but abroad as well, wherever and however possible within its capacity.

Especially since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022, the possibility of it interfering in Latin America has been acknowledged as a serious concern by such U.S. government organizations as the Congressional Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere and the U.S. Department of Defense’s Southern Command (Richardson, House Armed Service Committee, 6) Some policymakers have even expressed the belief that Russia seeks to, in the words of Congressman Albio Sires, “threaten democratic aspiration and [development]” as well as to “inflame political polarization and civil disorder” in the region. (Sires, U.S. House of Representative, Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, 2) Based on Russia’s concept of information securitization (which is in opposition to the West’s), it would, at the very least, seek to influence the Latin American public towards as favorable a position as possible regarding its activities—in this case, its invasion of Ukraine.

Outside of the U.S. government, several policy experts who have expressed concern over Russian activity in Latin America are identified below:

Name	Affiliation and Expertise
Vladimir Rouvinski	Icesi University in Cali, Colombia - expertise in Russian relations with Latin America and the Caribbean.
Julia Gargunus	Russia and Eurasia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace - with a focus on Russian foreign policy and Russia-U.S. relations.
Douglas Farah	President of IBI Consultants - specializing in transnational criminal organizations and extra-regional actors in the Western Hemisphere.
Evan Ellis	Latin American Studies at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, with a focus on the region's relationships with China and other non-Western hemisphere actors.

In approaching this topic, we wanted to contribute to the growing body of literature and conduct research to help determine the extent and efficacy of Russian information operations in Latin America. By collecting and analyzing Spanish-language tweets related to five key events that occurred during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we sought to assess the degree of pro-Russian sentiment in the Spanish-speaking world and whether it was changing over time -- and, if so, begin to determine why that might be the case.¹

Our research did indicate an increase in pro-Russian sentiment within high-engagement Spanish-language tweets between the first days of the Russian invasion and the bombing of a restaurant in Kramatorsk in late June of 2023. Furthermore, the increase in pro-Russian sentiment was most consistent among those Spanish-speaking Twitter users based in Latin America. We also found an increase in user engagement with Spanish-language tweets posted by anonymous users. These ‘anonymous’ tweets trended sharply pro-Russian in sentiment, and this finding would appear to indicate an increase in intentional influence operations occurring via Twitter since the start of the conflict in Ukraine. These findings align with the assertions made by the U.S. government and a variety of policy experts from around the world, that Russia employs fake social media accounts to manipulate online discourse. (Menn, 1)

We have also identified various key influencers who are operating on Spanish-language Twitter to disseminate pro-Russian viewpoints. Most of these are not well known names, and, indeed, many of them are anonymous or semi-anonymous. Few have follower counts that would be considered significant.² However, they all posted tweets which received high levels of engagement for one or more of our chosen events. Liu Sivaya, a Russian-born “independent journalist” based in Madrid, is probably the most well-known such figure, and has been written

¹ For our capstone, we used the Cambridge Dictionary definition of sentiment as “a view of or attitude toward a situation or event.”

² While “significant” is subjective, most of the accounts of this kind had fewer than 100K followers.

about previously. (Kahn, Reuters Institute, 8) Others are far less well known and might be easily overlooked had they not been identified in this study; one such example is David.Cu [@_Davidcu](#), a Cuban political commentator, whose tweets received significant engagement, despite him having just 95.4K followers.

Another important finding of our research is that the earliest vector for pro-Russian sentiment on Twitter was not in Latin America. During the first of our events, the most virulent pro-Russian sentiments were coming not from any Latin American nation but rather from Spain (or, at least, from users masquerading as Spaniards). We found these amplifying voices to include not only known public figures such as Anibal Garzon and Colonel Pedro Baños, but also, quasi-anonymous users that claimed to be from Spain.

Additionally, we found that the influence exerted by Twitter accounts with large numbers of followers (e.g., CNN en Español) or from government officials (e.g., Spanish President Pedro Sanchez) was surprisingly limited; in contrast, engagement garnered by tweets with relatively small numbers of followers could far surpass them. There was not a significant correlation between the number of followers and the level of engagement as measured by favorites in our dataset. This finding is in line with existing studies, which have noted that social networks tend to confer authority to individuals over institutions. (McCrosky, DataEthics, 2-4)

Throughout this project, we stressed Latin America's regional and global significance in geopolitics, emphasizing the impacts of Russian influence on the region and assessing its extent. Our work underscores the importance of understanding the pervasiveness of Russian narratives in the Latin American digital sphere, including on platforms like Twitter.

Many inferences can be drawn from these findings. One key example is that, given the disparity in follower count and tweet engagement, Twitter's algorithm must be fundamental in

determining which tweets get viewership and engagement. Therein lies a potential solution to the problem of Russian influence in Latin America (and elsewhere). Cooperation with Twitter, itself, is likely to be necessary to counter this kind of online influence. Unfortunately, Twitter has recently been moving in the opposite direction, reducing transparency and implementing Application Programming Interface (API) restrictions that limit automated data collection by researchers. (Calma, The Verge, 1) Indeed, the outspoken CEO of Twitter, Elon Musk, has gone so far as to boost Russian propaganda by reposting anti-Ukrainian memes. (Burgess, WIRED, 1)

Methodology

Research Question

Our research sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) How have levels of support for Russia among Spanish-speaking users on Twitter (now X) changed since the start of the War in Ukraine?
 - Have they increased, decreased, or stayed the same?
- 2) How have Spanish-speaking audiences on Twitter exhibited changes in the degree to which they either echo or challenge the official Russian narrative?
 - Have they increased, decreased, or remained consistent in degree of similarity?

Hypothesis

Our initial hypothesis proposed that the level of support for Russia, and level of similarity between official Russian narratives and those reflected by Spanish-language Twitter users, would increase over the course of the Ukraine War. Additionally, we anticipated an increase in favorability towards Russia in relation to the war in Ukraine among the populations of Spanish-speaking countries.

Understanding Russia's Motive in Latin America

Russia's motives in Latin America are multifaceted. First, Russia's projection in the Latin American and Caribbean region attempts to force the U.S. to focus more of its attention and resources on responding to the new vulnerability close to home. ([Ellis, SSL, 8](#)) Second, Russia aims to challenge U.S. leadership and influence in the Western Hemisphere as part of its global strategy, employing power projection for this purpose. ([Gurganus, 2](#)) Latin America's geographical proximity to the United States is of significant value to Russia, especially in the eyes of Vladimir Putin. ([Gurganus, 2](#))

Additionally, Russia's disinformation efforts in the Latin American and Caribbean region raise valid concerns for the U.S. and its allies. Russia, along with China, spreads alternative narratives and rumors to shape public opinion and, consequently, influence government policies—and, perhaps even more troublingly, democratic elections themselves. (Delgado, *Diálogo Américas*, 1) This includes advancing pro-Kremlin messages, attacking the legitimacy of political groups, and attempting to undermine NATO and its member states from within. ([Lanoszka, 245](#))

Definition of Influence

For our research, identifying appropriate terminology associated with shaping the information environment posed a challenge. Some of these challenges included, but were not limited to, “philosophical dichotomies, immeasurable intent and pre-existing connotations.” ([Wanless and Pamment, 2](#)) Concepts such as misinformation and disinformation draw hard lines between black and white that are difficult to classify and scale. Propaganda, for example, has a pre-existing connotation and is an exceptionally broad concept that may be difficult to distinguish from advertising, marketing, and public relations. ([Wanless and Pamment, 5](#)) Determining what constitutes ‘influence’ on Twitter was also a challenge, as there are many soft power definitions of influence, including, “the power to change a target audience (i.e., mass publics, organizations, specific population subgroups, etc). ([Wanless and Pamment, 7](#))

The social influence network theory aided in establishing connections between tweets and public opinion via influence. Social influence network theory presents influence as a “dynamic social cognition mechanism, in which individuals are combining and weighing their own and others’ positions on an issue.” ([Friedkin and Johnsen, 2011, xv](#)) This theory would help

explain why Twitter users presenting as individuals tended to receive greater engagement than Twitter users presenting as organizations.

Additionally, our research measured the influence of Spanish-speaking audiences on social media, more specifically Twitter, by the number of favorites or likes received by each tweet. We used Twitter “likes,” or favorites, as our primary measure because not only was it the most prevalent metric, but it was also the most heavily weighted metric in Twitter’s own algorithm to determine tweet importance. ([Fang et al. 2021](#))

Data Collection

The analysis leveraged five datasets of Spanish-language Twitter posts shared within seven days of five previously identified “flashpoint” events that occurred during the War in Ukraine (February 24, 2022 – November 2023). New restrictions on researchers’ access to Twitter’s data have made it difficult for academics to collect a larger number of tweets. (Calma, The Verge, 1) Therefore, our datasets were collected manually via the use of Twitter’s user-facing “advanced search” tool.

Temporal Evolution

Our five flashpoint events represent different phases of the conflict: first, chronologically, was the onset of the War (**February 24, 2022**), second, the bombing of the Kramatorsk train station (**April 8, 2022**), third, Putin’s announcement of the mobilization of Russian reserve forces (**September 21, 2022**), fourth, Finland joining NATO (**April 4, 2023**), and, lastly, the bombing of the Kramatorsk pizza restaurant (**June 27, 2023**).

We selected our specific events based on the following criteria:

1. Temporal spread: We selected our events partly in order to have a series of datasets that are spaced chronologically throughout the war, in order for our temporal analysis to best

reflect the greater context of shifting Spanish-language sentiments over the course of the War.

2. Kremlin statements: the Kremlin released an official statement outlining the official Russian narrative with regard to each of our five chosen events. Choosing events with associated Kremlin statements allowed us to easily ascertain what the “official” stance on each of our events was from Russia.
3. Google trends: each of our five chosen events represented a peak in Google search interest for “Ucrania” (the Spanish word for Ukraine), demonstrating an increased interest in them among Spanish-speaking internet users. This provided evidence for each of our events being relevant and of interest to the Spanish-speaking population.

Construction of Sentiment

While there were some limitations to manual collection in terms of the volume of data points that we could reasonably collect, the manual approach allowed us to achieve a deeper and more nuanced understanding of sentiments and narratives that have proven most popular among Spanish-speaking Twitter users in relation to our flashpoint events. Per Kim et al., manual collection and analysis of tweets is a viable method, and even preferable, in the case of descriptive sentiment analysis of the kind that we undertook. (Kim et al., JNCI Monographs, 1)

A qualitative review of tweet content was helpful in determining whether search terms are successful in identifying relevant content. Manual coding worked in our favor, as it is “the fastest and least expensive approach” to conducting manual searches using keywords through Twitter search. (Ibid) This method required investigators to manually copy and paste results into a database.

Using the Twitter advanced search function, we collected the top 200 most-liked Spanish-language tweets, retweets, and replies about each event, published within one week of the initial event. In our time-series analysis, we calculated the most-liked tweets, most retweets, and most replies related to our events. After the initial 24 hours, we found that engagement tends to decline, but some tweets may continue to receive sporadic engagement over the course of several days; after seven days, tweets may no longer appear on users' timelines at all.³ Tweets may still generate traction at a later point, particularly if they are retweeted or commented on by influential accounts or shared in relevant discussions. (Bray, 1)

Overall, our combined datasets contained 1000 tweets from 523 unique Twitter users. Regarding premium users, we noted in our data if a user had a "checkmark" on their account (blue for premium user, gold for verified organization, gray for governmental or multilateral organization.) The tweets of users with a checkmark were weighted more heavily in Twitter's algorithm.⁴

The Twitter verification process involved verifying accounts to confirm their authenticity, ensuring that the public could trust the identity of the user behind the account. Verification badges appeared as specific icons (blue, gold, or gray) next to the account's name.⁵

1. Blue Badge (Premium User): This badge indicated that an individual's account was verified as authentic, notable, and of public interest. Only accounts that were actively subscribed to Twitter Premium were eligible to receive the blue checkmark.
2. Gold Badge (Verified Organization): This badge was specifically for verified organizations, demonstrating that the account represented an authentic entity. These organizations included businesses, brands, media outlets, and other institutions.

³ <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-x/missing-posts>

⁴ <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/profile-labels>

⁵ <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/profile-labels>

3. Gray Badge (Governmental or Multilateral Organizations): Governmental or multilateral organization accounts were given gray verification badges. These included accounts representing government bodies, international organizations, and government officials.

We conducted both qualitative and quantitative analysis of our data, though it should again be noted that, given our methodology, we were only able to draw conclusions about the most popular Spanish-language tweets related to a given event, and our research should not be construed as representing the entire corpus of (Spanish-language) tweets about the war in Ukraine.

Finally, we organized our data into a chronological time series, in order to determine the sentiment, impact, and degree of similarity to Kremlin statements of the most-liked Spanish-language tweets about the Ukraine War (in relation to our chosen events), over the ~16 month period from February 24, 2022, to June 27, 2023. We constructed an index of similarity by referencing the pro-Russia tweets against the official Kremlin statements concerning each event, as well as against statements by various Russian embassies in the Spanish-speaking countries, and against reporting by RT en Español, Sputnik Mundo, and TeleSUR. We classified tweets using content analysis based on our criteria, and, according to the content we found, created an index of similarity. (Krippendorff, 1) We used sentiment analysis to create our index of similarity, whereby we classified tweets based on our criteria and according to the content.

Data Analysis

Correlation with Public Opinion Trends and Statistical Tests

In the aftermath of each of our chosen events, a statement was released by the Kremlin. These statements allowed us to determine the official position of the Russian government with

respect to the flashpoints and to establish the degree of similarity between the official view and the sentiments presented in the pro-Russian tweets responding to the events.

For each dataset, we manually classified the sentiment of each tweet on a five-point scale: clearly pro-Russian and/or anti-Ukrainian (-2), leaning pro-Russian/anti-Ukrainian (-1), neutral (0), leaning pro-Ukrainian/anti-Russian (1), or clearly pro-Ukrainian and/or anti-Russian (2). In many cases, the bias of the sentiment was self-evident, but in others, the classification of a given tweet required contextualizing it with the author's other tweets. We did not conduct a sentiment analysis of these tweets in terms of emotion, but, rather, based on what political sentiment they appeared to reflect. Looking at the raw engagement numbers and using these methods, we were able to gain further insight into the quality and virality of individual tweets.

Criteria for Evaluating Tweets

Based on the criteria we utilized:

- 1) Russian State Media or Official Russian Government Accounts: Tweets from these sources generally conveyed a negative sentiment.
- 2) Western Media Companies with Pro-Ukrainian Bias: Tweets from these entities typically were neutral or positive.
- 3) Posts with Otherwise Neutral Appearance: Tweets that seem neutral but came from accounts expressing bias in either direction would be scored (-1) or (1) based on their bias.

Factors Distinguishing (1) and (2):

Considerations for differentiating between a (1) and a (2) involved assessing the emotional tone, aggressiveness, blame-oriented language, use of strong images, swearing, slurs,

or similar indicators. A (1) had a more neutral or less aggressive tone compared to a (2), which exhibited emotional or accusatory language.

Distinguishing (-1) and (-2):

The distinction between a (-1) and a (-2) was based on Russian influencers actively promoting the pro-Russian narrative. For instance, individuals like Inna Afinagivina, Pablo Iglesias, etc., who consistently contributed to supporting the pro-Russian stance, would be categorized as a (-2) due to their notable influence in shaping this narrative.

Regarding Tweet Threads:

When evaluating tweet threads, if the concluding tweets expressed a particular stance, while individual tweets within the thread maintain neutrality, the entire thread was considered as a cohesive unit expressing the same sentiment. All tweets within the thread were treated equally, considering they conveyed a unified viewpoint, despite potential variations in individual tweets.

Our data analysis allowed us to do the following:

1. [The temporal variation](#) helped us gauge whether there was an increase, decrease, or a consistent level of pro-Russian or anti-Russian sentiment among popular tweets in the Spanish language relating to our five events. This measurement served to indicate whether levels of support for Russia changed among Spanish-speaking Twitter users over the course of the War in Ukraine. Our hypothesis going into the research was that the fluctuations in the levels of support for Russia on Twitter in relation to the Ukraine War would align with the public favorability of Russia in Spanish-speaking countries.
2. Our sentiment analysis indicated whether there has been an increase, decrease, or consistent level of similarity between pro-Russian sentiment expressed in popular Spanish-language tweets regarding events in the Ukraine War and official statements

from the Kremlin (and other government-aligned Russian sources) about the same events. This demonstrated the degree to which popular pro-Russian tweets in Spanish amplified the official Russian narrative, and whether that degree changed over the course of the War. This measurement revealed the level of alignment between Kremlin messaging and that of Spanish-language influencers on Twitter, and whether and to what degree that messaging was absorbed and repeated by Spanish-language Twitter users in general.

Conclusion of Methodology

The two key aspects of our methodology were:

1. Temporal evolution.
2. Construction of sentiment.

There were clear benefits to our approach. This methodological framework allowed us to explore, in a systematic way, and, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, the conversations of Spanish-speaking Twitter users in the context of the Russian-Ukraine War. Focusing in greater depth on a smaller sample size enabled us to come to more nuanced conclusions about our dataset, particularly with regard to sentiment and frame. The sample served to identify elements, keywords, or narratives. Once identified, the tweets repeated these strategic narratives with the same format. Therefore, the small sample was sufficient. It made it possible for us to conduct our analysis without the need to employ external programs or third-party platforms. Our methodology allowed us to attain a high degree of clarity regarding the qualitative analysis of our data. Focusing on the most-liked tweets also allowed us to hone in on the most popular narratives among Latin American audiences regarding a given event. This methodology also allowed us to recognize facts of interest to the shaping of public opinion. The ability to influence consists of impacting public opinion and directing it towards ideas, interests,

Analysis and Results

As noted previously, our research primarily consisted of collecting and evaluating the 200 most-favorited Spanish-language tweets for each of five chosen ‘flashpoint’ events during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Our primary objective in doing so was to determine whether there have been any notable changes in the public sentiments expressed by Spanish-speaker Twitter users concerning the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The events under analysis are as follows:

1. February 24, 2022: Marking the commencement of Putin’s "special military operation,"
2. April 8, 2022: The Kramatorsk train station bombing.
3. September 21, 2022: Russia’s announcement of a partial mobilization.
4. April 4, 2023: Finland's accession into NATO.
5. June 27, 2023: The Kramatorsk restaurant bombing

Event 1: February 24, 2022

On the early morning of February 24, 2022, Russia surprised the world by initiating a series of unexpected missile strikes on neighboring Ukraine. Shortly after, a full-scale invasion ensued, with assaults on key cities across the country by both land and air. This led to the seizure of the Chernobyl power plant. (PBS NewsHour, 1) The events of February 24th marked the onset of a conflict that persists to this day. It is fitting that we choose the invasion as the first of our ‘flashpoint’ events for analysis.

Reviewing the data from the first event, we observed heightened levels of engagement and a prevalence of neutral stances. 96 of the 200 tweets in the dataset (48%) for this event were neutral, a far greater share than in any of our other events (neutral tweets accounted for 4.5%,

6%, 24.5%, and 6.5%, in events 2 through 5). The discourse mostly refrained from favoring either country and instead expressed concerns about the ongoing situation, urging an end to the conflict without attributing blame to Russia or Ukraine. As depicted in Figure 1 and Figure 2, below, the frequency of neutral sentiment across the timeline seems to reflect public uncertainty regarding the trajectory of events following the initial day of the war. The scatter plot analysis illustrates a predominant engagement with neutral public opinions (see Figure 1 below). Many tweets featured memes conveying apprehension and confusion, reflecting the fear of a potential World War III scenario. Other memes contained satire to depict the situation. Still others in this category expressed concerns about the war's implications for Latin American countries and their economies. Additionally, a notable segment of neutral tweets discussed the commencement of the War and pointed blame at the West, particularly directing criticism towards President Biden, suggesting that such a conflict would not have occurred under President Trump's administration.

a. Positive and Negative Sentiments

The scatter plot in Figure 1 illustrates a prevailing positive sentiment, which signifies an anti-Russian/ pro-Ukraine stance. The majority of positive (pro-Ukraine) tweets attributed blame to Russia and Putin. Additionally, some tweets expressed admiration and high regard for Ukrainian President Zelensky, portraying him as a heroic figure. Other tweets featured graphic images depicting violence, crediting these actions to Russia. The scatter plot below illustrates that very few of the tweets in the dataset for Event 1 expressed pro-Russian sentiment. The most pronounced negative or clearly pro-Russian sentiment stemmed from an official Russian government account, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (@maerusia_). This sentiment notably echoes official Kremlin statements and correlates with Putin's declaration of the "special

military operation.” (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 1) The negative sentiments that did appear in this dataset primarily assigned blame to the West and echoed the narrative put forth by the Russian government.

Figure 1

Event 1: February 24 2022 Scatterplot Sentiment



Figure 2

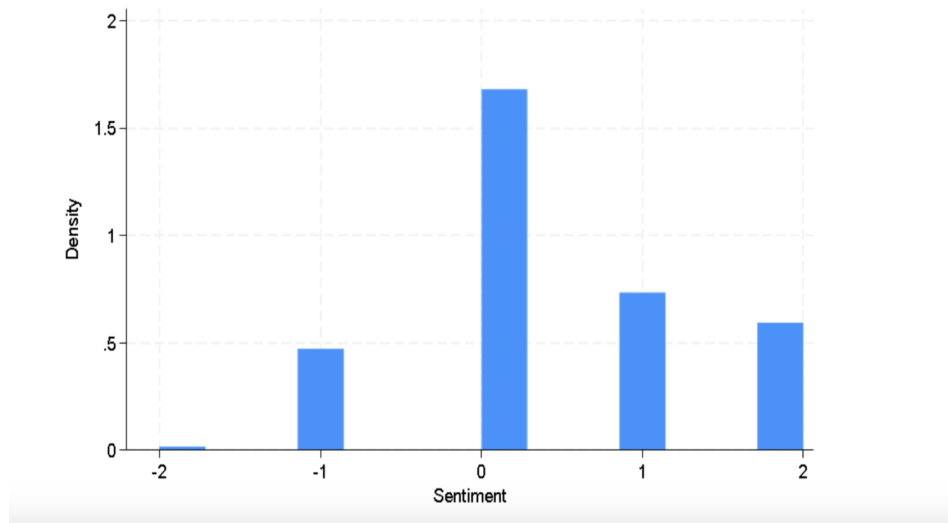


Figure 3⁶



Inicia la Tercera Guerra Mundial entre Rusia y Ucrania.

La gente en México

[Translate post](#)



11:10 PM · Feb 23, 2022

153 replies 3.5K retweets 29K likes 156 bookmarks

Figure 3 (Continued)

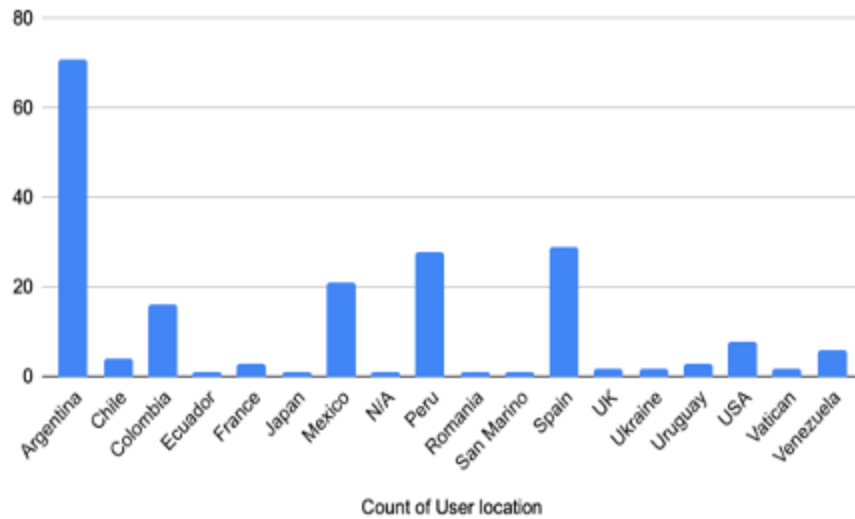
⁶ <https://twitter.com/ItziashunelyM/status/1496755595457998849>
<https://twitter.com/soyalexbriones/status/1496699042776027138>
<https://twitter.com/yxelalexander/status/1496707529912557572>



When measuring the number of favorites, a substantial difference was observed, ranging from the highest level of engagement with 326,000 favorites, to the lowest level at 18,000 favorites. This considerable level of engagement is considered a high impact event, especially in comparison to the other four events measured, in which the upper limit of favorites that tweets received was less than 20K.

Upon examining the various user locations, the data revealed a notable distribution, with Argentina having the highest percentage with 35.5% of the 200 most-favorited tweets responding to the initial Russian invasion originating there, followed by Spain with 14.5%, Peru with 14%, Mexico with 10.5%, Colombia with 8%, the USA with 4%, and Venezuela with 3% of the tweets. Other locations that appeared in the dataset but accounted for less than 3% of the volume include Chile, Ecuador, France, Japan, N/A (location could not be determined/anonymous), Romania, San Marino, Ukraine, and the Vatican.

Figure 4



Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with the most **favorites** are the following:

1. Vásquez @Omar_Mz - (Venezuela) (Not Verified) (0 - neutral):
326,000 favorites
 - a. Average Twitter user
 - b. https://x.com/Omar_Mz/status/1496698640710180864?s=20

2. pv @toppercio - (Argentina) (Not Verified) (1 leaning anti-Russia):
267,000 favorites
 - a. Average Twitter user
 - b. <https://x.com/toppercio/status/1497047821463142402?s=20>

3. Aoluco @LUJANCORRO - (Peru) (Not Verified) (2 anti-Russia):
216,000 favorites
 - a. Average twitter user
 - b. <https://x.com/LUJANCORRO/status/1496832554456199169?s=20>

4. Tomás Baliña@Tommy95RKO - (Argentina) (Not Verified) (0 neutral):
183,000 favorites
 - a. Average twitter user/ Content Creator
 - b. <https://x.com/Tommy95RKO/status/1498304405573148673?s=20>

5. Alerta News 24 @AlertaNews24 - (Peru) (Blue Verified) (1 leaning anti-Russia):
167,000 favorites
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator - Not an Individual
 - b. <https://x.com/AlertaNews24/status/1497169558821613573?s=20>

6. Xiaomi @naaoromero - (Argentina) (Not Verified) (0 neutral):
138,000 favorites
 - a. Average Twitter user
 - b. <https://x.com/naaoromero/status/1497188019358650378?s=20>

7. Carlos Noriega @carlosnoriegam - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (2 anti-Russia):
132,000 favorites
 - a. Writer/ Pundit/ CEO El Bastion
 - b. <https://x.com/carlosnoriegam/status/1497383902553460742?s=20>

8. Nahuel Barberan Audizzio@nahuelbarberan - (Argentina) (Not Verified) (-1 leaning pro-Russia):
132,000 favorites
 - a. Average Twitter user/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/nahuelbarberan/status/1496931540663775232?s=20>

9. Manu @cinicammundi - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (0 neutral):
128,000 favorites
 - a. Average Twitter user
 - b. <https://x.com/cinicammundi/status/1498680110815354882?s=20>

10. Mart!na @birratina - (Argentina) (Not Verified) (2 anti- Russia):
119,000 favorites
 - a. Average Twitter user/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/birratina/status/1497013761831747586?s=20>

Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with the most **retweets** are the following:

1. Aoluco @LUJANCORRO - (Peru) (Not Verified) (2 anti-Russia):
57,000 retweets
 - a. Average twitter user
 - b. <https://x.com/LUJANCORRO/status/1496832554456199169?s=20>

2. pv @toppercio - (Argentina) (Not Verified) (1 leaning anti-Russia):
32,000 retweets
 - a. Average Twitter user
 - b. <https://x.com/toppercio/status/1497047821463142402?s=20>

3. Reick @Reickdice - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (0 neutral):
28,000 retweets

- a. Average twitter user
 - b. <https://x.com/Reickdice/status/1496721072128987143?s=20>
4. Alerta News 24 @AlertaNews24 - (Peru) (Blue Verified) (1 leaning anti-Russia):
27,000 retweets
- a. Twitter News Aggregator - Not an Individual
 - b. <https://x.com/AlertaNews24/status/1497169558821613573?s=20>
5. Vásquez @Omar_Mz - (Venezuela) (Not Verified) (0 neutral):
24,000 retweets
- a. Average Twitter user
 - b. https://x.com/Omar_Mz/status/1496698640710180864?s=20
6. Manu @cinicamundi - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (0 neutral):
24,000 retweets
- a. Average Twitter user
 - b. <https://x.com/cinicamundi/status/1498680110815354882?s=20>
7. Arturo Pérez-Reverte@perezreverte - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2 pro- Russia):
22,000 retweets
- a. Novelist/ Journalist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/perezreverte/status/1497343991922241538?s=200>
8. Oscar Font @oscaarfont - (Spain) (Not Verified) (0 neutral):
21,000 retweets
- a. Content Creator/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/oscaarfont/status/1496792402991800330?s=20>
9. Carlos Noriega @carlosnoriegam - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (2 anti-Russia):
19,000 retweets
- a. Writer/ Pundit/ CEO El Bastion
 - b. <https://x.com/carlosnoriegam/status/1497383902553460742?s=20>
10. Agustín Antonetti@agusantonetti (USA) (Blue Verified) (2 anti- Russia):
17,000 retweets
- a. Pundit/ Content Creator/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/agusantonetti/status/1497702721276858371?s=20>

Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with the most **replies** are the following:

1. Vázquez @Omar_Mz - (Venezuela) (Not Verified) (0 neutral):
10,000 replies
 - a. Average twitter user
 - b. https://x.com/Omar_Mz/status/1496698640710180864?s=20

2. Gabriel Boric Font @GabrielBoric - (Chile) (Grey Verified) (2 anti-Russia):
5,000 replies
 - a. President of Chile/ Politician/ World Leader/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/GabrielBoric/status/1497961435086811138?s=20>

3. Gabriel Boric Font @GabrielBoric - (Chile) (Grey Verified) (2 anti-Russia):
4,900 replies
 - a. President of Chile/ Politician/ World Leader/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/GabrielBoric/status/1496877105484808202?s=20>

4. Lilly Téllez @LillyTellez - (Mexico) (Grey Verified) (2 anti- Russia):
3,800 replies
 - a. Senator of Mexico/ Politician/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/LillyTellez/status/1496930891188350979?s=20>

5. Cristina Kirchner @CFKArgentina - (Argentina) (Grey Verified) (0 neutral):
3,200 replies
 - a. Vice President of Argentina/ Politician/ World Leader/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/CFKArgentina/status/1498040486317084673?s=20>

6. Lalo Salazar oficial @eduardosalazar4 - (Mexico) (Not Verified) (0 neutral):
3,000 replies
 - a. Journalist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/eduardosalazar4/status/1498803183711551488?s=20>

7. Héctor Manrique @manriquehector - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (2 anti-Russia):
2,600 replies
 - a. Theater Actor/ Theater Director/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/manriquehector/status/1497405398730645505?s=20>

8. Alex Tienda @AlexTienda - (Romania) (Blue Verified) (0 neutral):
2,000 replies
 - a. Content Creator/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/AlexTienda/status/1498438550571917319?s=20>

9. Marcelo Ebrard C. @m_ebrard - (Mexico) (Blue Verified) (0 neutral):
1,900 replies

a. Mexican Politician/ Influencer

b. https://x.com/m_ebrard/status/1496700805268791297?s=20

10. Marcelo Ebrard C. @m_ebrard - (Mexico) (Blue Verified) (2 anti-Russia):
1,900 replies

a. Mexican Politician/ Influencer

b. https://x.com/m_ebrard/status/1497272555182477314?s=20

The top ten favorites, retweets, and replies demonstrated that the majority of most-favorited tweets for Event 1 came from unverified or blue-verified users. Unverified accounts are those that have not undergone the Twitter verification process. The Twitter verification process, as mentioned in the methodology section of this report, involves verifying accounts to confirm their authenticity, ensuring that the public can trust that the verified user is a real person. They lack a verification badge (the blue, gold, or gray icon) which signifies the account's authenticity, prominence, or association with an official organization. Unverified users tend to either be typical Twitter users, or notable figures that did not choose to pursue a Blue Verification badge (which requires a subscription to Twitter). However, it is important to note that in the case of some unverified users, especially those who keep their location and/or name anonymous, there is a possibility of the account being "fake." The key is understanding that the majority of the top tweets did not come from official government accounts or governmental and/or multilateral organizations (gray- or gold-verified accounts), indicating that public individuals prevail in the Twitter discourse. To be fair, though, most Twitter users overall are either unverified or blue-verified, considering that gray- and gold-verifications require one to be a representative of a government or large organization.

Event 2: April 8, 2022

On April 8, 2022, a ballistic missile, later identified as being a Tochka-U model, exploded at the main railway station of Kramatorsk, a city of approximately 150,000 people located in eastern Ukraine, in the disputed Donbas region. At the time of the bombing, hundreds of Ukrainians were at the station, hoping to evacuate the area, which had become a warzone, via train. (Human Rights Watch, 1) The explosions killed 63 civilians, and wounded over one hundred more. (Vakulenko, Free Radio, 1) The Russian government denied responsibility for the attack, instead blaming it on the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF), on the basis of the type of missile used. Ukraine and its allies, on the other hand, have been unequivocal in asserting that the attack was perpetrated by Russia.

Upon reviewing the data from the second event, we noted considerable engagement levels on both the positive and negative ends, with a sharp spike in highly negative tweets (strongly pro-Russian). The number of strongly pro-Russian tweets was 78 out of 200 (39%), and the number of strongly pro-Ukrainian tweets was 58 out of 200 (29%). The overall percentages of pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian tweets were 46.5% and 49% respectively, with only 4.5% of the top 200 most-favorited tweets expressing neutral sentiment, reflecting a significant degree of polarization, especially compared to Event 1, which occurred just over a month prior.

Figures 5 and 6 reveal that strong pro-Russian sentiments attracted higher engagement levels from Twitter users. Within these negative (pro-Russian) tweets, blame was directed towards Ukraine and the West, based on the assertion that the Tochka-U missile, allegedly responsible for the train station attack, originated from Ukraine. This claim directly mirrors the official position of the Russian government, which asserts that it was not responsible for the Kramatorsk train bombing, and, furthermore, no longer keeps that specific model of missile in its

arsenal. The Kremlin's statement regarding the incident describes the bombing as "another war crime" committed by the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF). (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 1) Many of these tweets contained offensive language, including derogatory terms such as 'ucronazis,' as depicted in Figure 7. Examining Figure 5, the polarity between strong positive and negative sentiments (2 and -2) is evident. Notably, the strongly positive (pro-Ukrainian) tweets were similarly accusatory, but instead directed their accusations towards Putin and Russia (Figure 8). Numerous tweets expressing strong positive sentiment reinforced their stance by sharing graphic images of the bombing, depicting injured and potentially dead civilians. Furthermore, these tweets utilized language that attributed blame to Russia and Putin, labeling them with terms such as terrorist and war criminal.

a. Leaning Positive, Neutral, and Leaning Negative sentiments

The data and figures presented below indicate that neutral (0) and positive- or negative-leaning (1 or -1) sentiments were less prevalent compared to the stronger bipolar sentiments (2 and -2). Among these, the neutral sentiment appeared with the least frequency. The neutral tweets that do exist among the 200 most-favorited Spanish-language tweets about Event 2 simply described the events that had occurred at the Kramatorsk train station, without editorialization or attributing blame to either Russia or Ukraine. Additionally, some of the accounts that posted neutral tweets about Event 2 appeared to be purposefully refraining from casting any overt judgment about the event, despite likely having personal sympathies one way or the other. Regarding tweets with positive-leaning sentiments (1), these primarily focused on expressing sympathy for the tragedy at the Kramatorsk train station, often echoing or quoting from Western or Ukrainian sources, displaying a slight tilt toward pro-Ukraine sentiment, but not

otherwise expressing strong emotions on the matter. The negative-leaning tweets (-1) similarly tended to quote from Russian state-sponsored or supporting sources, such as RT Español, Sputnik Mundo, and the Russian embassies, but without making any strong statement of their own. These tweets presented information matter-of-factly without an apparent change in tone or language.

Figure 5

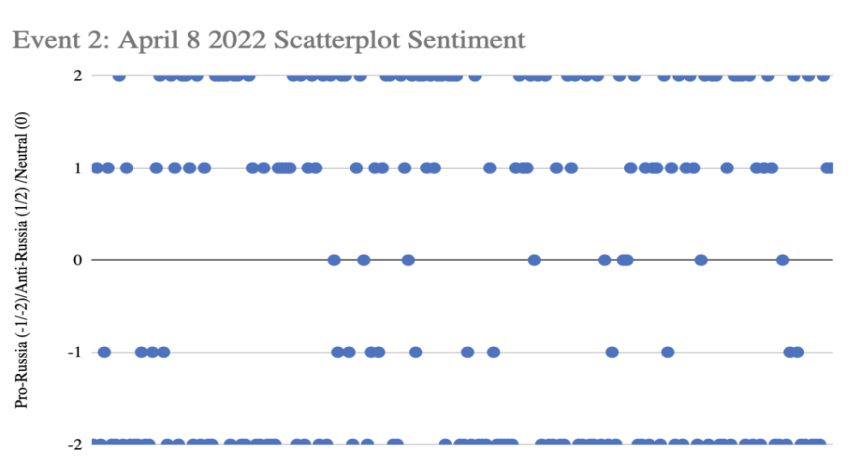


Figure 6

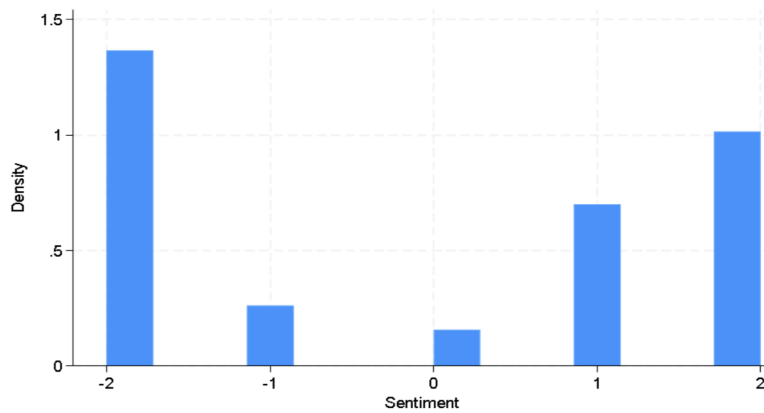


Figure 7⁷

 **DAVID.cu**
@_Davidcu

URGENTE!! ...el número de serie del misil lanzado sobre Kramatorsk coincide con los número de series de otros misiles Tochka-U lanzados por los ucronazis contra Donetsk y Lugansk... ¡¡El misil fue lanzado por Ucrania!!

[Translate post](#)

10:56 AM · Apr 9, 2022

183 5.8K 7.8K 49

 **Víctor González**
@VictorGonz54B

Los misiles Tochka-U son usados sólo por militares ucranianos, dichos misiles y que el propio Zelenski publicó, son los que llegaron a la estación de tren, así que, blanco y en botella.

[Translate post](#)

297 683 Me gusta
zelenskiy_official Los invasores golpearon el "punto-in" en la estación de tren de Kramatorsk, donde miles de pacíficos ucranianos estaban esperando la evacuación...

TECNOLOGÍA
Así es el Escarabajo, el potente misil soviético con el que Ucrania contraataca en territorio ruso

9:12 AM · Apr 8, 2022

19 127 182 3

⁷ https://x.com/_Davidcu/status/1512806576683470854?s=20
<https://x.com/VictorGonz54B/status/1512418044475281410?s=20>

Figure 7 (Continued)⁸

Daniel Mayakovski @DaniMayakovski

El cohete voló hacia Kramatorsk desde el lado suroeste, territorio controlado por los ucronazis.

La "prensa" que se dedica a manipular debería ser juzgada y condenada por colaboradora de crímenes de lesa humanidad, cada frase manipulada suya es más munición para los ucronazis.

3:31 PM · Apr 8, 2022

5 87 121 8

Figure 8⁹

Nacho Montes de Oca @nachomdeo **Subscribe**

Putin y su masacre diaria. Misiles rusos impactaron la estación de trenes de Kramatorsk, en la ciudad de Donetsk al oeste de Ucrania. Asesinaron a 29 e hirieron a 100 con municiones de racimo. Era gente que huía de la guerra.

5:45 AM · Apr 8, 2022

105 843 989 10

⁸ <https://x.com/DaniMayakovski/status/1512513517299056648?s=20>

⁹ <https://x.com/nachomdeo/status/1512365905774325762?s=20>

Figure 8 (Continued)¹⁰

 **rosa villacastin**
@RosaVillacastin

El asesino Putin bombardea una estación de trenes de Kramatorsk, donde se agolpaban unas 4.000 personas que intentaba salir de su país. Sin palabras.

8:12 AM · Apr 8, 2022

203 379 1.5K 1

 **Miguel De La Fuente** ✓
@MDFzonacaliente

Hace 25 días hacia estas fotos en la estación de Kramatorsk en la región de Donest hoy un misil ruso la ha dejado así. Al menos 30 muertos

[Translate post](#)



5:45 AM · Apr 8, 2022 from Madrid, Spain

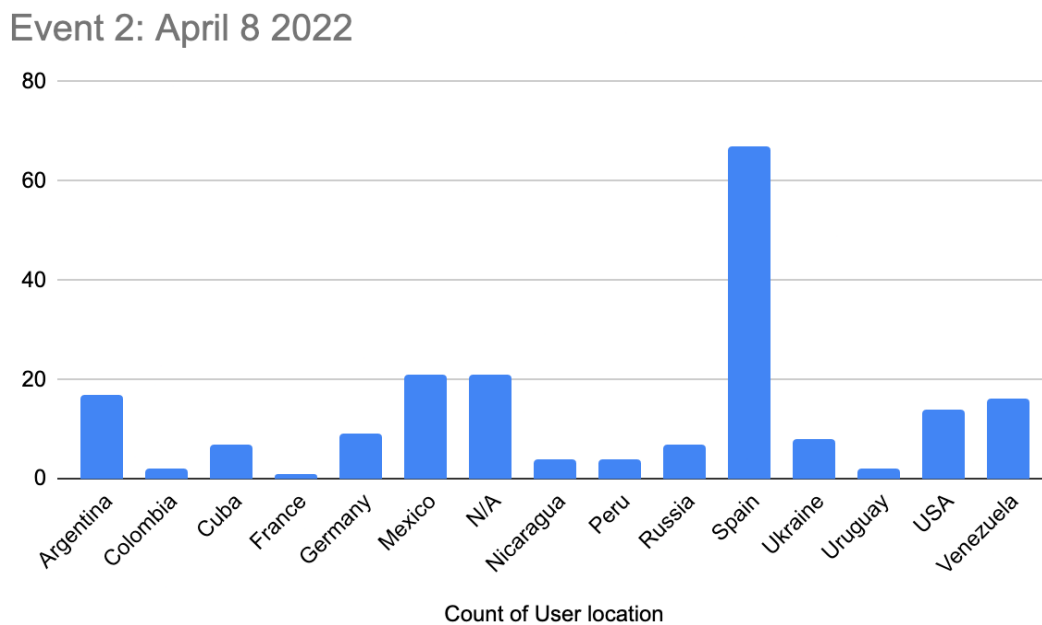
44 134 319 3

¹⁰ <https://x.com/RosaVillacastin/status/1512402957631123469?s=20>
<https://x.com/MDFzonacaliente/status/1512365902645407748?s=20>

When analyzing the number of favorites received, we noticed a large disparity between the most-favorited Spanish-language tweet for Event 2, with 7,821 favorites, and the two-hundredth most-favorited, with 119. The comparatively low numbers for both the maximum and minimum favorites in the Event 2 dataset strongly indicates that, at least for Spanish-speaking audiences, the Kramatorsk train station bombing was not a high impact event.

Examining the various user locations revealed a significant distribution, with Spain accounting for 34% of the 200 most-favorited Spanish-language tweets for Event 2, followed by Mexico with 10.5%, users with no identifiable location (N/A) with 10.5%, Argentina with 8.5%, Venezuela with 8%, the USA with 7%, Germany with 4.5%, Ukraine with 4%, and both Russia and Cuba at 3.5 percent. Additionally, countries that were represented in the dataset but received accounted for less than 3% of the volume of tweets include Colombia, France, Nicaragua, Peru, and Uruguay.

Figure 9



Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with the most **favorites** tweets are the following:

1. DAVID.cu @Davidcu - (Cuba) (Not Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
7,821 favorites
 - a. Pundit/ Influencer
 - b. https://x.com/_Davidcu/status/1512806576683470854?s=20
2. Alex Tienda @AlexTienda - (Mexico) (Blue Verified) (1 anti- Russia):
7,283 favorites
 - a. Content Creator/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/AlexTienda/status/1512432127144472583?s=20>
3. Guillermo Toledo @guillermoTM1959 - (Spain) (Not Verified) (- 2 pro- Russia):
4,510 favorites
 - a. Actor/ influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/guillermoTM1959/status/1512395998429159425?s=20>
4. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-1 pro-Russia):
4,500 favorites
 - a. Journalist (Independent) / Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/liusivaya/status/1512858382264422409>
5. José R Guzmán @JoseRGuzman - (Mexico) (Blue Verified) (1 anti-Russia):
4,200 favorites
 - a. Comedian/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/JoseRGuzman/status/1512403794050666501?s=20>
6. Víctor García Guerrero @VictorGGuerrero - (Spain) (Not Verified) (- 2 pro-Russia):
4,100 favorites
 - a. Journalist (Independent)/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/VictorGGuerrero/status/1512774496851312642?s=20>
7. El Viejo Topo @Viejo_Topo - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
3,902 favorites
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. https://x.com/Viejo_Topo/status/1513192058940502026?s=20
8. José Luis Espert @jlespert - (Argentina) (Grey Verified) (2 anti-Russia):
2,900 favorites
 - a. Member of the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina/ Politician

b. <https://x.com/jlespert/status/1512808470541656067?s=20>

9. Ternovsky Victor @Ternovsky Victor - (Russia) (Not Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
2,766 favorites

a. Pundit/ Sputnik news Journalist/ Influencer

b. <https://x.com/TernovskyVictor/status/1513225963684999177?s=20>

10. Alerta News 24 @AlertaNews24 - (Peru) (Blue Verified) (1 anti-Russia):
2,729 favorites

a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual

b. <https://x.com/AlertaNews24/status/1512355601443086339?s=20>

Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with most **retweets** are the following:

1. DAVID.cu @_Davidcu - (Cuba) (Not Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
5,844 retweets

a. Pundit/ Influencer

b. https://x.com/_Davidcu/status/1512806576683470854?s=20

2. Guillermo Toledo @guillermoTM1959 - (Spain) (Not Verified) (- 2 pro- Russia):
2,485 retweets

a. Actor/ influencer

b. <https://x.com/guillermoTM1959/status/1512395998429159425?s=20>

3. El Viejo Topo @Viejo_Topo - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
2,426 retweets

a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual

b. https://x.com/Viejo_Topo/status/1513192058940502026?s=20

4. Ternovsky Victor @Ternovsky Victor - (Russia) (Not Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
2,322 retweets

a. Pundit/ Sputnik news Journalist/ Influencer

b. <https://x.com/TernovskyVictor/status/1513225963684999177?s=20>

5. Victor García Guerrero @VictorGGuerrero - (Spain) (Not Verified) (- 2 pro-Russia):
2,300 retweets

a. Journalist (Independent)/ Influencer

b. <https://x.com/VictorGGuerrero/status/1512774496851312642?s=20>

6. Javier Couso @Caninator - (Spain) (Not Verified) (-2 pro-Russian):
1,637 retweets
 - a. Ex Member European Parliament /Politician/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/Caninator/status/1512408179564494852?s=20>
7. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (- 2 pro-Russia):
1,600 retweets
 - a. Journalist (Independent) /Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/liusivaya/status/1512679403423154179?s=20>
8. Ibai Trebiño @ibaitrebino - (France) (Not Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
1,486 retweets
 - a. Journalist (Independent) /Content Creator/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/ibaitrebino/status/1512415882093514754?s=20>
9. SuperfuzzBigmuff @AlvaroSeco - (N/A) (Not Verified) (-1 pro- Russia):
1,484 retweets
 - a. Anonymous Twitter User
 - b. <https://x.com/AlvaroSeco/status/1512831362851561475?s=20>
10. DAVID.cu @_Davidcu - (Cuba) (Not Verified) (- 2 pro-Russia):
1,321 retweets
 - a. Pundit/ Influencer
 - b. https://x.com/_Davidcu/status/1512407389902979074?s=20

Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with most **replies** are the following:

1. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
996 replies
 - a. Journalist (Independent)/Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/liusivaya/status/1512380544427823108?s=20>
2. Guillermo Toledo @guillermoTM1959 - (Spain) (Not Verified) (- 2 pro- Russia):
665 replies
 - a. Actor/ influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/guillermoTM1959/status/1512395998429159425?s=20>
3. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
659 replies
 - a. Journalist (Independent)/Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/liusivaya/status/1512858382264422409?s=20>

4. Pedro Sánchez @sanchezcastejon - (Spain) (Grey Verified) (2 anti-Russia)
622 replies
 - a. Prime Minister of Spain/ Politician/ World Leader
 - b. <https://x.com/sanchezcastejon/status/1512788441888604162?s=20>

5. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
540 replies
 - a. Journalist (Independent)/ Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/liusivaya/status/1512679403423154179?s=20>

6. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
268 replies
 - a. Journalist (Independent)/ Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/liusivaya/status/1512387811084746757?s=20>

7. Víctor García Guerrero @VictorGGuerrero - (Spain) (Not Verified) (- 2 pro-Russia):
251 replies
 - a. Journalist (Independent)/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/VictorGGuerrero/status/1512774496851312642?s=20>

8. DW Español @dw_español - (Germany) (Gold Verified) (1 anti- Russia):
238 replies
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. https://x.com/dw_espanol/status/1512618803426996228?s=20

9. DW Español @dw_español - (Germany) (Gold Verified) (1 anti- Russia):
209 replies
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. https://x.com/dw_espanol/status/1512405048772411395?s=20

10. Rosa Villacastin @RosaVillacastin - (Spain) (Not Verified) (2- anti-Russia):
203 replies
 - a. Journalist (Independent)/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/RosaVillacastin/status/1512402957631123469?s=20>

The analysis of the top ten favorites, retweets, and replies revealed a significant presence of both Not Verified and Blue Verified accounts among these users. Within the top ten Not Verified accounts were influencers representing diverse fields such as actors, independent

journalists, pundits, content creators, politicians, and an anonymous Twitter user. Notably, this anonymous user lacked location information and verification, potentially indicating a bot or fake account. However, it is important to highlight that most non-verified accounts seemed identifiable and authentic, often recognized as influencers or known individuals, underscoring their potential impact on shaping public opinion.

Conversely, the top ten Blue badge verified accounts indicated that the tweets originated from official or authentic individuals or organizations, including Alerta News 24, El Viejo Topo, and Liu Sivaya, among others. The majority of Blue Verified tweets, particularly those from Liu Sivaya, a Spanish war correspondent, journalist, and influencer. These highlight the prevalence of public opinion being conveyed by individual authoritative voices rather than solely by official government entities or reputable multilateral organizations.

Event 3: September 21, 2022

On September 21st, 2022, Putin held a press conference during which he announced that Russia would have a “partial mobilization,” or, in other words, a military draft. This represented the first military mobilization undertaken by Russia since WWII, although Putin made sure to stress that only current reservists would be subject to the conscriptions. (Al-Jazeera, 1) Analysts were quick to note that, in doing so, Putin was tacitly admitting that he and his military advisors had fundamentally miscalculated the level of manpower that would be necessary to allocate in order to successfully capture Ukraine as planned, and that, by extension, he and his team had made a strategic error. (Cancian, 1) This intuitive realization was not lost on the Spanish-speaking Twitter public, either.

For this third event, we observed heightened levels of engagement and a prevalence of pro-Ukrainian stances regarding the invasion of Ukraine. 56% of the top 200 most-favorited

Spanish-language tweets about this event expressed pro-Ukraine sentiment (112/200), versus 38% that expressed pro-Russian sentiment (76/200), while only 6% (12/200) expressed neutral sentiments. The discourse was once again highly polarized, with the majority of users expressing strong views, either heavily in favor of Ukraine (37.5%) or of Russia (30.5%). Many users focused on the aftermath of Putin's partial mobilization, highlighting reports of Russian citizens resisting mandatory conscription.

Figures 10 and 11 illustrate the high density of strongly partisan sentiments (2 and -2) observed in the dataset for Event 3. Many of the strongly pro-Ukrainian tweets featured videos that purportedly showed Russian citizens protesting the mobilization or being arrested by police for resisting the draft. Other tweets highlighted the efforts of some Russians to leave the country in order to escape conscription. Still others mocked Putin for his perceived failure in conquering Ukraine and his desperation reflected by his ordering a partial mobilization. One tweet even likened the exodus of Russians from their country to the outflow of Venezuelan migrants during the economic crisis in that country. Pro-Russian users responded with videos of Russian citizens shown happily enlisting in the army, in an effort to disprove the narrative that Russians were resisting the draft.

Figure 10

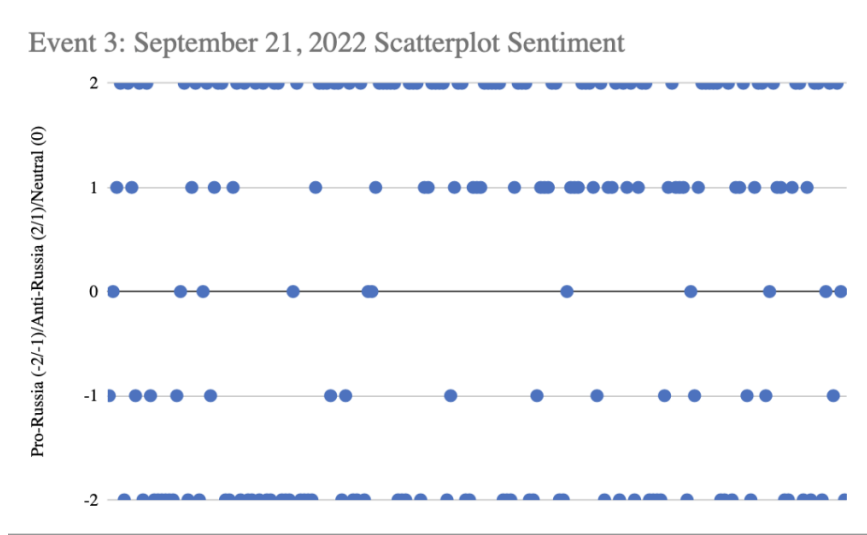


Figure 11

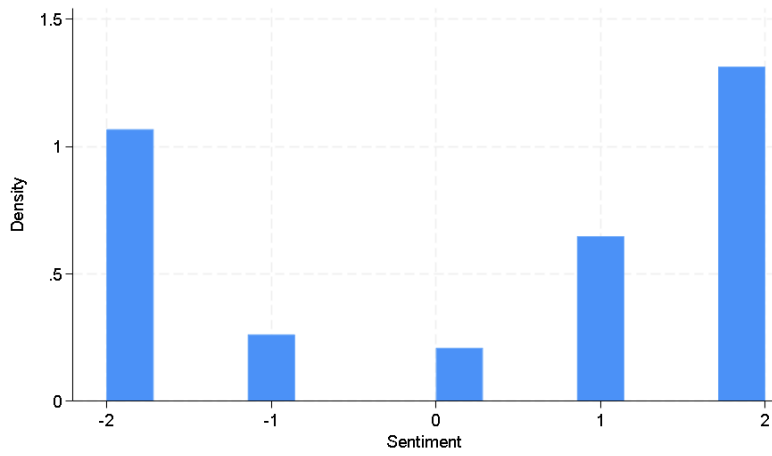


Figure 12¹¹

 **Xavier Colás**
@xaviercolas Follow ...

La principal calle comercial del centro de Moscú ahora mismo. Gritan: “No a la guerra”. La gente joven muy, muy, muy enfadada. Los mayores, asustados por el rumbo de las cosas. Furgones policiales llenos de detenidos. La policía, con problemas para disolver a la multitud.

[Translate post](#)



1:08 PM · Sep 21, 2022

481 4.8K 8.7K 93

 **ElBuni** ✓
@therealbuni Follow ...

Putin dijo que va a prohibir que los hombres de 18 a 65 (que de casualidad es edad para reclutar kjj) se escapen del país y se están yendo todos a la mierda jsjs
Los rusos más patriotas

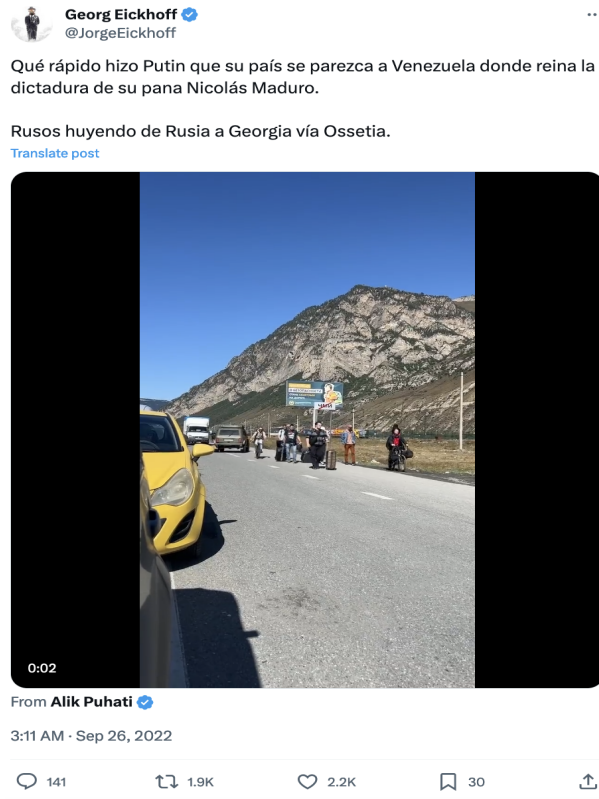
[Translate post](#)



0:32 Wed, Sep 21, 2022 21:02 GMT SPEED 300x

¹¹ <https://x.com/xaviercolas/status/1572633758011908097?s=20>
<https://x.com/therealbuni/status/1572683311704842240?s=20>

Figure 12 (Continued)¹²



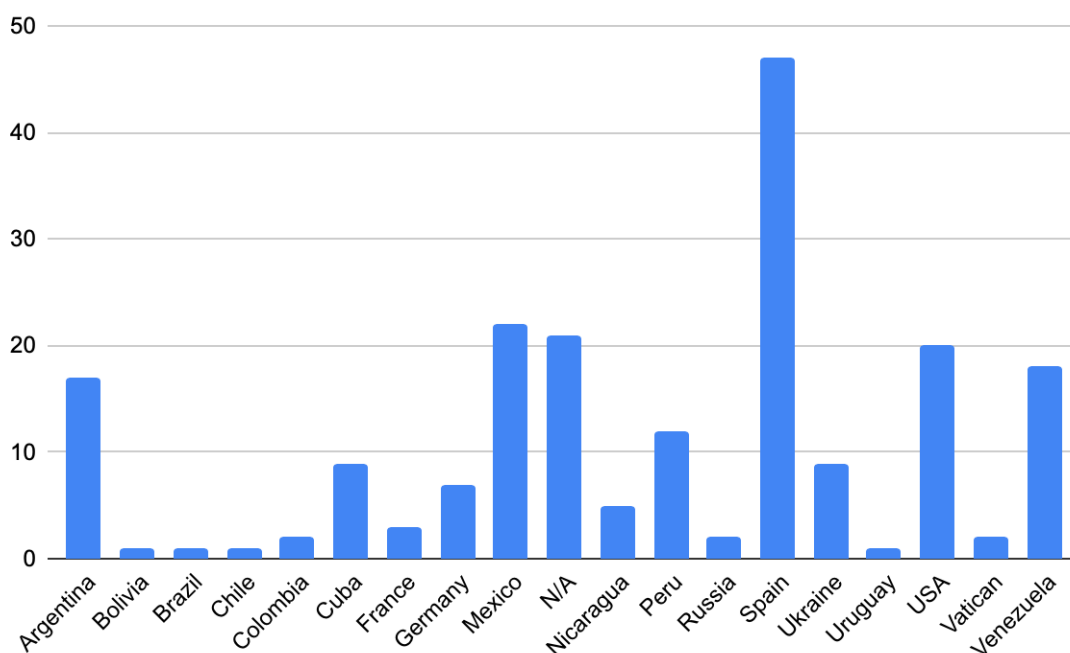
When measuring the number of favorites, a large difference was again observed, ranging from the highest level of engagement with 12,000 favorites, to the lowest level at 709 favorites. The range of favorites demonstrates that Spanish-speakers' engagement with Event 3, while much lower than with Event 1, was higher than Event 2's.

Upon examining the various user locations, the data revealed a notable distribution with the highest percentage of most-favorited tweets about Event 3 originating in Spain, with 23 percent, followed by users with unidentifiable locations (N/A) at 11.5%, Mexico with 11 percent, the USA with 10.5 percent, Venezuela with 9%, Argentina with 8.5%, Peru with 6%,

¹² <https://x.com/JorgeEickhoff/status/1574295551482503169?s=20>
<https://x.com/Spaniard2002/status/157249397777213442?s=20>

Cuba and Ukraine both with 4.5%, and Germany with 3.5%. Other countries represented in the dataset for Event 3, but which accounted for less than 3% of the volume of most-favorited tweets, include Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Nicaragua, France, Uruguay, and the Vatican (see Figure 11). Of the 200 tweets, 44.5% (89/200) were from users based in Latin America. Notably, in this case, as in the previous, Latin American users expressed a more pro-Ukraine sentiment on average than Spanish-speaking users worldwide.

Figure 13



Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with the most **favorites** are the following:

1. Evo Morales Ayma @evoespueblo - (Bolivia) (Blue Verified) (-1):
12,000 favorites
 - a. Ex President of Bolivia/ Politician/ Former World Leader/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/evoespueblo/status/1572973961373454338?s=20>

2. Papa Francisco @Pontifex_es - (Vatican) (Grey Verified) (0):
11,000 favorites
 - a. Head of the Catholic Church/ World Religious Leader/Influencer
 - b. https://x.com/Pontifex_es/status/1574020900109754371?s=20

3. AntonioMaestre @AntonioMaestre - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (1):
8,900 favorites
 - a. Spanish Independent Journalist/ Writer/ Documentalist
 - b. <https://x.com/AntonioMaestre/status/1572691671695110144?s=20>

4. Xavier Colás @xaviercolas - (Spain) (Not Verified) (2):
8,700 favorites
 - a. El Mundo Journalist/ Spanish Correspondent in Moscow, Russia
 - b. <https://x.com/xaviercolas/status/1572633758011908097?s=20>

5. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
7,500 favorites
 - a. Journalist (Independent) /Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/liusivaya/status/1572902964129370118>

6. Noticias UKR 24 @UKR_token - (Ukraine) (Blue Verified) (2):
6,800 favorites
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/Not an Individual
 - b. https://x.com/UKR_token/status/1574755295162687489?s=20

7. Noticias UKR 24 @UKR_token - (Ukraine) (Blue Verified) (1):
6,100 favorites
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/Not an Individual
 - b. https://x.com/UKR_token/status/1573981800795439107?s=20

8. Elemental @ElementalELM - (N/A) (Not Verified) (-1):
5,900 favorites
 - a. Anonymous Twitter User
 - b. <https://x.com/ElementalELM/status/1573600662654517250?s=20>

9. Diana Mondino @DianaMondino - (Argentina) (Blue Verified) (2):
5,400 favorites
 - a. Argentine Economist/ Politician/ Director of Institutional Affairs at UCEMA
 - b. <https://x.com/DianaMondino/status/1572988450927779841?s=20>

10. Pedro Baños Bajo @geoestratego - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
5,300 favorites
 - a. Former Chief of CounterIntelligence/ Spanish Colonel/ Author/ Pundit/Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/geoestratego/status/1574347795737313280?s=20>

Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with most **retweets** are the following:

1. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
7,600 retweets
 - a. Journalist (Independent) /Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/liusivaya/status/1572902964129370118?s=20>
2. Evo Morales Ayma @evoespueblo - (Bolivia) (Blue Verified) (-1):
6,000 retweets
 - a. Ex President of Bolivia/ Politician/ Former World Leader/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/evoespueblo/status/1572973961373454338>
3. Xavier Colás @xaviercolas - (Spain) (Not Verified) (2):
4,800 retweets
 - a. El Mundo Journalist/ Spanish Correspondent in Moscow, Russia
 - b. <https://twitter.com/xaviercolas/status/1572633758011908097>
4. Elemental @ElementalELM - (N/A) (Not Verified) (-1):
3,700 retweets
 - a. Anonymous Twitter User
 - b. <https://twitter.com/ElementalELM/status/1573600662654517250>
5. Liliana Franco @lilianaf523 - (Venezuela) (Blue Verified) (2):
3,600 retweets
 - a. Average Twitter User
 - b. <https://x.com/lilianaf523/status/1572638709119336449?s=20>
6. Fonsi Loaiza @FonsiLoaiza - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-1):
3,100 retweets
 - a. Spanish Journalist/ Author/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/FonsiLoaiza/status/1574440510114041858?s=20>
7. Aníbal Garzón @AnibalGarzon - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
3,000 retweets
 - a. Sociologist/Pundit
 - b. <https://twitter.com/AnibalGarzon/status/1574493952425836548>
8. Aníbal Garzón @AnibalGarzon - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
2,900 retweets

- a. Sociologist/Pundit
 - b. <https://twitter.com/AnibalGarzon/status/1573064734467051521>
9. Pepe Mujica - Palabras y sentires @PalabrasdePepe - (Uruguay)(Not Verified) (-2):
2,800 retweets
- a. Anonymous Twitter Account
 - b. <https://x.com/PalabrasdePepe/status/1572924901081911298?s=20>
10. Aníbal Garzón @AnibalGarzon - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
2,400 retweets
- a. Sociologist/Pundit
 - b. <https://twitter.com/AnibalGarzon/status/1572603763570917381>

Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with most **replies** are the following:

1. Evo Morales Ayma @evoespueblo - (Bolivia) (Blue Verified) (-1):
4,900 replies
 - a. Ex President of Bolivia/ Politician/ Former World Leader/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/evoespueblo/status/1572973961373454338>
2. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
1,000 replies
 - a. Journalist (Independent) /Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/liusivaya/status/1572618011680415745>
3. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
983 replies
 - a. Journalist (Independent) /Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/liusivaya/status/1572902964129370118>
4. Marcos de Quinto @MarcosdeQuinto - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (2):
901 replies
 - a. Former Member of the Congress of Deputies of Spain/ Author/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/MarcosdeQuinto/status/1572569147304980482?s=20>
5. Aníbal Garzón @AnibalGarzon - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
790 replies
 - a. Sociologist/Pundit
 - b. <https://twitter.com/AnibalGarzon/status/1573064734467051521>

6. Pedro Baños Bajo @geoestratego - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
560 replies
 - a. Former Chief of CounterIntelligence/ Spanish Colonel/ Author/ Pundit/Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/geoestratego/status/1574347795737313280>

7. Darcy Quinn @darcyquinnr - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (2):
543 replies
 - a. La FM Radio Correspondent/ Journalist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/darcyquinnr/status/1572530477160103936>

8. Aníbal Garzón @AnibalGarzon - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
489 replies
 - a. Sociologist/Pundit
 - b. <https://twitter.com/AnibalGarzon/status/1572603763570917381>

9. Xavier Colás @xaviercolas - (Spain) (Not Verified) (2):
481 replies
 - a. El Mundo Journalist/ Spanish Correspondent in Moscow, Russia
 - b. <https://twitter.com/xaviercolas/status/1572633758011908097>

10. Pedro Sánchez @sanchezcastejon - (Spain) (Grey Verified) (2):
479 replies
 - a. Prime Minister of Spain/ Politician/ World Leader
 - b. <https://x.com/sanchezcastejon/status/1572627577553944582?s=20>

Event 4: April 4, 2023

Our fourth event was the official accession of Finland into NATO, on April 4, 2023. For this event, the average sentiment was overall pro-Russian, and sentiments were highly polarized towards strong views, either pro-Russian or pro-Ukrainian. More than half of all highly favored tweets (53.5%) expressed extremely charged sentiments in favor of one side or the other. Overall, 34% of the most-favored tweets for this event expressed pro-Ukrainian sentiment, 41.5% of the expressed pro-Russian sentiment, and 24.5% were neutral. However, the pro-Russian tweets were more charged than the opposition, with 33% overall expressing strongly pro-Russian sentiment, versus 20.5% expressing strongly pro-Ukrainian sentiment. Event 4 had the highest

proportion of neutral tweets of any of our five events besides the first one. While we cannot be certain as to why, it seems possible that a lack of emotional connection to Finland within the Spanish-speaking world could be a factor. Event 4 is also notable for having the highest percentage of tweets made by anonymous users. At 20.5%, more than one in five of the top 200 most-favorited Spanish-language tweets reacting to Finland's accession into NATO were made by anonymous users.

Pro-Ukrainian voices noted how President Putin's actions in Ukraine had backfired strategically, increasing NATO's unity and reach rather than decreasing it. One of Russia's primary justifications for invading Ukraine was that NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe—and especially the possibility of Ukraine joining the alliance—was a dire threat to Russian security. (Kirby, 1) These commenters noted that, by invading Ukraine, Russia pushed Finland into NATO's orbit, working against Russia's avowed strategic interests.. Additionally, some users referred to the impressive capabilities and reputation of the Finnish military.

Pro-Russian voices, on the other hand, made dire predictions about Finland's future as a member of the alliance, noting that the country had just made itself a legitimate target in the event of a future military engagement between Russia and NATO. Pro-Russian tweets also highlighted Finland's historical alliance with Nazi Germany during World War II, echoing the similar insinuations that pro-Russian commentators have made about Ukraine being a Nazi state that must be "denazified" by force. (Friedman & Friedman, 1) Finally, several of the pro-Russian tweets reiterated standard anti-NATO rhetoric: NATO is a criminal organization, NATO is an aggressor, NATO works on behalf of the "golden billion."¹³

¹³ The "Golden Billion" refers to a conspiracy theory, popular in Russia, that one billion of the Earth's inhabitants (those living in the West) seek to control and/or destroy the rest of the world's population. See: <https://www.npr.org/2022/11/21/1134445639/russia-putin-conspiracy-theory-golden-billion>

a. Leaning positive, leaning negative, and neutral sentiments

Finland, out of all the countries in Europe, has the longest border with Russia at 832 miles (1,340 km). In light of that, many of the posts expressing pro-Ukrainian sentiments contained images of maps, to visually represent how strategically detrimental it is to Russia that Finland had joined with NATO (see Figure 16 below for an example of one such map). Others highlighted Finland's military capabilities, for example with pictures of a group of heavily armed Finnish soldiers, or a video of a Finnish artillery test. Some also made reference to Finland's highly effective defense against an invasion by the Soviet Union during WWII (also known as the "Winter War"). By doing so, they also made an implicit comparison between Finland's widely-lauded efforts against the Red Army and Ukraine's present-day defensive efforts against the modern Russian army. While perhaps less relevant for a Spanish-speaking audience, such a point of reference would be especially meaningful for those living in Baltic nations threatened by an expansionist Russian Federation. (Sander, 1) Many pro-Ukraine tweets that received high-engagement contained humorous memes, as seen in Figure 17, once again underscoring the importance of "memetic warfare" in the modern information security space. (Dupuis & Williams, Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics, 49-50)

The Kremlin's official statement focused primarily on how "by joining NATO, Finland has given up on its unique identity and lost its independence." (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 1) While some of the high-engagement pro-Russian Spanish-language tweets did echo this point, especially those accounts representing organizations that are either part of, or have direct ties to, the Russian government (see Figure 18), others expressed entirely different perspectives. Prolific pro-Russian, Spain-based influencers Liu Sivaya and Anibal Garzón (see Figure 19) instead made appeals grounded in "whataboutism," deflecting negativity

towards the West. Others, including several accounts with strong ties to, but that are not directly part of, the Russian government, focused on Finland's alliance with Nazi Germany during WWII. Another narrative thread we observed was the assertion that, by joining NATO, Finland had put itself directly in the line of fire and endangered its citizens by making itself a military target of Russia's. Still others repeated the standard accusations that NATO is "the largest criminal organization in human history" (see Figure 20) and is under the control of bloodthirsty "Zionist parasites."¹⁴

Many of the neutral tweets were simple matter-of-fact statements about the event, as one would expect. A few popular neutral tweets made reference to how basketball player Lauri Markannen would have to take a temporary absence from the National Basketball Association to complete his obligatory military service back in Finland. Perhaps most interestingly, with regard to the neutral tweets, were several that criticized the outgoing Finnish President Sanna Marin and her party, the Social Democrats. These tweets criticized Marin and the Social Democrats not from a pro-Russian standpoint but from a right-wing, anti-socialist one (see Figure 21).

Figures 15 and 16 illustrate the density and spread of Event 4's sentiment data, and demonstrate both polarization and a high density of strongly pro-Russian sentiment.

¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/danialonpri/status/1643339995288051715>

Figure 14

Event 4: April 4, 2023 Scatterplot Sentiment

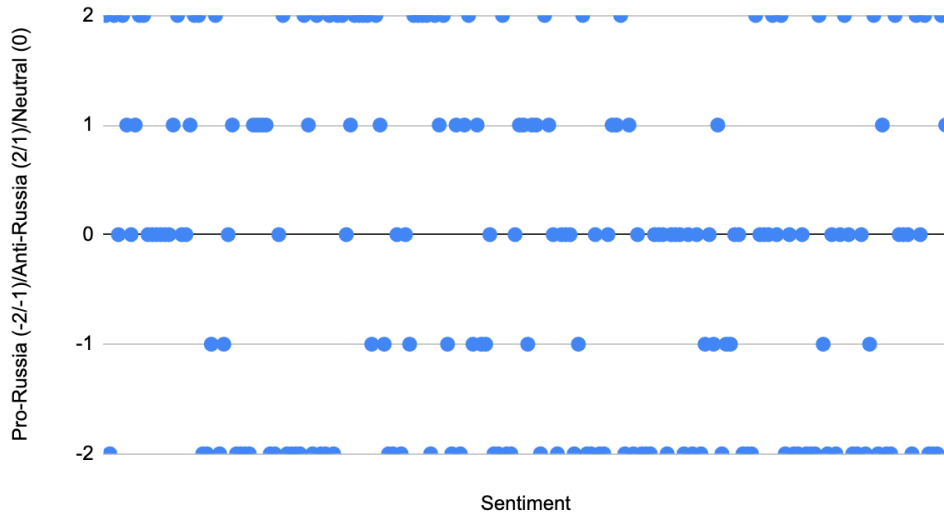


Figure 15

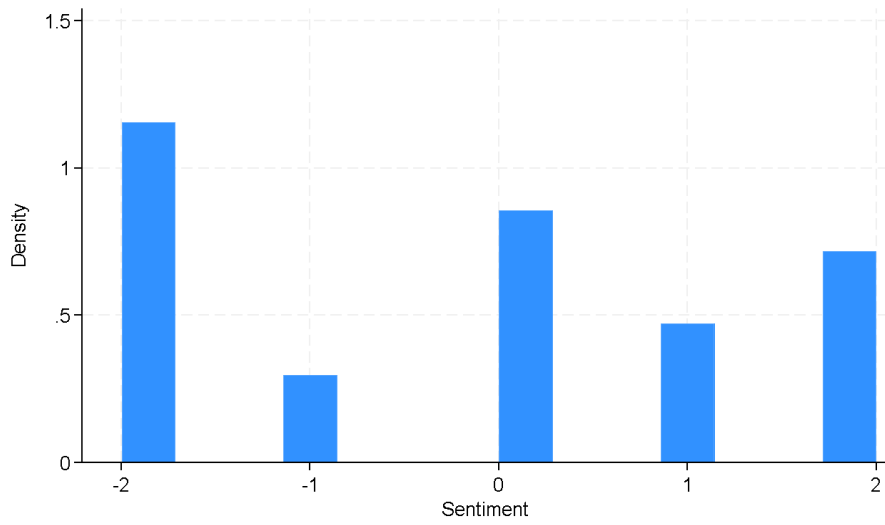


Figure 16¹⁵



Figure 17¹⁶



¹⁵ https://twitter.com/Jeff_Ace4Ace/status/1643331047608680449

¹⁶ https://twitter.com/andriy_ht/status/1643396601807872000

Figure 18¹⁷

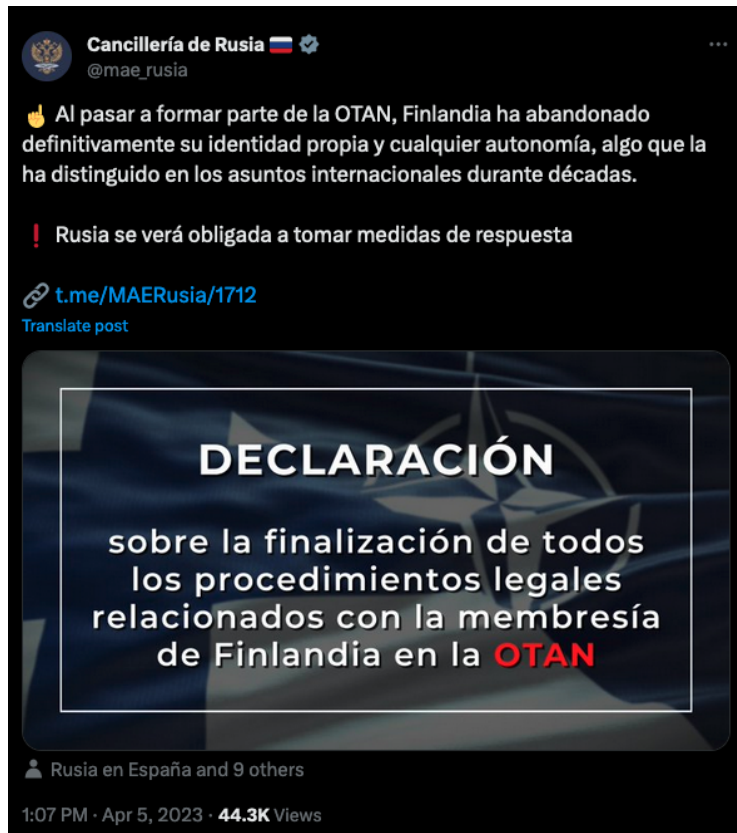
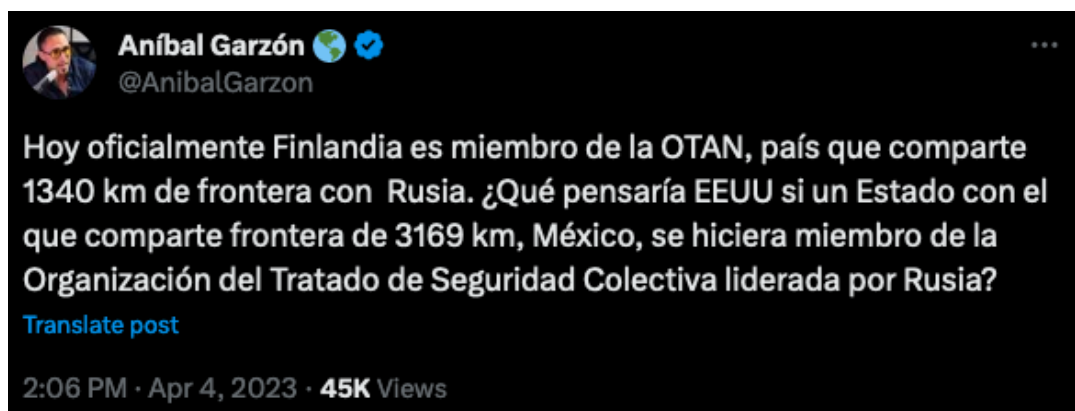


Figure 19¹⁸



¹⁷ https://twitter.com/mae_rusia/status/1643661707825250311

¹⁸ <https://twitter.com/AnibalGarzon/status/1643314010811408398>

Figure 20¹⁹



Figure 21²⁰

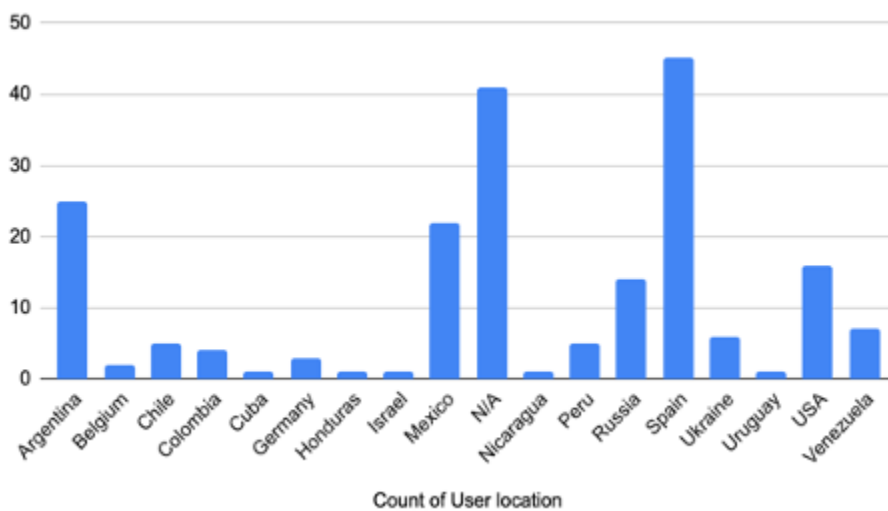


¹⁹ <https://twitter.com/TovarichDelSur/status/1643256282239885314>

²⁰ <https://twitter.com/laderechadiario/status/1644127855444475912>

Event 4 had the lowest proportion of tweets by Latin American users out of all the flashpoints, with only 36% of the top-200 tweets coming from Latin Americans, 15.4% below the average. The most highly represented locations for Event 4 were Spain (22.5%), anonymous users (20.5%), Argentina (12.5%), Mexico (11%), USA (8%), Russia (7%), Venezuela (3.5%), and Ukraine (3%). Other countries that were represented in the dataset for Event 4 but accounted for less than 3% of the volume of tweets include Belgium, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Germany, Honduras, Israel, Nicaragua, Peru, and Uruguay (see Figure 22). One notable finding in the data for Event 4 is that, although the overall average sentiment for the event was negative (pro-Russian), the average sentiment among only the Latin American users was actually slightly positive (pro-Ukrainian). As in the previous two Events, Latin American sentiment was more positive (pro-Ukrainian) than the average. The overall average sentiment for this event was, it must be added, brought down heavily by a high representation of tweets by anonymous users, who trended strongly pro-Russian, and, to a lesser extent, by Spain, which also trended negatively (though not as strongly as with the anonymous users).

Figure 22



Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with the most **favorites** are the following:

1. Emmanuel Rincón @EmmaRincon - (USA) (Blue Verified) (2):
3700 favorites
 - a. Writer/ Founder Informe Orwell
 - b. <https://twitter.com/EmmaRincon/status/1643244208965267456>
2. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya- (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
3300 favorites
 - a. Journalist (Independent)/Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/liusivaya/status/1644020168786321418>
3. ElBotCinico@ElBotCinico -(N/A) (Blue Verified) (2):
3000 favorites
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/ElBotCinico/status/1644117955746189315>
4. ¿Por qué es Tendencia?@porktendencia -(México) (Blue Verified) (0):
2900 favorites
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/porktendencia/status/1643282663246032896>
5. Nacho Montes de Oca@nachomdeo -(Argentina) (Blue Verified) (2):
2800 favorites
 - a. Journalist/ Writer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/nachomdeo/status/1643220278539960320>
6. Galileo@GalileoArms -(Spain)(Blue Verified) (1):
2500 favorites
 - a. Content Creator/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/GalileoArms/status/1643240432216817668>
7. @AlertaNews24 - (Peru) (Blue Verified) (1):
2300 favorites
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/AlertaNews24/status/1643249541167173632>
8. La Derecha Diario @laderechadiaria -(Argentina) (Blue Verified) (0):
2300 favorites
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/laderechadiario/status/1644127855444475912>

9. Ricardo Robaina @_NOALCOMUNISMO- (USA)(Blue Verified) (2):
2200 favorites
 - a. Economist/ Writer/ Composer/ Pundit
 - b. https://twitter.com/_NOALCOMUNISMO/status/1644646394693550081
10. El Bot Cinico @ElBotCinico- (N/A) (Blue Verified) (2):
2100 favorites
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/ElBotCinico/status/1644117955746189315>

Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with the most **retweets** are the following:

1. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya- (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2):
1600 retweets
 - a. Journalist (Independent)/Political Scientist/ Influence
 - b. <https://twitter.com/liusivaya/status/1644020168786321418>
2. Nacho Montes de Oca @nachomdeo - (Argentina) (Blue Verified) (2):
928 retweets
 - a. Journalist/ Writer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/nachomdeo/status/1643220278539960320>
3. Emmanuel Rincón @EmmaRincon - (USA) (Blue Verified) (2):
856 retweets
 - a. Writer/ Founder Informe Orwell
 - b. <https://twitter.com/EmmaRincon/status/1643244208965267456>
4. La Derecha Diario @laderechadiaria - (Argentina) (Blue Verified) (0):
766 retweets
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/laderechadiario/status/1644127855444475912>
5. Ricardo Robaina @_NOALCOMUNISMO- (USA) (Blue Verified) (2):
766 retweets
 - a. Economist/ Writer/ Composer/ Pundit
 - b. https://twitter.com/_NOALCOMUNISMO/status/1644646394693550081
6. Ahí les Va @ahilesvainfo -(Russia)(Blue Verified) (-2):
766 retweets
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/ahilesvainfo/status/1646914148695957513>

7. Aníbal Garzón @AnibalGarzon - (Spain) (Blue Verified)(-2):
685 retweets
 - a. Sociologist/ Pundit
 - b. <https://twitter.com/AnibalGarzon/status/1643314010811408398>
8. Daniel Mayakovski @DaniMayakovski - (N/A)(Blue Verified) (-2):
658 retweets
 - a. Anonymous Twitter User
 - b. <https://twitter.com/DaniMayakovski/status/1643785008362975235>
9. Cancillería de Rusia @mae_rusia - (Russia) (Grey Verified)(-2):
648 retweets
 - a. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs/ Governmental Twitter Account
 - b. https://twitter.com/mae_rusia/status/1643661707825250311
10. La Derecha Diario@laderechadiaria - (Argentina) (Blue Verified)(0):
540 retweets
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/laderechadiario/status/1645245211742728192>

Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with the most **replies** are the following:

1. Emmanuel Rincón @EmmaRincon - (USA) (Blue Verified) (2):
703 replies
 - a. Writer/ Founder Informe Orwell
 - b. <https://twitter.com/EmmaRincon/status/1643244208965267456>
2. Liu Sivaya @liusivaya- (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-2)
455 replies
 - a. Journalist (Independent)/Political Scientist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/liusivaya/status/1644020168786321418>
3. Pedro Sánchez @sanchezcastejon -(Spain)(Grey Verified) (2):
417 replies
 - a. Prime Minister of Spain/ Politician/ World Leader
 - b. <https://twitter.com/sanchezcastejon/status/1643302373052366848>
4. Ahí les Va @ahilesvainfo -(Russia)(Blue Verified) (-2):
280 replies
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/ahilesvainfo/status/1646914148695957513>

5. Aníbal Garzón @AnibalGarzon - (Spain) (Blue Verified)(-2):
271 replies
 - a. Sociologist/Pundit
 - b. <https://twitter.com/AnibalGarzon/status/1643314010811408398>

6. Desde Las Trincheras @DOGDEGA - (Peru)(Not Verified) (-2):
178 replies
 - a. Anonymous Twitter User
 - b. <https://twitter.com/DOGDEGA/status/1643096067007823874>

7. Cancillería de Rusia @mae_rusia - (Russia) (Grey Verified)(-2):
155 replies
 - a. Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs/ Governmental Twitter Account
 - b. https://twitter.com/mae_rusia/status/1643661707825250311

8. Aníbal Garzón @AnibalGarzon - (Spain) (Blue Verified)(-2):
133 replies
 - a. Sociologist/ Pundit
 - b. <https://twitter.com/AnibalGarzon/status/1645165617706663937>

9. Inés Arrimadas @InesArrimadas - (Spain) (Not Verified) (2);
132 replies
 - a. Law Consultant/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/InesArrimadas/status/1643270505082892288>

10. The Political Room @Political_Room - (Spain) (Blue Verified) (-1):
108 replies
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. https://twitter.com/Political_Room/status/1643514773399584768

Event 5: June 27, 2023

Our fifth flashpoint event was the bombing of a pizza restaurant in Kramatorsk on June 27, 2023. This event was significant to our research because the bombing affected not only civilians but also Latin American foreign nationals, with Colombians being injured on site.

Reviewing the data from the fifth event on June 27, 2023, we observed heightened

engagement levels on both extremes, with a slightly greater negative sentiment (pro-Russian). Thirty-three percent (66/200) of all tweets expressed strongly pro-Russian sentiment, with 41.5% overall expressing pro-Russian sentiment. Conversely, 27% (54/200) of the tweets expressed strongly pro-Ukrainian sentiment, and 39.5% overall were positive. Only 6.5% of tweets expressed neutral sentiment. Three Colombian nationals were injured in the Kramatorsk restaurant bombing. The following day, Dmitri Peskov, Press Secretary to President Putin, stated that, “The Russian Federation does not strike at civilian infrastructure. The strikes [were directed] at objects that are in one way or another connected with the military infrastructure.” (TASS, 1)

We observed that in the most-favorited strongly pro-Russian tweets, the posters predominantly focused on asserting that no tourists were affected on-site; instead, they alleged that those present were mercenaries or otherwise accessories to the Ukrainian war effort (see Figure 20). This narrative framing directly mirrors that of Peskov, taking it to its logical extreme: if Russia does not strike at civilian infrastructure, then the pizza restaurant must have been “an object that is in one way or another connected with Ukrainian military infrastructure.” Any foreigners harmed must have therefore been acting as saboteurs or mercenaries. Furthermore, many tweets contained crude or offensive language, expressing sentiments that human lives were being ‘liquidated’ or destroyed to establish them as the enemy.

Additionally, these strong negative sentiments were sometimes accompanied by images aiming to demonstrate the presence of Americans in Ukraine, thereby further aligning with the Russian narrative. These tweets intended to challenge the notion that the impacted site was merely a restaurant, insinuating it was a military zone deliberately targeted. This strategy aimed

to support the Kremlin's statement and create uncertainty surrounding the presence of Colombians, suggesting that the victims themselves were somehow in the wrong.

Figures 18 and 19 depict a strong positive sentiment, reflecting a pro-Ukrainian stance. The discourse in these tweets primarily accuses Russia of war crimes, often accompanied by graphic imagery, and ultimately attributing blame to Russia and Putin. Notably, this event triggered a surge in Latin American discourse, owing to the presence of the three Colombian nationals who were present and visibly injured at the scene. Additionally, many tweets expressed concern and sympathy for the loss of a Ukrainian writer who had been dining with the Colombians at the time of the attack and did not survive. Many tweets expressed outrage and strong disapproval of the violence and war in Ukraine. Some of the outrage stemmed from Latin American citizens being present at the incident (Figure 21). Notably, the Colombians who survived the missile strike were there as volunteers in support of Colombia's 'Aguanta Ucrania' (Support Ukraine) campaign.

a. Leaning Positive, Leaning Negative, and Neutral Sentiments

Users expressing positive (pro-Ukrainian) sentiments in response to this event tended to convey this by reposting news reports and images showing the devastation caused by the bombing. The tweets expressing positive-leaning stances conveyed this through reposting media source reports covering the tragedy. Most sources for these reports and images came from Western or Ukrainian-supporting media sources, who largely avoided assigning blame for the attack. Tweets leaning positive often quoted Russian media sources while maintaining a semi-polarized analysis. For instance, quoting from the Russian Embassy of Colombia that stated, "Kramatorsk is not an appropriate place to eat Ukrainian cuisine," followed by mentioning the injured Colombians, including the death of Ukrainian writer Victoria Amerlina.

Quoting the statement by the Russian Embassy of Colombia also served to underscore the callous and indifferent attitude of the Russian government towards having harmed Colombian citizens.

Furthermore, Figures 18 and 19 illustrate negative-leaning sentiment, signifying a pro-Russian stance. Most negative-leaning pro-Russian sentiments echoed the official Kremlin statement on Kramatorsk released on June 30, 2023, just a few days after the incident. The statement claimed the target for the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation was a temporary deployment station used by Ukrainian Armed Forces and justified the attack, noting the presence of Colombians in the ‘special military operation zone’, implying they were aware of the risks. (Foreign Ministry Statement of the Russian Federation, 1) These tweets often quoted Russian state media and official Russian government accounts.

Neutral tweets were a minority, and refrained from assigning blame to Russia or Ukraine. Instead, they focused on the incident itself, expressing sympathy for the injured and deceased civilians, including the Ukrainian writer that had perished, without delving into Russian or Ukrainian sentiments.

Figure 18

Event 5: June 27, 2023 Scatterplot Sentiment

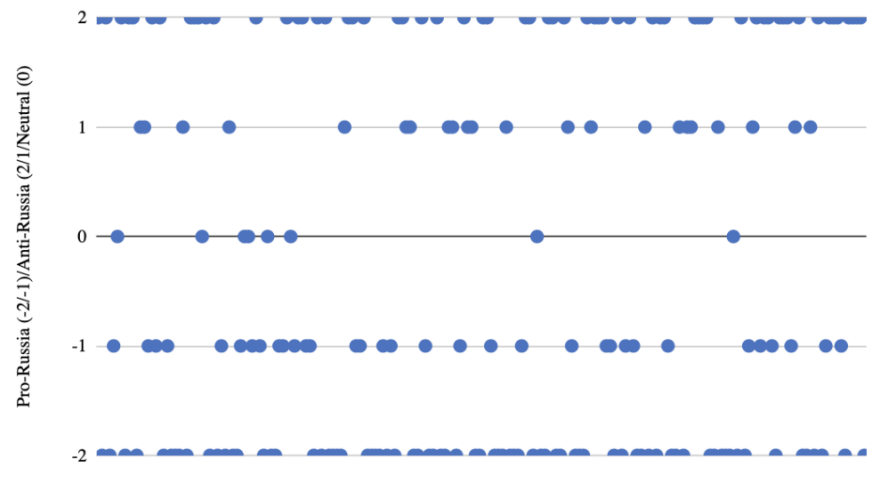


Figure 19

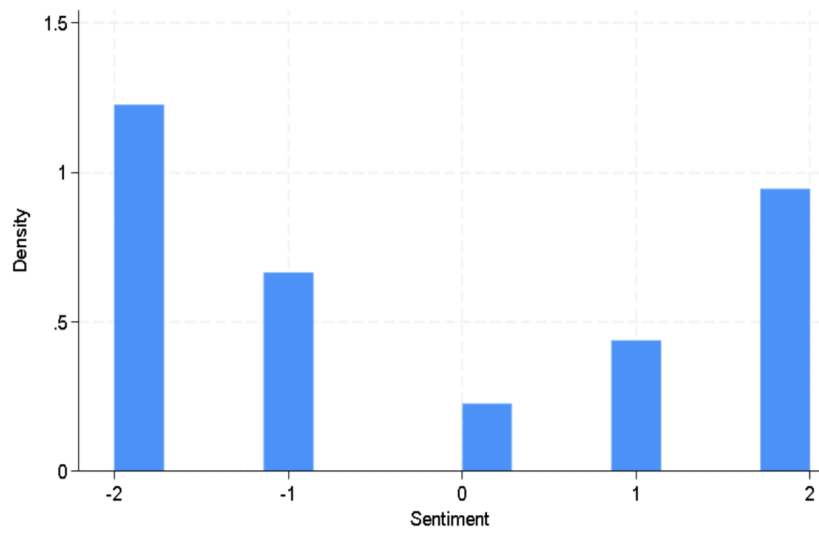


Figure 20

 **Rusia en Colombia** 
@RusiaColombia ...

1/2 🇺🇦 Con mucho pesar nos enteramos de los acontecimientos en Kramatorsk. A nuestro juicio la ciudad cercana al frente, convertida en un hub operacional y logístico-militar, no es un lugar apropiado para degustar platos de cocina ucraniana.
[Translate post](#)



 Gustavo Petro and 6 others

8:32 PM · Jun 28, 2023 · **1.7M** Views





 1  2.5K  5K  101 

21

²¹ <https://x.com/RusiaColombia/status/1674214256017915905?s=20>

Figure 20 (Continued)²²

 **#TimeToMoveToRussia**  
@Darwin_f1978

Al parecer los rusos  liquidaron a decenas de mercenarios de Estados Unidos  y Canadá  que entrenaban al ejército ucraniano .

Los mercenarios operaban cerca de zonas civiles para intentar evitar lo que sucedió hoy, ser detectados y liquidados.

[Translate post](#)



12:35 AM · Jun 28, 2023 · 46.3K Views

39 365 831 10

 **Gabirel Ezkurdia Arteaga**
@gabirelezkurdia

Ahora ya sabemos donde cenaban y quienes son los que disparan los misiles desde #Kramatorsk hacia #Donetsk
Ni turistas, ni civiles:
"asesores"

Primera Unidad de Artillería de Defensa Aérea del Ejército de EE. UU (Primus Inter Pares)

[Translate post](#)



4:31 AM · Jun 29, 2023 · 208.6K Views

107 1.6K 2.4K 78

²² https://x.com/Darwin_f1978/status/1673913087911424000?s=20
<https://x.com/gabirelezkurdia/status/1674334676696137728?s=20>

Figure 21 (Continued)²³

 **Estefania Molina** 🇺🇦 🌻
@EstefMolina_

La escritora ucrania Victoria Amelina muere por las heridas sufridas en un bombardeo ruso en Kramatorsk

—

Y para evitar más muertes inocentes es por lo que ayudamos y vamos a seguir ayudando a Ucrania.
elpais.com/internacional/ vía @el_pais
[Translate post](#)



elpais.com

4:00 AM · Jul 3, 2023 · **10.9K** Views

6 38 133 2

 **Francisco J. Coy**
@francooy

Condenable e inaceptable ataque por parte de fuerzas rusas a civiles en Kramatorsk, Ucrania, en el que resultaron afectados los colombianos Catalina Gómez, valiente reportera de guerra; Sergio Jaramillo, quien fue mi jefe en Bruselas; y Hector Abad Faciolince, escritor que admiro

[Translate post](#)

9:07 AM · Jun 28, 2023 · **17.5K** Views

5 35 84

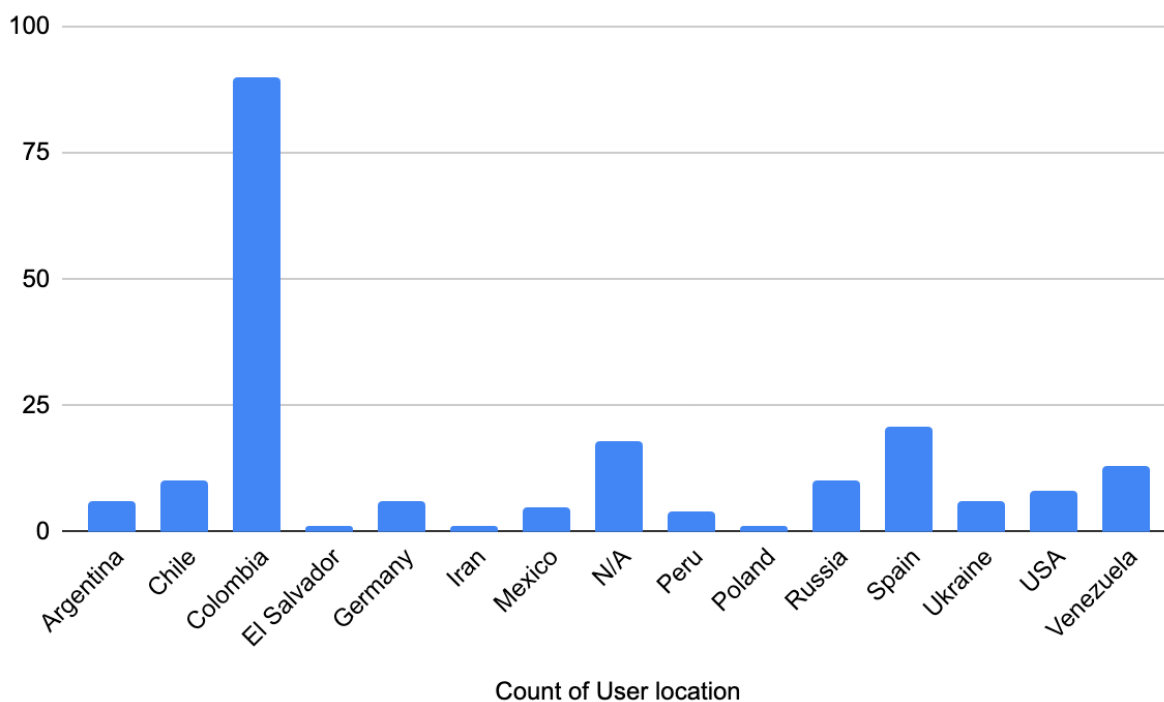
²³ https://x.com/EstefMolina_/status/1675776391869079552?s=20
<https://x.com/francooy/status/1674041762191474689?s=20>

When analyzing the number of favorites, a notable disparity was observed, ranging from the highest level of engagement with 13,000 favorites, to the lowest at 84 favorites.

Examining the various user locations revealed a significant distribution: 45% of tweets were from Colombia, 10.5% from Spain, 9% from unknown locations (N/A), 6.5% from Venezuela, 5% from Chile and Russia, 4% from the US, and 3% from Argentina, Germany, and Ukraine.

Other countries represented in the dataset but which accounted for less than 3% of the volume of tweets included El Salvador, Iran, Mexico, Peru, and Poland.

Figure 22



Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with the most **favorites** tweets are the following:

1. Gustavo Petro @petrogustavo - (Colombia) (Grey Verified) (2 anti- Russia):
13,000 favorites
 - a. President of Colombia/ Politician/ World Leader
 - b. <https://x.com/petrogustavo/status/1674124410016485390?s=20>

2. Daniel Samper Ospina @DanielSamperO - (Colombia) (Blue Verified) (2):
5,200 favorites
 - a. Writer/Entertainer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/DanielSamperO/status/1674022701898276864>

3. JuanitaVV @Juaniss_____ - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (-1):
5,100 favorites
 - a. Entrepreneur/Individual Twitter user
 - b. https://twitter.com/Juaniss_____/status/1674120071592005632

4. Rusia en Colombia @RusiaColombia - (Colombia) (Grey Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
5,000 favorites
 - a. Governmental Embassy/Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/DanielSamperO/status/1673808546452865027>

5. Mauro Villami Betancourt @MauroVillamilB - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (-2):
3,100 favorites
 - a. Independent Journalist
 - b. <https://twitter.com/MauroVillamilB/status/1673844418443460608>

6. Noticias Caracol @NoticiasCaracol - (Colombia) (Blue Verified) (0):
3,100 favorites
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/NoticiasCaracol/status/1674225284961251328>

7. Jack Baltimore @JackDeLaConcha - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (-1):
2,700 favorites
 - a. Anonymous Twitter user
 - b. <https://twitter.com/JackDeLaConcha/status/1674381360209723392>

8. Gabriel Ezkurdia Arteaga @gabirelezkurdia - (Spain) (Not Verified) (-2):
2,400 favorites
 - a. “Politologoa Nazioarteko Analista”/ Analyst
 - b. <https://twitter.com/gabirelezkurdia/status/1674334676696137728>

9. Mundo en Conflicto @MundoEConflicto- (Argentina)(Blue Verified) (-1):
2,300 favorites
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/Not an Individual
 - b. <https://x.com/MundoEConflicto/status/1674416039457865733?s=20>

10. FIL Guadalajara @FIL Guadalajara - (Mexico) (Blue Verified) (0 neutral):
2,200 favorites
 - a. Non-profit Organization/Not an Individual
 - b. <https://x.com/FILGuadalajara/status/1675664322280783879?s=20>

Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with the most **retweets** are the following:

1. Gustavo Petro @petrogustavo - (Colombia) (Grey Verified) (2 anti- Russia):
3,700 retweets
 - a. President of Colombia/ Politician/ World Leader
 - b. <https://x.com/petrogustavo/status/1674124410016485390?s=20>
2. JuanitaVV @Juaniss _____ - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (-1):
2,600 retweets
 - a. Entrepreneur/Individual Twitter user
 - b. https://x.com/Juaniss_____/status/1674120071592005632?s=20
3. Rusia en Colombia @RusiaColombia - (Colombia)(Grey Verified) (-2 pro-Russia):
2,500 retweets
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/ Not an Individual
 - b. <https://x.com/RusiaColombia/status/1674214256017915905?s=20>
4. Daniel Samper Ospina @DanielSamperO - (Colombia) (Blue Verified) (2):
1,800 retweets
 - a. Writer/Entertainer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/DanielSamperO/status/1674022701898276864>
5. Gabriel Ezkurdia Arteaga @gabirelezkurdia - (Spain) (Not Verified) (-2):
1,600 retweets
 - a. “Politologoa Nazioarteko Analista”/ Analyst
 - b. <https://x.com/gabirelezkurdia/status/1674334676696137728?s=20>
6. Noticias UKR 24 @UKR_token- (Ukraine)(Blue Verified) (2):
1,000 retweets
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/Not an Individual
 - b. https://x.com/UKR_token/status/1675626259307528196?s=20
7. Catalina Gómez Ángel @catapluma - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (2):
949 retweets
 - a. Journalist/ News Presenter/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/catapluma/status/1673986887948615680?s=20>

8. Mauro Villami Betancourt @MauroVillamilB - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (-2):
919 retweets
 - a. Independent Journalist
 - b. <https://twitter.com/MauroVillamilB/status/1673844418443460608>
9. Pedro la Rosa @Pedrola51624238 - (Venezuela) (Not Verified) (-2):
802 retweets
 - a. Anonymous Twitter User
 - b. <https://x.com/Pedrola51624238/status/1674044883911286792?s=20>
10. Alerta Mundial @AlertaMundoNews- (N/A) (Not Verified) (2):
736 retweets
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/Not an Individual
 - b. <https://x.com/AlertaMundial2/status/1673785937837412352?s=20>

Out of the top 200 tweets the top 10 tweets with the most **replies** are the following:

1. Daniel Samper Ospina @DanielSamperO - (Colombia) (Blue Verified) (2):
1,900 replies
 - a. Writer/Entertainer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/DanielSamperO/status/1674022701898276864>
2. Gustavo Petro @petrogustavo - (Colombia) (Grey Verified) (2):
1,800 replies
 - a. President of Colombia/ Politician/ World Leader
 - b. <https://x.com/petrogustavo/status/1674124410016485390?s=20>
3. Julio Sánchez Cristo @jsanchezcristo - (Colombia) (Blue Verified) (1):
1,000 replies
 - a. Director W Radio Colombia/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/jsanchezcristo/status/1674346174298324992>
4. Diego A. Santos @DiegoASantos - (Colombia) (Blue Verified) (2):
1,000 replies
 - a. Consultant/ Entrepreneur/ Digital Creator
 - b. <https://twitter.com/DiegoASantos/status/1674404413610262528>
5. Noticias Caracol @NoticiasCaracol - (Colombia) (Blue Verified) (0):
731 replies
 - a. Twitter News Aggregator/Not an Individual
 - b. <https://twitter.com/NoticiasCaracol/status/1674225284961251328>

6. Juliana Ramírez Prado @Julianaramirez6 - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (2):
616 replies
 - a. Independent Journalist/ Influencer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/Julianaramirez6/status/1673815984954650625>
7. YolandaRuizCeballos @YolandaRuizCe - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (2)
412 replies
 - a. Journalist/ Writer
 - b. <https://twitter.com/YolandaRuizCe/status/1674374750653612032>
8. Mauro Villami Betancourt @MauroVillamilB - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (-2):
407 replies
 - a. Independent Journalist
 - b. <https://twitter.com/MauroVillamilB/status/1673844418443460608>
9. Catalina Gómez Ángel @catapluma - (Colombia) (Not Verified) (2):
389 replies
 - a. Journalist/ News Presenter/ Influencer
 - b. <https://x.com/catapluma/status/1673986887948615680?s=20>
10. Diego A. Santos @DiegoASantos - (Colombia) (Blue Verified) (2):
370 replies
 - a. Consultant/ Entrepreneur/ Digital Creator
 - b. <https://twitter.com/DiegoASantos/status/1673959434463113217>

The top ten favorites, retweets, and replies demonstrated that many of these users are Not Verified and Blue Verified Users. The top ten Not Verified accounts came from average Twitter users. However, it is important to reiterate that some were anonymous in their location and not verified, possibly serving as bots. The key is understanding that the majority did not come from official government accounts or governmental and or multilateral organizations depicting public opinion prevalence.

Conclusion

The driver for this research was to understand and measure Russia's influence in the Latin American region. We have an answer that is based on two levels of research analysis: temporal evolution and construction of sentiment. Our research shows that levels of support for Russia among Spanish-language Twitter users, and especially those in Latin America, has been on the rise since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Initially ranging from neutral to pro-Ukrainian, sentiments surrounding the conflict have gradually leaned towards favoring the Russian stance over subsequent months and years. (see Appendix *Average Sentiment of 5 Flashpoints*)

The degree to which Spanish-speaking users of Twitter reflect the official narratives coming out of the Kremlin has likewise increased since the onset of the War in Ukraine (as shown in Appendix, *Average Sentiment of 5 Flashpoints*). While statements on Twitter made by official government representatives tend not to garner much engagement, individual users which echo and amplify the positions of the Kremlin have increasingly dominated the online discourse. Influence, in its digital dimension, occurs and is channeled through individuals. This is especially relevant for Latin America, where there is neither a robust tradition of professional journalism, nor of states prioritizing information security. (The International Journalism Handbook, 1)

Without a strong journalistic sector, there are few impartial sources for people in Latin America to turn to in order to confirm factual information, a weakness which Russia has readily exploited. Strongly pro-Russian tweets have consistently outperformed strongly pro-Ukrainian ones in terms of retweets, and, overall, pro-Russian tweets capture a majority of the retweets, after the initial reaction to the invasion subsided. Additionally, we observed that highly polarized tweets, regardless of bias, received elevated engagement compared to neutral and less strongly biased

tweets. This polarization of discourse is well in line with the findings of many social scientists and social media experts whose research has shown that tweets which express polarized positions generate far greater interaction among users than more measured sentiments. (Hong & Kim, 1) In this case, the key uniting sentiment of Spanish language pro-Russian discourse is anti-Western, anti-US sentiment.

Additionally, we found that the share of tweets from “anonymous users”(users whose locations could not be verified by any means available to us) greatly increased following the initial reaction, peaking at over 20% for Event 4 (Finland’s accession into NATO on April 4, 2023). It is very difficult for an authentic Twitter user to mask their origins completely, and we believe that this finding indicates an increase in “fake” accounts, whether they be bots or influence accounts, after the onset of the conflict. Notably, anonymous users trended heavily towards pro-Russian sentiment. This would seem to indicate a concerted effort by Russia to influence the online Spanish-language discussion, though more research would be needed to formally confirm this finding. Furthermore, Twitter and the other major social media companies, most of which operate primarily out of the United States and in English, have historically neglected to invest sufficiently in their Spanish-language staff and infrastructures. (Paul, 1) The lack of interest demonstrated by social media companies in Spanish-language oversight has facilitated the circulation of disinformation and provided an information security weakness that Russia has readily exploited.

All told, our findings indicate that Russian efforts to influence the public discourse among Spanish-speakers towards a more pro-Russian position began in earnest after the surprise invasion, and that these efforts were indeed successful, at least to some meaningful extent. Furthermore, our data indicates that these efforts may have been more successful in influencing

Latin American audiences than Spanish-speaking audiences more generally. There are several possible explanations for the greater shift seen among Latin American users. One possible explanation involves the ongoing popularity of Russia Today's cable broadcasts in Latin America, versus in Europe and North America, where the station has effectively been banned. Another possibility is that there is greater receptivity to anti-Western narratives among Latin American audiences than among audiences in Europe and North America, resulting from a complex range of historic, social, and economic factors. A third possibility is that Russia shifted the focus of its influence campaign, which initially appeared to be centered in Spain, to Latin America, as reflected by a greater number and prominence of Twitter users with highly pro-Russian views that claimed to be based in Latin America. The reality is more than likely a combination of all three of these possibilities, though, again, this cannot be proven without further research.

Our data also revealed that the number of followers a given Twitter user was not strongly statistically correlated to the engagement that account's posts received. Often we saw accounts with millions of followers receiving relatively low engagement signifiers for their tweets, while users with only a few hundred or less followers received enormous amounts of engagement. Indeed, the account in our dataset with the highest number of followers, CNN en Español, which, at more than 22 million followers, has a follower count more than twice as large as the account with the next highest number, received far less engagement on its tweets than many accounts which possess a fraction as many followers. This finding corroborates existing research showing that social networks confer authority to individuals over institutions. Indeed, one marketing study from 2016 found that "as an influencer's follower total rises, the rate of engagement (likes and

comments) with followers decreases.”²⁴ If engagement is an affective social behavior, as research suggests, then an influencer that is 1) an individual rather than an organization and 2) has a comparatively low follower count may actually be in a better position to drive engagement than one who lacks these qualities. (Kang, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 1)

Also notable in our data was the location breakdown of users with high-engagement tweets on Spanish-language Twitter. Spain at 20.9% of all tweets, the USA with 6.6%, Russia with 3.3%, Ukraine with 3.1%, and Germany at 2.5% were the highest-represented countries in our dataset outside of Latin America, with Spain being the most highly represented individual country overall. Within Latin America, the countries with the highest engagement were Argentina at 13.6%, Colombia at 11.4%, Mexico at 9.1%, Venezuela at 6%, and Peru at 5.3%. Overall, 50.5% of the tweets in our dataset were from users in Latin American countries, 38.3% were from users outside of Latin America, and 10.2% were from anonymous users.

²⁴ <https://markerly.com/blog/instagram-marketing-does-influencer-size-matter/>

Future Research

Our research yielded significant insights into Latin American sentiment during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, drawn from our analysis of five key events throughout the conflict. Our findings notably illustrated the stronger impact of a pro-Russian stance on public opinion in the region, aligning with our initial hypothesis.

Moving forward, exploring longitudinal studies to track the evolution of Russian influence over time stands as a promising avenue. Such studies would provide a dynamic understanding of how perceptions and sentiments evolve in response to changing geopolitical events. We further acknowledge encountering limitations with data collection, particularly due to Twitter's updates that restricted API access, prompting manual data collection. Thus, research, ideally employing third-party tools, would be useful but would require additional funding. Expanding our scope beyond Twitter, additional digital platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and investigations into group chats on platforms like Telegram—a Russian-owned messaging app with a growing Latin American user base—hold yet another arena to better understand Russian influence comprehensively.

Considering the absence of recent public opinion polls on Russian favorability in Latin American countries, leveraging updated surveys to compare sentiments from previous years would significantly contribute. Finally, investigating influencers and their impact on shaping opinions, beyond analyzing tweets related to the ongoing Russian Invasion of Ukraine war, could be a valuable next step, involving a comprehensive analysis of influencers' entire Twitter presence to gauge their positioning and collect data on their broader impact.

An intriguing area for future exploration could include deeper analysis of digital public opinion within specific Latin American countries. For example, while our focus centered on Spanish-language tweets, delving into Portuguese-language tweets presents an opportunity to expand our research's linguistic scope.

Contributions and Reflections

Our capstone contributes to the Center for Latin American Studies by offering a cross-regional and multi-disciplinary analysis centered on the interactions between Russia and Latin America. This research project specifically investigates Russian influence in the region, focused on measuring digital public opinion. Throughout this project, we stressed the regional and global significance of Latin America in geopolitics, placing a particular emphasis on present day Russian messaging through Twitter. Rather than focusing solely on individual countries, our approach examines the entire Latin American region. This broader perspective is essential as Russian influence varies across countries within the region, a point highlighted by Russian and Latin American expert, Vladimir Rouvinski. Our work underscores the pervasive Russian narrative evident throughout Latin America in the digital sphere, particularly on platforms like Twitter.

Our project drew upon our collective understanding of Culture and Power, States and Societies, as well as our Chinese, Russian, and Latin American relations courses. We synthesized insights from our focus areas, which include foreign affairs, Russian initiatives, Western perspectives, and analysis of social and traditional media. In conducting this research, we made a deliberate effort to minimize bias in our sentimental analysis of the data. To achieve this, we established clear criteria for analysis, ensuring a systematic and objective approach to our evaluation.

Our deliverable, an article slated for English publication on StopFake.org's website, will provide an account of our analysis and findings, to enlighten readers about the effectiveness of Russian influence and dissemination within the Latin American region.

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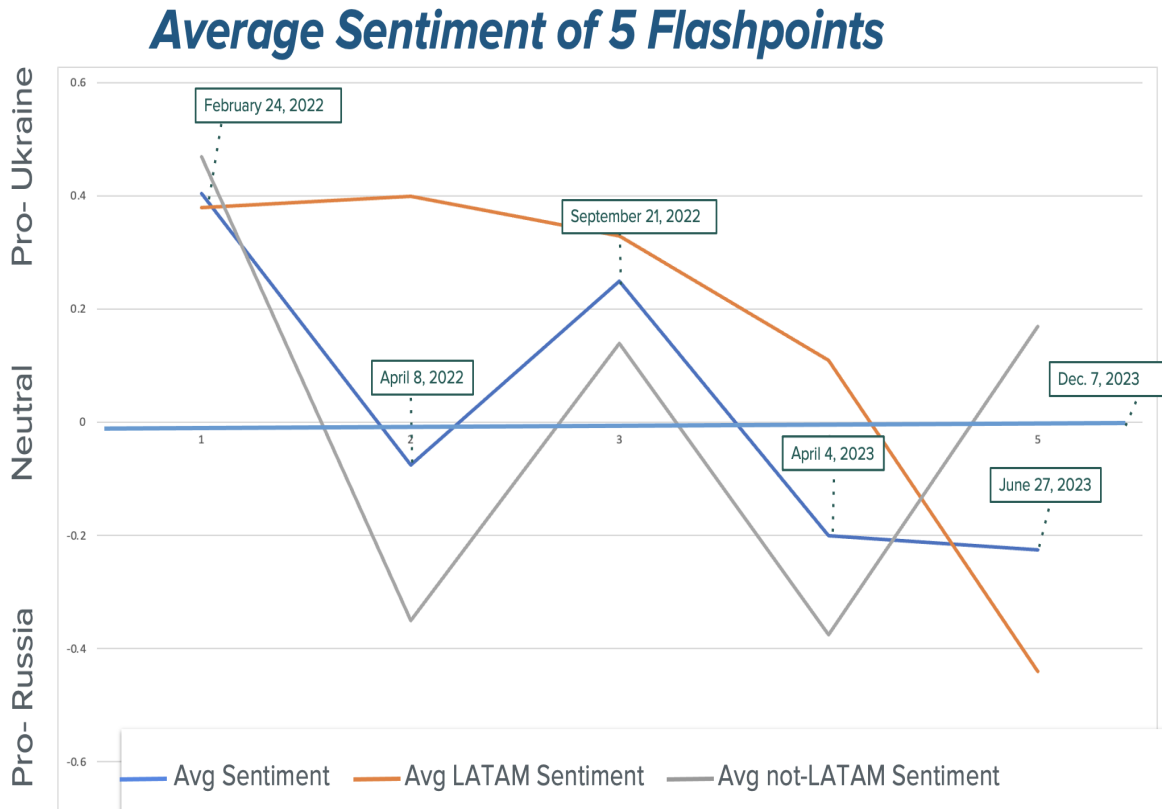
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Appendix

Appendix Average Sentiment of 5 Flashpoints



Appendix Key Findings

<h1>KEY FINDINGS</h1>		<h2>Insights: Sentiment and Location</h2>
Event 1	Onset of Russian invasion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feb. 24, 2022 • n=200 tweets 	Prevalent Sentiment was Neutral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We observed heightened levels of engagement and a prevalence of neutral stances regarding the invasion of Ukraine. However, there is also a significant number of positive tweets that attributed blame to Russia and Putin, condemning Russia for the invasion of Ukraine. • The location with highest level of engagement was Colombia.
Event 2	Kramatorsk Bombing Train Station <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apr. 8, 2022 • Contention on perpetrator of missile attack 	Sentiment was overall Polarizing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We noted considerable polarizing engagement levels, with a sharp spike in highly negative tweets (strongly pro- Russian) concerning the Kramatorsk train station bombing. We also observed numerous tweets expressing strong positive sentiment by sharing graphic images of the bombing, depicting injured and potentially deceased civilians. • The location with the highest level of engagement in L.A. was Spain
Event 3	Russian Mobilization Efforts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept. 21, 2022 • Putin's announcement of 300,000 reservists. 	Prevalent Sentiment was Positive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For this event we saw a prevalence of positive (pro-Ukrainian) sentiments as well as high levels of polarization (strong sentiments both positive and negative). Within these tweets, users shared videos and images that asserted that Russians were protesting against, and fleeing from, Putin's partial mobilization. • The location with the highest level of engagement L.A. was Spain.
Event 4	Finland Joining NATO <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apr. 4, 2023 • Expansion of NATO on Russian border 	Prevalent Sentiment was Negative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For this event we saw a preponderance of strongly negative tweets, as well as an increase in neutral tweets relative to the other events (aside from event 1). Negative tweets focused on Finland's collaboration with the Nazis during WW2, as well as by reiterating anti-NATO tropes. • The country with the highest share of the tweets was Spain, and event 4 saw the highest level of engagement by users with anonymous locations out of all the events.
Event 5	Kramatorsk Bombing Restaurant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jun. 27, 2023 • Colombian nationals injured 	Sentiment was overall Polarizing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We observed heightened engagement levels on both ends, with a slightly greater negative sentiment (pro-Russian), mostly due to the bombing at a restaurant in Kramatorsk. The negative sentiments in the tweets are predominantly focused on asserting that no tourists were affected on-site. The positive sentiment is based on the discourse primarily accusing Russia of war crimes, attributing blame to Russia and Putin. • The location with the highest level of engagement was Spain and no location shown.