The Dangers of Underestimating TikTok — Or Why Trump Might Have Been Right (For All the Wrong Reasons)

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Supervisor:

Daniel Innerarity
Chair AI&DEM STG European University Institute Florence
Ikerbasque Foundation for Science, UPV/EHU, Globernance

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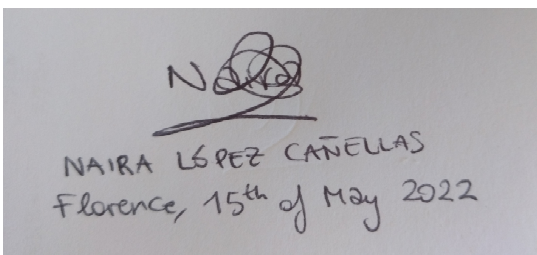**School of Transnational Governance**

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ABSTRACT

TikTok has stormed into the social media realm with unique dexterity in engineering virality, to which users contribute both passively and actively through sophisticated yet accessible built-in editing tools. The research corroborates recent media uproar around the platform's tendency to bring political discussions away from constructive, nuanced debate and into the sphere of entertainment, antagonism, or mockery. With a focus on the presence of the far right on Spanish TikTok, the study finds a clear overrepresentation of male right-wing content creators and party leaders on the platform, who seem to significantly set the tone for the interactions taking place online. The paper ends with possible avenues for further academic research on the reasons behind these imbalances, and a few recommendations aimed at both the platform and European policymakers stressing why it is imperative that they are tackled with urgency.

Keywords: TikTok, political polarisation, far right, digital governance, online communities

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1. INTRODUCTION[1]

'In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that has directly lived has receded into representation.'

(Guy Debord, The Society of the Spectacle, **1967**)

TikTok was the most downloaded App in 2021 — for the third year in a row (Hootsuite, 2022). Whichever figures one chooses to look at (number of daily active users, monthly downloads, revenue, time spent per day), the platform continues to break its own records month after month, and its growth shows no signs of stopping any time soon (ibidem).[2]

How did it get here? Did the pandemic have anything to do with it? Has its much-discussed Chinese origin proven significant in any way? And, most importantly, what might the effects of such popularity turn out to be?

In the past decade or so there have been growing concerns over social media's impact on users' lives both on- and offline. Even more so, it is becoming increasingly common in the literature to regard such virtual-life/real-life dichotomy as outdated, given the degree to which new technologies have become embedded in everyday life (Krutrök, 2021; Kaufmann, K. et al., 2021). Social media platforms have been accused of allowing major privacy breaches (Petropoulos, 2022); engaging in anti-competitive practices (Rosenquist, Morton & Weinstein, 2021); negatively impacting users' mental health, social relations, self-perception and self-esteem (Cummins, 2022), and exploiting psychological biases and vulnerabilities to get them to spend more time online, effectively increasing the platform's revenue through ads and purchases (Deller, 2018).

In this context, one issue in particular rang the alarms in academia, journalism and the public debate in general: social media's impact on the social and political climate. The reportedly growing levels of political

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[1] The title's reference to Donald Trump alludes to the United States' former president attempt at banning TikTok. For more information, see: Brown (2020).

[2] The only significant hiccup in the growth of the platform was due to its ban in India, enacted in 2020. Until that moment, the platform had amassed 200 million Indian users (Kolsquare, 2022).

polarisation and far right radicalisation started to be traced back to the virtual world, thus fuelling inquiries and investigations into the reasons for such disquieting trends. Accounts of Facebook amplifying climate change denial and Islamophobia, Youtube's promotion of conspiratory and misogynistic content, or IG's rampant disinformation on vaccines have flooded the news in the past few years (Adams & Gonzales, 2019; Etlinger, 2019; Thomas, 2020; Degli-Esposti & Wagner, 2022; Fiske, 2021). Among all mainstream social media Apps, though, TikTok has been repeatedly portrayed as one of the worst performing in terms of persecuting hate speech, mis- and disinformation and political manipulation (Bay et al., 2020).

Hence the relevance of this topic and, subsequently, of this paper. In order to narrow down the challenge ahead, the research will aim at testing the following two-part hypothesis:

> (a) *There's an overrepresentation of the discourse of the far right on (Spanish) TikTok[3]*
> (b) *This is due to its higher success in driving engagement*

In terms of structure, the paper will start by outlining the fundamental traits responsible for turning TikTok into the giant platform it is today, and will then proceed to zoom in on how political discussions are mediated by its affordances.[4] The methodological section will follow, which will break down the steps taken during the collection and processing of data, and examine any related ethical considerations. Subsequently, there will be a presentation, analysis and discussion of the results, followed by an overview of their policy implications. The final section will delineate the limitations of the present study and propose avenues for further research.

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[3] Although the paper deals specifically with Spain, the mushrooming studies based on other contexts seem to detect common patterns.

[4] As found on the work of Cervi & Marín-Lladó (2021, 8), the concept of 'affordances' refers to the ways in which 'objects provide possibilities for action' (Zheng, 2016) through their 'structural design, functionalities, algorithms, and datafication models' (Van-Dijck & Poell, 2013). This term sheds light on how 'digital architecture affects human behavior' (Bossetta, 2018).

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In order to take on the endeavour of interrogating whether there is an overrepresentation of the far right on TikTok – and, if so, the reasons why that might be–, it is necessary to first understand how users interact with and on the platform. Far from being a passive entity, TikTok's qualities – and, most importantly, its hotly-debated 'TikTok algorithm' – give the platform enormous agency in determining the content its users produce and consume, the time they spend on it, and the ways in which such content swiftly colonises other online and offline spaces. After going over its main features, the second part of the section will shed light on how these influence the political discussions that take place on it.

2.1. THE SOCIAL MEDIA CROWN JEWEL

2.1.1. Getting Acquainted With TikTok

'Calling an algorithmically defined online configuration *social* has been one of the smartest semantic moves in the history of media institutions', reads the article *Researching Social Media as if the Social Mattered*, by Couldry & van Dijck (2015, 3). With this assertion, the authors highlight the widespread misconception that social media is a neutral sphere on which people can express and connect with each other in their own terms – a misconception that allows platforms to fade into the background and, with it, deflect criticism, responsibility, and regulation. By obscuring how technology influences the actions that can and cannot be taken online; portraying users as *members of the community,* and concealing the volume and purpose of the information stored of them, social media companies have succeeded at datifying, commodifying and manipulating users without any repercussions (ibidem). And TikTok seems to have outsmarted them all.

Tiktok was launched in 2017 by the Chinese social media company ByteDance, famous for the creation of Douyin, the TikTok equivalent in mainland China (Zeng, Abidin & Schäfer 2021, 3162). In 2018, ByteDance purchased Musical.ly, a considerably famed App worldwide, and merged it with TikTok, which ultimately proved to be the recipe for success (ibidem).

It is no surprise that the short-video App's global popularity boom coincided with the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis. Zeng, Abidin & Schäfer describe TikTok's ForYouPage (FYP), where users spend the vast majority of their time on the platform, as 'one of the most addictive scrolling experiences on the Internet' (idem, 3163). It has been described as an 'enormous meme factory' (ibidem) which derives its appeal from its magic-like ability to provide a seemingly endless source of entertainment. This comes in the form of short, looped videos that perfectly appeal to users' precise interests, which the platform figures out without needing to ask for any of their contacts, unlike most other social platforms (Gamir-Ríos & Sánchez-Castillo, 2022). In fact, users don't have to volunteer any information at all: the platform offers a wide variety of content and quickly fine-tunes it to their interests by tracking any reactions (or lack thereof), primarily in the form of 'Likes', 'Follows' and, most remarkably, sheer viewing time – that is, how long users stare at a video before swiping up for the next one (Krutrök, 2021; Boeker & Urman, 2022). Hence, the platform moves into the realm of the unconscious – or, at least, what is tacit, unspoken –, which takes agency further away from users in determining what content comes up on their feed.

The other main appeal of the App is how easy and accessible it is for users to participate creatively by posting their own content, often by responding to videos (in the form of a 'Stitch' or a 'Duet', that is, by showing the original video and their reaction either back-to-back or next to each other). They can also copy pre-existing audio or video templates, use predeterminate filters and audio-visual effects, or make up their own.

While, on the one hand, the platform's creative freedom makes room for a wide range of topics and individuals to be represented, on the other a lot of the content one finds online is repetitive, immersive and even numbing (García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2022). As Vijay & Gekker (2021, 713) state, 'TikTok's architecture engineers viral spread and replication of content into its very DNA'. The uncertainty on what the content of the next video might be, coupled with the high likelihood that it belongs to a trend one is familiar with (or soon will be), offers a perfectly soothing and addictive experience (ibidem). This is aided by the fact that the platform is primarily inhabited by users under 30 years of age

(Gamir-Ríos & Sánchez-Castillo, 2022), with a shared cultural and political socialisation (Vijay & Gekker, 2021), who thus encounter little resistance in understanding and incorporating such trends. Moreover, these often permeate into their interactions offline or in other platforms (ibidem), further driving new users into the App.

2.1.2. The Dark Sides of The Platform's Business Model

The previous section introduced how social media excels at offering a customised experience to its users — and political attitudes are not exempt from this process.

According to Zeng & Abidin (2021, 2460), the constituents of a generation have a tendency to exhibit 'shared political consciousness and behaviours, and [a] corresponding tendency to clash with the political attitudes of other cohort groups'. This is even more so in the case of the younger, greatly globalised Generation Z, many of which experience deeper emotional attachment online than with their offline peers (idem). However, these transboundary connections don't make their particularities irrelevant or obsolete. The ways in which they participate are still greatly influenced by their language, geographical location, race, class, gender performativity, and even beauty (Krutrök, 2021; Gade, 2020). These are all traits that can be easily spotted by the platform's rigorous profiling, leading to the creation of self-referencing subcommunities made up by homogenous groups of users. These are often referred to as 'the sides of TikTok' (Krutrök, 2021), whose interests range from pets, hobbies and artistic talents to white supremacy, gun violence and rampant misogyny.

Each 'side of TikTok' cultivates its own norms, language, humour, community-building practices and avenues to communicate, easily circumventing, when needed, the already lethargic measures against hate speech and disinformation (Castro Martínez & Díaz Morilla, 2021). Therefore, although they can offer safe spaces for marginalised communities, and contribute to their visibility, socialisation and self-discovery (Hiebert & Kortes-Miller, 2021), it is also unequivocally dangerous that that such semi-closed communities can prosper without encountering outsiders' resistance, and grossly overestimate the presence of their own kind (Vijay & Gekker, 2021).

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The speed and precision with which the platform's algorithms filter, rank and assign user profiles to rigid categories feed self-fulfilling cycles and amplify both conscious and unconscious biases.[5] Tolentino puts it succinctly in an article to The Newyorker: 'the algorithm gives us whatever pleases us, and we, in turn, give the algorithm whatever pleases it. As the circle tightens, we become less and less able to separate algorithmic interests from our own' (2019). Cummins (2022) echoes that same message, alerting that when treating algorithms as 'diagnostic' or 'deterministic', one overlooks that they are merely 'probabilistic', hence based on static and ossified reflections of oneself or those with similar socio-demographic characteristics. Yielding such epistemic power to an abstract idea of the algorithm is equivalent to 'outsourcing self-awareness to AI', the author claims (ibidem).

If the platform simply reflected the diversity of interests, views and opinions of its users, there would be little controversy to speak of. However, as is the case of most social media platforms' business models, it sells its viewers' attention to the highest bidder. Hence, the content one sees on the platform isn't entirely up to the interests explicitly and implicitly expressed, but also depends on which brands or self-promoting accounts pay to pop up on one's feed (Adams & Gonzales, 2019). Furthermore, the platform can cherry-pick what becomes viral, a power it capitalises on by selling exclusive information on 'upcoming trends' to those willing to pay to stay on top (Tolentino, 2019). Combined with its perpetual adjustments to make in-platform purchases always easier – including for content directed at minors –, and the difficulty in distinguishing regular posts from sponsored content, the platform skilfully manages to dodge many of the standards observed today when advertising in more traditional forms of media (Hirsh, 2020).

The potentially isolating and distorting effects of the platform's nuts and bolts add onto its well-known privacy concerns and censorship allegations. Tiktok's AI-powered features include 'facial recognition, object recognition, voice recognition and location-based services', which together turn it into 'an instrument for massive data collection', whose surveillance extends 'across other social media platforms and the Web in general' (ibidem). Tolentino (2019) cautions users of the risks associated with the

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[5] In an attempt to showcase how quickly the platform sends users down these so-called *rabbit holes* (Sanchez, 2021), the Wall Street Journal ran an experiment involving 100 bots programmed to pause on videos featuring a specific topic each. Within a matter of minutes, the platform returned up to 93% of content pertaining exclusively to those individual categories – one of which being 'sadness and depression' (Krutrök, 2021).

platform's ability to piece together different streams of data to develop detailed patterns of their daily routines, including how their tastes shift according to the time and place they log into the App. Although most of the scandals concerning deliberate suppression of content have taken place in China — which the platform purposefully isolated by making Douyin and TikTok two separate entities —, censorship accusations have surfaced from a multiplicity of topics and geographies, most notably in India (Anderson, 2020; Adams & Gonzales, 2019). The following portion will delve deeper into the dynamics that take place on the platform when discussing political topics, with special emphasis on the presence of the far right and how it capitalises on TikTok's socio-technical features to spread its message.

2.2. POLITICS IN THE ERA OF TIKTOK

Driving direct causal links between the online and offline worlds is always complicated, even more so when referring to phenomena that are hard to measure and explain, as are political behaviour and participation. However, there is no denying that the more visibility an issue acquires online, the more it manifests offline too. Castro Martínez & Díaz Morilla (2021) have linked increased online consumption of political content with greater offline participation, a reality of which political parties are well-aware. From Trump's Tulsa rally fiasco (Herrman, 2020), to the global diffusion of Black Lives Matter's slogans (ibidem); from the astounding electoral results of Xavier Hervás in Ecuador (Obando Muñoz, 2021) to the election campaigns of Narendra Modi and Jair Bolsonaro (Cervi & Marín-Lladó, 2021): these are all examples of social media becoming central in traditional forms of political participation.

Such experiences show the potential of TikTok in engaging a generation that has found traditional forms of political participation far less appealing than its predecessors (Cervi & Marín-Lladó, 2021). This apparent passivity has long been mistaken for apathy, but renewed academic interest in the phenomenon has concluded that the youth's low election turnout is rather due to a lack of trust in traditional institutions and representative democracy (Jerez, 2019). However, the shift towards virtual participation doesn't come without caveats: it can be hard to draw the line between meaningful participation and what

has been called *slacktivism*[6]; platforms reward high rates of engagement over constructive discussion and, as previously discussed, the predominance of filter bubbles makes it all too easy to end up only preaching to the choir.

2.2.1. The Surge In Politainment[7] And The Gamification Of Politics: A Double-Edged Sword?

It has thus far been established that political exchanges on social media greatly influence the non-digital world too. The issue of interest, however, remains: is TikTok a significant hotbed for the spread of far-right propaganda?

Several studies have documented the extensive presence of neo-Nazi propaganda and radicalisation (Anderson, 2020), white supremacist narratives (Castro Martínez & Díaz Morilla, 2021), alt-right symbols and memes (Vijay & Gekker, 2021), and nationalist discourse and hate speech (ibidem), all phenomena which fall into the scope of far right movements (Calderón & Fernández de Castro, 2018). When notified about the frequency of these harmful discussions, TikTok's response was to commit to 'add[ing] more content moderators' and to set up pop up warnings of 'hateful behavior' when looking up (a small minority of) problematic hashtags (Anderson, 2020). However, without clear, transparent and consistent guidelines for moderators; higher pedagogy on the platform, and greater willingness to apply national legislation against incitement to violence and disinformation, these steps are far from tackling the roots of the problem (ibidem). Moreover, although looking up certain words might not return any results (e.g. looking up 'suicide' or LGBT+phobic slurs), users can easily find their way around it, either by substituting some of the letters by similar-looking numbers (e.g. 'su1cide'), or accessing those same bubbles through the appropriation of related, less hostile-looking hashtags (e.g. 'masculine urge' or 'real men').

Sociological studies propose the age of users and the anonymity provided by avatars as possible drivers of the graphic and inflammatory rhetoric that has become TikTok's bread-and-butter (Nilsen et al., 2022).

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[6] For a discussion of the term see: Muslic (2017).
[7] For more information on *politainment*, see: Castro Martínez & Díaz Morilla, 2021.

For Herrman (2020), the personalised mode of story-telling is also to blame: conversational content scores higher engagement, thus users are incentivised to share their unfiltered opinions without the need for any context or justification, often making grand statements with only anecdotal evidence.

The playful, convivial and even friendly nature of TikTok content is, on the one hand, credited with potentially making political discussions more accessible and appealing to a wider audience (Vijay & Gekker, 2021). On the other hand, it can also foster the circulation of insensitive messages, due to the fleeting, ironic and light-hearted nature of the platform. On the occasions where these remarks are met with resistance, replies vary between minimising the seriousness of the situation ('it was just a joke') and complaining that 'we can't say anything anymore'. In both cases, they effectively negate the possibility that such commentary, whether serious or not, 'can propagate and legitimize racist or homophobic speech in wider communities' (idem, 718).

All things considered, it is fair to speculate that it is not by accident that the platform doesn't encourage meaningful and constructive exchanges, but by design. Vijay & Gekker (2021, 719) posit that fragmenting the content into videos that function as 'self-contained narrative(s)', and amplifying niche references that reinforce 'in–group and out-group delineations', are both techniques that feed 'outrage politics', responsible of providing great rates of engagement at the cost of heightened conflict, tension and polarisation online. Chowdhury & Belli (2021) and Herrman (2020) fall in line with the argument, as their respective research concludes that being adversarial, caricaturising the enemy, engaging in self-victimisation and giving deeply tendentious accounts of political phenomena are all rewarded behaviours online.

Chowdhury & Belli (2021) even take it one step forward and claim that such engagement patterns are reinforced in the case of right-wing leaning positions. Gamir-Ríos & Sánchez-Castillo (2022) arrived at the same conclusion when looking at Spain's right-wing political parties. Similarly, Medina Serrano, Papakyriakopoulos & Hegelich (2020) showed that, on US TikTok, Republicans had greater control of the discourse, because both Democrats and Republicans preferred to engage with other Republicans. It

is thus in TikTok's best interest to allow trolling, lynching and alarming narratives to run amok, as long as they help feed the spiral of intense emotions that keeps users coming back for more.

2.2.2. Back To The Future – Or Forward To The Past? The Making Of The Far Right In The 21st Century

The first challenge when trying to estimate the presence of the far right on the platform is defining what is understood as such. While narrow delineations of the concept are rarely comprehensive and hard to find, there are multiple concepts and constructions, often used as synonyms, which can help get the gist of it. Despite their nuances, most definitions of extreme right, far right, radical right, neo-Nazism, neo-fascism and alt-right considerably overlap with each other, and advocate for several or all of the elements below (pooled together from the works of Filosofía en español, 2018; Ravik Jupskås & Beau Segers, 2020, and AlDescubierto, n.d.):

> (i) thorough limitation of the government's budget and scope of action, except for matters of security and defence (as they tend to revere the use of violence)
>
> (ii) glorification of the (masculine) individual, personified in an authoritarian-leaning and charismatic leader, who either is religious or acts in an equivalently ceremonial manner
>
> (iii) exclusionary nationalism and rejection of all that *is* or *feels* foreign: international organisations; migrants; cultures, religions and values that are different from one's own…
>
> (iv) illiberal and anti-democratic rejection of egalitarian ideas, sometimes bordering fascist sympathies, and emphasising social hierarchies
>
> (v) reactionary views that mistrust progress and modernity, and express rejection towards feminism, LGBT+ Pride, social and climate justice, antiracism, secularism and other contemporary beliefs and social movements

While conservatism tends to be a structuring element in all of them, some neo-Nazi and alt-right groups present seemingly renewed aesthetics, slogans and ideas, and adopt a futurist-like and youth-centric look (Mozo Yefímovich, 2022). Their bigoted rhetoric can sometimes be masked with euphemisms and dog

whistling tactics – hence why they find it easy to circumvent censorship and traditional understandings of hate speech (ibidem).

The libertarian-leaning ideas presented by some of these groups sometimes diverge (and others collude) with the purely nostalgic traits of traditionalism, which idealises a vague moment of the past and claims that society has taken a wrong turn and is losing sight of all that is sacred. It emphasises the sense of community that was lost, and is eager to return to past gender roles and routinary forms of labour (Ravik Jupskås & Beau Segers, 2020; AlDescubierto, n.d.). All in all, these movements share a profound discontent with the status quo, and the conviction that today's ideals encourage weakness and servitude and are harmful for the individual and society at large, whose *unexploited potential* they want to unleash.

2.2.3. Navigating Spain's Far Right Movements: The Power Of Capitalising On Nostalgia & Disenfranchisement

Despite the globalised nature of many of today's political movements, local and national nuances still play a considerable role in citizens' political socialisation, and remain their highest marker of identity (Moffitt, Juang & Syed, 2020). When studying the ideological composition of Spain, it is hardly deniable that the most relevant factor to bear in mind must be the Civil War and subsequent Francoist dictatorship.

The 20th century left behind a myriad of unresolved social, economic, political, cultural and linguistic tensions in the country. The democratic transition avoided acknowledging those tensions with the aim of speeding up the process of turning the ultra-catholic, nationalistic and repressive country into an outward-looking, democratic and modern nation (Maestre, 2013). Despite high popular support for the architecture of the transition, the conflict didn't fully recede, and sociological francoism[8] remained latent in both the minds and institutions of the newborn democracy (ibidem).

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[8] For more information, see Maestre (2013).

In the past few years, something changed. Even before achieving electoral representation, Vox[9] acquired a higher degree of visibility in the media than any other far right party in the country had ever dreamed of.[10] Such media presence allowed it to slowly make its way into all mainstream political, academic and media discussions, instilling its rhetoric and ideas in a savvy and successful manner. Vox's steam relied on fuelling fears around 'the MENA invasion',[11] on inciting hatred towards Catalan and Basque independentist movements, and on modern reconfigurations of the idea of 'La Reconquista',[12] drawing parallels with an alleged contemporary jihadist offensive (Domènech, 2019; Blanco, 2021; Pérez, 2021). Supporters of the party have spoken of Spain's colonisation of the Americas with pride, and often express beliefs analogous to those of the Francoist era, including antisemitic and anti-communist ideas, the desire to re-centralise the country, and disdain towards the liberal democratic status quo (Blanco, 2021; Pérez, 2021).

Another cornerstone of Vox's dogma has been its diametrical opposition to Unidas Podemos, the 15M and all other contemporary leftist movements – and, more recently, to their governmental coalition with PSOE[13] (Jerez, 2019; Daniel Calderón & Fernández de Castro, 2018). Their demeaning linguistic choices (*El Coletas*, *Perro Sánchez*, *El Gobierno Frankenstein*) and their hyperfocus on specific anecdotes used to discredit the government make of former Vice President Pablo Iglesias, Equality Minister Irene Montero, former Catalan Presidents Carles Puigdemont and Joaquim Torra and current President Pedro Sánchez their most preferred targets.

In line with this rhetoric, Vox-adjacent spaces are hypermasculine, almost exclusively white, profoundly conservative and supportive of the monarchy (Domènech, 2019). They also stand out from other

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[9] Vox is Spain's main far-right party, and the only one that enjoys widespread institutional representation.

[10] Given Vox's current centrality in the Spanish far-right movement, I use the two almost interchangeably throughout the paper (or, more accurately, as metonymies of each other). For the purposes of this paper, given Vox's agenda-setting power in the whole of the far-right, especially on TikTok, I believe this to be a valid use of the terms — however, it is far from unquestionable.

[11] This acronym refers to unaccompanied minor migrants from Northern Africa.

[12] 'La Reconquista' refers to the period in which Christian Spaniards 'reconquered' Al-Andalus.

[13] Unidas Podemos is a relatively newborn party in Spain, considered to be the furthest to the left within those with widespread national representation. 15M refers to the movement pushing for the end of austerity measures and for greater democratisation of the country following the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. PSOE stands for Partido Socialista Obrero Español, and is the main social-democratic party at a national level, and historically, the only alternative to the conservative Partido Popular (PP).

European equivalents in their economic ideas, as they clearly embrace a neoliberal logic, instead of the scepticism that characterises other far right parties' approach to the liberal and capitalist order. The makeup of the party includes several members from aristocratic backgrounds, and despite a few exceptions during electoral campaigns, the party steers away from positioning itself on the side of workers, trade unions or other unprivileged sectors of society, choosing instead to emphasise entrepreneurial and employers' needs and interests (Bernabé, 2022; Ondarra, 2022).

2.2.3.1. Vox's Textbook Formula For Online Success

Given the young age of many of Vox's voters, the party is well-aware of the importance of curating an online presence that solidifies their crucial support (Cervi, Tejedor & Marín Lladó, 2021). Along with Unidas Podemos, it has proved to be an outlier among the Spanish parties, mastering the craft of adapting their language to the affordances of each social media platform and, most remarkably, TikTok (ibidem).

To understand their success, the first order of business is understanding the demographic make-up of the platform. According to Aguiar (2020), TikTok's Spanish user base is predominantly female (¾ of all users identify as such), incredibly young (with up to ⅓ of minors) and with a clear majority entering the platform on the daily (in 40% of the cases, several times a day) (ibidem). With 8.8 million users, it is also one of the most numerous user bases in Europe, especially when it comes to young children (ibidem). To get an idea of its impressive growth rate, one must consider that, in around 3 years, it has amassed 40% of Facebook's users, and 'at 82 minutes of average daily exposure', it has surpassed almost all of its biggest competitors: Instagram, Facebook and Twitter (Gamir-Ríos & Sánchez-Castillo, 2022).

Castro Martínez & Díaz Morilla (2021) describe Vox's language online as effectively turning complex political debates into simplified, direct, aggressive and belligerent language, often including calls to action and insisting on the disqualification and ridicule of its opponents. A quick look at their social media feeds shows a cult-like glorification of its leaders, with a predominance of Santiago Abascal. In the same vein, a study by López Fernández (2022) documents that the party's highest engagement is reached on the posts

that portray politics in a trivialised and/or spectacular light, and those that exhibit blunt and witty comebacks, further stimulating the production of this type of content.

On TikTok, it is common to find snippets of their speeches with epic music in the background, as well as compilations of anti-Vox protests, often 'dramatized as a battlefield between Good and Evil' of which they will emerge victorious (Cervi, Tejedor & Marín Lladó 2021, 267). They often portray themselves as 'the only alternative' and 'the resistance' against Spain's allegedly mushrooming internal and enemies, and excel at making up viral hashtags, such as #PorEspaña, #VivaEspaña and #ProtegeMadrid. Overall, they rely on fuelling fear and frustration online, and connecting with their young audience through 'populist discursive dynamics' that perfectly match their attention span and appetite for short, unfiltered and emotional content (Cervi, Tejedor & Marín Lladó 2021, 276).

3. METHOD OF ANALYSIS

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The question posed by the two-part hypothesis must be answered, equivalently, by a two-part answer. Thus, the challenge is not only in devising a methodology that allows to judge whether the far right is overrepresented online, but also why that might be the case. This requires breaking up the investigation in two distinct steps:

a. *Is the far right overrepresented on Spanish TikTok?*

A more or less normal distribution of ideological preferences in Spain is assumed, in line with Copenhaver (2019), Faustino et al. (2019), Reuning (2018) and Robles Egea (2015). That is not to say that most people identify as *centrists*, but that only a minority place themselves at the ends of the spectrum (Medina & Caínzos, 2018). Although electoral preferences don't necessarily represent citizens' ideology in a faithful manner (Ley, 2019), they are still believed to be significant enough to provide meaningful support to this assumption (Robles Egea, 2015).

Hence, if researching political content on Spanish TikTok shows a higher saturation of far-right content than one would find when looking at the Parliament, everyday discussions, and opinion polls, it can be argued that far-right content is, indeed, overrepresented on the platform.

b. *If so, why is that the case?*

Should the first part of the hypothesis be confirmed, the following step is figuring out what drives such overrepresentation. The theoretical framework developed above reveals that platforms tend to promote content in function of their estimations of each user's tastes, which they infer from their previous engagements — or those they deem similar to them (Cummins, 2022). In turn, users react positively to (and even contribute to the production of) content that they see rewarded (ibidem). Hence, if it is true that far right content abounds on the platform, it should be due to a higher engagement rate in such

videos, either prompted by users' response patterns, the platform's conscientious promotion, or a combination of the two. However, other options shouldn't be ruled out — such as far-right content creators (and followers) choosing TikTok over other platforms in order to spread their message.

In order to answer the two questions at hand, a digital ethnography approach is followed, which consists on the 'researcher immersing themselves' on the platform in order to study 'how human behaviors are expressed within a digital environment and how interactions taking place digitally can create and shape cultures both on and offline' (Caliandro, 2018, as quoted in Hiebert & Kortes-Miller 2021, 5).

More specifically, this is done through a multimodal content analysis of primarily qualitative nature, complemented by quantitative data. Firstly, the multi-modal approach is arguably the best fit when analysing platforms based on User-Generated Videos (UGVs), since understanding their multiple modes of communication is only possible when considering them as an intertwined ensemble (Wang, 2021). Secondly, the form of content analysis deployed is inspired by the works of Khattab (2019), Suárez-Álvarez & García-Jiménez (2021), Kaufmann et al. (2021) and Hiebert & Kortes-Miller (2021). In short, it seeks to understand the 'platform vernaculars' of political discussions on TikTok, defined as 'shared (but not static) conventions and grammars of communication, which emerge from the ongoing interactions between platforms and users' (Gibbs et al., 2015 as quoted by Krutrök 2021, 2). Part of the analysis, thus, consists of examining whether these vernaculars depart from those present in non-virtual discussions, helping better detect any spillovers between online and offline spaces.

Thirdly, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data is essential. On the one hand, the mainly qualitative character of the research helps capture the nuanced interactions with the App's socio-technological features. This process helps break down users' linguistic and audio-visual choices, and identify how social and discursive connections are created. On the other hand, the use of quantitative data is essential for testing the two-part hypothesis central to this paper, as it involves estimating the presence of a particular type of content, and studying whether any of its associated quantitative data (in the form of 'Views', 'Likes', 'Comments', etc.) justifies its popularity.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

In order to uncover any potential ideological bias on the platform, the hashtag '#politica'[14] was chosen for its *nonpartisan*[15] nature, combined with '#españa' in order to restrict any results to the Spanish landscape.[16] Once the hashtags had been decided upon, the next step was to mark as 'Liked' the first 150 TikToks to come up when writing '#politica #españa' on the TikTok search bar. This was done on the 3rd of March of 2022, in order to keep track of each post and their ranked order.[17] A new TikTok account was created for the purposes of this study, in order to minimise the information known of the user as much as possible, and with it, the biases coming up in the search.[18]

In the weeks that followed, a thorough analysis of the audio-visual, written and contextual elements of 100 of those 150 TikToks was carried out.[19] Once their analysis was finalised, the remaining 50 posts were visualised, in order to make sure that the first 100 faithfully represented them in both content and style. Once that was verified, it was considered that the investigation had acquired a significant degree of data saturation, making the results valid for the purposes of the research.[20] When selecting which of the posts'

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[14] The choice of using the hashtag without an accent comes from the knowledge that most written forms of informal online language forego spelling conventions in the pursuit of brevity, speed, and simplicity (Gutiérrez-Sanz, 2016). A brief trial round confirmed this to be true in the case in question, as most videos use the word without an accent. Either way, the search also yielded results of the hashtag with the accent, so it was considered not to make a major difference.

[15] However, there's a point to be made that using the word 'politics' when effectively discussing political matters, or recognising an issue as 'political', isn't equally common on both ends of the spectrum. For instance, the use of the phrase 'the personal is political' is a renowned motto primarily used by left-leaning movements, and thus it is conceivable that there are everyday experiences and discussions that some would consider merit the label of 'political', while others would disagree. This is also exemplified by the use of diverse formulations of the phrase 'nowadays everything is made out to be political', when responding to commentary coming from social justice movements. However, a quick look at the hashtag showed that users belonging to a diverse ideological range used it in their content, thus it was considered to be a valid starting point.

[16] This doesn't completely rule out the possibility of encountering content related to other countries, or users from other nationalities (especially from other Spanish-speaking countries, most notably, those located in Latin America). However, a quick preliminary search returned a considerable homogeneity of Spanish content, so the combination of hashtags was considered to be fit for purpose. Furthermore, in order to have a faithful grasp of the conversations taking place online, such *sample contamination* should be considered useful, and thus taken into account.

[17] Their order is presumed to shift regularly; however, on the 8th of May of 2022, a majority of the sample remains at the top of the search, despite their oscillations in terms of numbers and position on the ranking.

[18] The platform still knew the researcher's location (Florence, Italy), and possibly, other kinds of metadata that are hard to spot or modify. However, after informally attempting the same search from another 4 accounts, and seeing that the result didn't change significantly, it satisfied these concerns enough to proceed with the research as given.

[19] 3 of the selected 150 turned out to be completely unrelated to Spanish politics, both in their content and in all of the comments they received, and thus were discarded and substituted by 3 extra ones.

[20] It should always be considered that there are caveats to this, as the 50 extra posts didn't feature the exact same content as the previous 100. However, the topics of discussion, the most prominent users, the content of the comment section, the levels of engagement and all other aspects were fairly similar — in some cases, almost interchangeable.

features to look at, the research took after the insights from Zeng & Abidin (2021), García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey (2022), Khattab (2019) and Suárez-Álvarez & García-Jiménez (2021), as will be further developed in the following subsection.

3.3. DATA PROCESSING

The elements selected for study were:

(i) 'Image/video'

(ii) 'Sound (background)', which usually consisted of music

(iii) 'Sound (principal)', which included the video's main message

(iv) 'Captions', placed next to or below the video

(v) 'Subtitles', integrated into the video

(vi) 'Hashtags', present in both 'Captions' and 'Subtitles'

(vii) 'Length' of the video

(viii) 'Username' associated with the post, as well as their 'Popularity' (in number of followers)

(ix) 'Comments', 'Views', 'Shares' and 'Likes'

(x) 'Rate of engagement', calculated as the addition of the number of 'Likes', 'Shares' and 'Comments', divided by 'Views'

(xi) Qualitative analysis of the comments (tone, style and content)

(xii) 'Date of publication' and 'Date of analysis' of each TikTok, and

(xiii) 'Retrievable link'.

Following the generic variables listed above, and once the sample had been visualised, six other categories were selected, in order to fine-tune them to the sample's specificities. These included:

(a) 'Gender' of the main person featured on the post (assigning 1 for 'women', 2 for 'men', and 3 for 'other/unknown').

(b) 'Theme' of the video, mostly including: rhetoric against communism, the current government, political parties and progressive moments; hails to Vox and particular

political leaders; calls for national unity; (neo)liberal and entrepreneurial discourse; the questioning of current and historical institutions; humour and comedy, and a miscellaneous of other hotly debated topics during the past few months (including migration, the energy crisis and Covid-19).

(c) 'Source' of the content featured on the post, the most notable options being YouTube, television, videos recorded by anonymous private citizens, other forms of media, and TikTok itself.

(d) 'People' featured on the video, generally including party leaders and other party members, celebrities and other public figures, the TikTok user, and anonymous people.

(e) Labels describing the 'Emotions elicited' by the posts (many of which received more than one), including: anger, mockery, fear, antagonism, pride/inspiration/admiration, neutral, and entertainment.

(f) 'Ideology' that best fits each post (for which the insights of March (2008), Filosofía en español (2018) and Ravik Jupskås & Beau Segers (2020) were pooled together): far-right, right-wing/conservative, moderate/ambiguous/neutral, leftist, far-left, and universally/transversally appealing.

The exact details of the analysis and the coding process can be found in the Spreadsheet available in Annex I. It contains all the relevant information, although the three main elements that helped identify either the post or the user have been subtracted from the published version (as explained below). Due to the poor legibility of the format, a readable version of the Spreadsheet is available upon request.

3.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

After a thorough review of the relevant literature and of TikTok's Terms of Service, and a consultation with a member of the EUI Ethics Committee, it was concluded that there weren't any legal or ethical impediments to this research. However, a few points are in order.

When researching social science phenomena, ethical concerns are bound to arise. In the case of social media, one of the main challenges regards the difficulty (if not impossibility) to acquire informed consent from all the subjects of study (De Gregorio & Goanta, 2022). Moreover, letting users know they are being studied might lead them to modify their behaviour, thus defeating the purposes of the research. This is a especially common occurrence when it comes to political matters, where certain political preferences are hidden because of fear of judgement and stigmatisation.[21]

Most social media researchers, thus, opt for the anonymisation or 'de-identification' of user data (De Gregorio & Goanta, 2022; Krutrök, 2021), and make sure to minimise their impact on their field of study. According to the criteria established in Boeker & Urman (2022), the research hereby presented falls in the scope of only causing 'marginal, non-intrusive and completely harmless interactions with the content creators', given that each of the videos was 'Liked' once and visualised a few times.

Since the research was aimed at studying a phenomenon present throughout the platform, instead of individual users or posts, the risk of placing the spotlight on specific people is minimised. To contribute to these efforts, the columns containing the username, the posts' retrievable link, and the label associated with their background sound of choice (which often included their username too) are kept out of the Annex. Instead, numbers are assigned to each post in descending order, and used for the purposes of the discussion below.

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[21] See the phenomenon of 'voto oculto', especially in regard to right-wing options like Popular Party (PP) (Maestre, 2013).

Moreover, due to the young age of many of the users, and the fact that some of the data regards political affiliation, it is qualified as especially sensitive (Medina Serrano, Papakyriakopoulos & Hegelich, 2020). One shouldn't overlook the relative recency of the mainstream use of social media, the slim concern for privacy that younger generations exhibit online, and how personal the experiences shared on the platform can be. Therefore, the fact that these videos are 'visible on the platform at the time of data collection' does not mean that 'they should be understood as public' (Krutrök 2021, 4). While doing social media research, a precautionary approach that centres on protecting users' privacy and interests is of utmost importance.

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The first segment of this section offers an overview[22] of the results from the perspective of the variables studied in view of answering the two-part hypothesis. The second segment examines the outcomes deemed most relevant in contributing to the analysis of the far-right discourse online, including its most repeated patterns in terms of both content and style. These will be complemented by any other contextual cues considered key in building a complete framework of the political conversations taking place on Spanish TikTok.

4.1. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1.1. Quantitative Disparities Found In The Sample

In order to provide some initial context and perspective, it is paramount to point out that the posts that are the object of this study were all published between the 8th of January of 2021 (around a year after the start of the Covid-19 pandemic) and the 27th of February of 2022 (three days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine). Within this time frame, the public debate muddled through many national and international phenomena; however, the discourse on TikTok primarily reflected national hot topics; practically mirroring the debates which, spearheaded by the leaders of each of the main political parties, were taking place on both regional and national institutions.

One of the first findings is that it doesn't seem like the order of appearance of the videos has any straight-forward explanation. For one, their number of views varies greatly, ranging from 2072 (in the case of post 11) to 3,8 million (in the case of post number 1). The three least viewed videos (11, 24, 61)[23] include two 'funny scenes' that took place in the Spanish Parliament and a street interview interrupted by a young

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[22] Some categories and subcategories are omitted in the presentation of the results. That is because they were thought to be either unfit, irrelevant or not representative of any phenomena of interest for the purposes of this study. This is the case, for instance, of the 'Hashtag' variable, which didn't return any interesting patterns, as well as subcategories like 'Sadness' and 'Frustration' (included in the category 'Emotions elicited'), and any other themes that were too sparse or anecdotal to merit distinct attention.

[23] The numbers between brackets refer to the number assigned to the videos discussed (as found in the Spreadsheet), and not to any of their metrics (such as 'Views' and 'Likes'), featuring outside any brackets.

man scolding a journalist. On the other end, the three most popular (1, 23, 47) include two other funny moments, also starring politicians, and a snippet of a speech by Isabel Díaz Ayuso[24] featuring classically liberal and anti-communist rhetoric.

Looking at 'Likes', 'Comments' and 'Shares' returns similar results. Both the three least (11, 61, 98) and three most (47, 30, 40) commented videos include two funny scenes each. In the former group, the third video features a Spanish rapper expressing his discontent with the behaviour and ideology of all current political parties, and in the latter, it shows a pro-Catalan independence activist interrupting an interview by a markedly right-wing and nationalistic Spanish online channel (Estado de Alarma TV, or as is most commonly known, EDA TV).[25] Turning to the least liked videos, one finds once again the funny scenes of videos 11 and 61 (along with video 49, a heated exchange between two politicians at a regional chamber), and in the case of the most liked, videos 23, 47 and 55, all meant for comedic purposes. Looking at 'Shares' returns practically the same results we've seen so far: 11, 61 and 98 for least popular, and 55, 47 and 23 as the most popular ones.

Zeng, Abidin & Schäfer (2021) and Kaufmann et al. (2021) defend that the 'Rate of Engagement' is the most significant factor in determining a post's popularity and ranking on TikTok. In the present selection of posts, this metric oscillates considerably, between 0,02004 and 0,626777. Funnily enough, one of the videos with the lowest number of views (24) shows one of the highest rates of engagement, which might explain why it appears significantly high up on the search. The opposite case is also common, as can be seen in video 55, which presents a high number of likes and shares and also a high engagement rate. It is also interesting to point out that, despite it being common knowledge that the platform promotes short content, four of the videos that show the highest engagement are all around 2 minutes of length (86, 69, 83 and 33), while much shorter ones have the lowest recorded engagement (51, 97, 37).

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[24] Isabel Díaz Ayuso is the President of the Comunidad de Madrid region.
[25] It's worth mentioning that one of the most and one of the least commented posts actually feature the same video, but posted by two different users (11 and 40). However, this is omitted from the discussion because the two following most and least commented videos are also similarly comedic scenes, so the point remains. A similar situation happens in videos 61 and 9, as they each feature the same exact exchange between two other politicians. This perfectly showcases the difficulties of drawing conclusions from the study of social media, and the apparent arbitrariness of the popularity status assigned to each piece of content on the platform.

The length of the videos varies enormously, extending between 7 seconds and 3 minutes. The shortest videos mainly feature comedic scenes (47, 99) and snappy, punchy statements (57), subsequently eliciting superficial conversations in the comments. On the other end of the spectrum, one finds more elaborated explanations of social and political phenomena, whether in a more antagonistic tone (20, in which the user condescendingly mocks those who voted for the current government) or a constructive one (33, 83 and 69, where the user shares her views on the monarchy and the Black Lives Matter movement). While this variable didn't seem to prove as significant as expected, another one did: publishing TikTok-originated content, rather than republishing what originated from other media sources. This could be because it tends to be of higher audio-visual quality, because TikTok itself rewards the forms of content that require spending most time on it, or simply because it fits what users look for when spending time on the platform.

4.1.2. A Bundle of Imbalances

As previously suggested, power asymmetries thrive on the platform as much as on any other form of media. In this sense, it is paramount to start by looking at the disproportionate presence of two users on the sample, one on each end of the ideological spectrum, in order to shed light on the monopolisation and hijacking of the discourse by a minority of actors online. This paper argues that their large following qualifies them as *public figures* instead of anonymous users, thus it is considered they will not be harmed by the inclusion of their username in this paper. [26]

On the one hand, @carlagaleote (with 328,500 followers) is a young activist who rose to relative popularity due to her discussion of current political events, with a focus on feminism. She openly identifies as a leftist, and her videos clearly align with most of Spain's leftist discourses both inside and outside public institutions. She appears in all of the videos she publishes, and is responsible for the creation of 8 of the posts studied. Her style is aimed at non-specialist audiences, she engages with the audience both verbally and in the comments, and tends to produce long videos that spark above-average engagement in the form

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[26] One of them often features in other forms of media and is relatively famous in the context of online activism, and therefore is used to being recognised; the other doesn't share any personal information online, thus their online profile wouldn't easily be traced back to their real-life identity.

of relatively amicable conversations in the comments. Although her videos are almost exclusively commented on by people who either agree with her or are actively seeking political education, she often receives hateful comments by right-wing male users, in the form of paternalistic condescension and/or sexual harassment.

With only half her following (164,4000), @azota_rojos is the user behind 27 of the 100 videos that compose the full sample of this study. The username (which roughly translates to 'him who whips communists')[27] and the especially aggressive content of the videos, which the user publishes at an impressive rate, attract equivalently hostile and belligerent engagement. While @carlagaleote is one of very few famous leftist creators on the platform (and the only woman among them), users like @azota_rojos abound, sometimes with equivalently provocative names, style and content. Their names are kept anonymous because they don't enjoy such a high degree of popularity, but some of them are well into the dozens of thousands of followers, almost exclusively identify as male, and are much more visible on the platform. This also speaks of a wider issue detected during the research, namely that 77% of videos studied feature either mainly or exclusively men, leaving only 23% that are starred by women. This gender imbalance is especially alarming considering that, as previously specified, 75% of the Spanish TikTok user base is female (Aguiar, 2020).

There's a similar imbalance, although not as pronounced, in terms of the people who appear on the posts, with a staggering 40% featuring exclusively political leaders (former and current). Factoring in that another 14% consist of other party members, and 19% pertain to other Spanish public figures, one is left with only 20% of videos starring TikTok users, and a meagre 7% of other anonymous citizens. Such overrepresentation of public personalities counters the idea that social media helps disseminate the views of a wider range of actors than traditional media, as will be further explored in the Discussion section.

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[27] The adjective 'rojo' has been used since the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) to refer to those on the side of the Republic and opposing the Francoist sublevation. Nowadays it's used as an umbrella term to pejoratively refer to leftists, and most commonly, communists.

4.1.3. The Elusive Explicability of Ideology and Its Emotional Response

The remaining categories proved to be the most challenging when trying to draw any conclusions, as their relatively higher degree of subjectivity would demand a bigger sample, and a more profound peer-review. However, given their relevance for the study, their interim conclusions are presented below.

After the categorisation process regarding the variable 'Ideology' was finalised, it became clear that, in most cases, it was hard to establish clear lines of differentiation between 'Right' and 'Far right', and between 'Left' and 'Far left'. The chosen label in such instances was '(Far) right' & '(Far) left', thus encapsulating both options. In the past few years, it has been proposed that the sudden visibility acquired by Vox has moved the discourse of most right-wing parties further to the extreme (Pérez, 2021; Ondarra, 2022). Given the prevalence of elected political representatives on the selected TikTok posts, it seems coherent to assume that the lines might have blurred online as they have in offline discussions. Thus, the topics of interest and style of delivery usually attributed to the far right (such as incendiary and visceral discourses about migrants, communists, or the feminist and queer movements) have been increasingly deployed by more moderate groups, presumably aided by social media's bias towards brief, eye-catching and entertaining content (Gutiérrez-Sanz, 2016).

It is still crucial to point out that, while engagement rates remained pretty similar on each of the sides,[28] only 11 videos qualified as '(Far) left', up against 38 qualifying as '(Far) right'.[29] Thus, in this sample, the latter type of content is significantly more present,[30] which would explain why some media have been ringing the alarms regarding a concentration of (far) right content on the platform.

Perhaps the most surprising result was that the 51 remaining TikToks didn't clearly align with either position, whether because the topics touched upon are considered to be universally appealing – for

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[28] The posts of @carlagaleote and @azota_rojos were omitted from the calculation, as their presence greatly influenced the results and concealed the engagement rates of the rest of the users. It is worth noting that, while @azota_rojos receives slightly above-average interactions, @carlagaleote receives greatly above average responses.

[29] The most difficult posts to categorise were those showing opposition to fascism and/or francoism, as it would be unfair to claim that a particular ideology has a monopoly of this stance. This challenge was surmounted by contextualising the videos in question to see if the users themselves or any other of their posts gave any clues, which showed that they all clearly identified as left-leaning.

[30] This ratio also approximately aligns with what was found in the 50 TikToks pertaining to the verification group.

example, posts mentioning the importance of culture and education – or, at least, transversally appealing – including topics that, albeit not being universally enjoyed or supported, still draw the attention of people from all sides of the spectrum, such as a generalised rejection towards most elected representatives, as well as most comedic posts.

In terms of 'Emotions elicited', there was a clear predominance of 'Anger' (41 posts), followed by the presence of posts evoking a combination of 'Pride', 'Admiration' and/or 'Inspiration', which counted 28, but garnered the lowest engagement of all. 'Mockery' and 'Laughter' follow with 19 posts each – along with the highest rates of engagement. Finally, the most numerous 'Theme' subcategories were those with an adversarial approach, mostly against leftist and/or progressive ideas, movements, anonymous people or elected representatives (44 posts), which aligns with the popularity of anger-inducing content exhibited at the beginning of the paragraph.

All in all, it is concluded that the first half of the hypothesis (that is, whether there is an overrepresentation of the far right on TikTok) is partially verified, with two caveats: first, the recognition that it is hard to pass such judgement with such a small sample, and second, that it is extremely challenging to define what qualifies as far right. The second half of the hypothesis doesn't seem to stand, as it doesn't seem to be the case that far-right content drives higher engagement. However, elements that tend to be present in far-right-dominated environments, such as a clear male majority, the personification of a political cause in glorified leaders, the stark opposition to leftist and progressive movements, and the adoption of aggressive and scornful language are rampant on the platform. If being disrespectful and mocking the adversary is rewarded online, it is far from surprising that conversations are fast to turn polarising, instead of attempting to start constructive debate.

4.2. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section expands and draws connections among the most recurrent patterns individualised in the sample. While the first subsection dissects their substance, the second deals with matters of form and style. The third briefly examines their underlying ideological assumption, and the fourth closes the reflection by proposing that a combination of all of these elements is bound to lead to heightened polarisation on the platform.

a. Tropes, Clichés & Overt Propaganda

There are three main tropes that, despite also being common offline, seem to be considerably accentuated on the platform, which consist of (i) relentless references to an ongoing culture war, (ii) an elevation of national symbols and past historical periods, and (iii) a rejection of all political representatives, sometimes leading to a rejection of democratic institutions themselves.

Virtually all allusions to a culture war come from reactionary sectors of society, who hold progressive movements to be destructive forces towards the conventions and institutions that constitute the centrepiece of society (Ondarra, 2022). During the research, these expressed in the form of complaints regarding 'cancel culture',[31] held responsible for allegedly ostracising (far) right-wing users from the public debate due to their opposition to progressive movements, which they portrayed as embarrassing, unnecessary, polarising, or ridiculous. In some cases, they went as far as claiming that women, non-white people and sexual minorities are actually in a position of privilege vis-à-vis their counterparts, and that systematic violence against these groups doesn't exist. The (few) videos featuring women all received profoundly gendered and/or misogynistic remarks, either criticising or excessively focusing on their looks; condescendingly dismissing their opinions as emotional or unqualified, or using infantilising and gendered adjectives ('princesa', 'maja', 'mi niña', 'Isabelita') and insults ('lerda', 'zorra').

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[31] For more information on the debate, see: Romano (2020).

Nationalism and sentimental longing for past, seemingly simpler times were perhaps the most prevalent elements throughout the research. Aside from the patriotic concepts and symbols explored below, some remarks openly justified and advocated for the Francoist regime, expressed nostalgia for the colonial era and the 1492 expulsion of the Jewish and Muslim communities, and claimed to miss the times where Spain was homogenously white and unapologetically patriarchal.

Some of the comments included mentions to the 'iron generation', as opposed to the generations Y and/or Z, known as the 'snowflake generation(s)',[32] in reference to their greater propensity to argue over words and ideas they deem to be offensive or disrespectful. The allocation of such nicknames is one of the ways in which younger generations' higher sensitivity for social justice was trivialised and weaponised against them in order to deauthorise their demands.[33]

Funnily enough, the profoundly patriotic takes were in some videos counteracted by self-deprecatory and derogatory comments against Spain and Spaniards, sometimes claiming that politicians' unprofessionalism and the malfunctioning of Spanish institutions is the fault of its citizens, for being too 'lazy', 'servile' or 'uneducated', and lacking 'morals' and 'a sense of 'fraternity'.

Similarly, numerous allusions to politicians' disconnection to citizens' everyday life, and to their incompetent, inappropriate or unethical behaviour, gave rise to worryingly low rates of approval and trust in democratic institutions. In a sometimes spoken and other times covert manner, the lack of hope for any improvement in their performance led users to question whether democracy is fit for today's socioeconomic climate. A concerning number of users expressed, rather proudly, not having voted ever before, or intending to stop voting altogether. It was also quite common to self-identify as 'apolitical' and claim that all politicians and political parties are interchangeable. The few comments encouraging others to vote all advocated for Vox, which was either justified by singling them out as the only party who hasn't been in power — and hence, the last remaining hope —, or by portraying them as the only party who stands out from the rest by telling the truth, 'no matter how uncomfortable it makes others feel'.[34]

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[32] The Spanish equivalents are 'Generación de acero' and 'Generación de cristal' (Infored 360, 2021).
[33] It is far from clear, however, whether younger generations generally care more about social justice, and it's also questioned whether these nostalgic claims speak of any actual transfer of power, as the boomer and silent generations have a far larger presence in leading positions and public institutions than younger ones.
[34] These three themes are indicative of a wider online current known as *Fashwave* (Mozo Yefímovich, 2022), which contends that the present is a time of profound moral, social, national and even personal decadence (ibidem), and resort to reactionary

b. Platform Vernaculars

Communities online are known to develop their own distinct modes of communication, through which they establish the 'ideological frames of reference' and 'spaces of social consensus' (Gutiérrez-Sanz, 2016) that allow them to recognise and understand each other. In the case of TikTok's Spanish right-wing community, these symbols have originated from the interaction between the platform's affordances and their previously held conventions.

Their most emblematic marker is their appropriation of all national symbols, as Spanish flags abounded in the form of emojis and avatar pictures. It was also common to find the words 'CataluÑa' and 'EspaÑa', a capitalisation used to reinforce the Spanish writing (vis-à-vis the Catalan version, which contains 'ny' instead of 'ñ'), as well as the words 'ES', 'EA', 'Viva España' and 'Arriba España', most often in combination with hails directed at Vox and/or Santiago Abascal.

Some of TikTok's easy-to-use editing features make it easy to present information in a de-contextualised and manipulative manner by cutting and stitching together parts of a video (or mixing different videos). This was especially common on posts aimed at discrediting left-wing activists or politicians, either by twisting their words or by taking out their response when scolded by the opposition, making them look defenceless and portraying their adversaries as clear winners of the debate (Gamir-Ríos & Sánchez-Castillo, 2022). Yet another two elements of TikTok that obfuscate the public debate are the difficulty in locating past videos (as they play on a rolling basis without any order or traceability) and the fact that the post's publishing date is not visible at first sight (Nilsen et al., 2022), making it hard to find out if the information one is being exposed to is outdated.

Finally, the availability of a multiplicity of audio-visual tools helps heighten the emotion that each post wants to induce. During long speeches, it is common to add inspirational and moving music on the

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and idealised portrayals of past eras in hopes of bringing back their values. What specially stands out from the movement is that, unlike most cryptofascist movements, it has both appeared and grown popular in mainstream spaces, and moves from irony and implicit allegories to explicitly advocating for ultra-catholicism, imperialism and even dictatorial forms of governance (ibidem).

background, while in other cases, a combination of words in all caps, exclamation points, information dumps and abrupt cuts helps incite a sense of fear and urgency in the face of danger.

c. On Antagonists And Scapegoats

After watching the first few posts, it quickly became clear that all leftist movements, parties and ideals were presented as a monolith, each of them as the embodiment of the enemy to blame for the current state of affairs. Communism, totalitarianism and any other leftist or progressive movements were presented as interchangeable, and equated with both PSOE and Unidas Podemos, all of which were often used as the main punching bag.

A few accounts adopted libertarian symbols (most often the yellow snake) and discourse, and used the same buzzwords and responses that are common offline (e.g. telling leftists to move to Cuba, Venezuela, North Korea or China; to give up all their material possessions, and to stop living off the welfare state). Overall, the meritocratic discourse prevailed, accompanied by complaints about abusive taxes and citizens freeriding on entrepreneur's creativity and hard work. However, this narrative encountered resistance, presenting employers, millionaires, real estate companies and banks as culprits of growing socio-economic inequalities.

d. Polarisation As The Inevitable Outcome?

Despite its potential for establishing diverse communities and multilateral conversations, TikTok has shown very little evidence of fostering constructive encounters. Most often, it encourages one-sided narratives, short-lived interactions and passive content consumption instead. With the exception of two posts — 67, which consists of a dispassionate reflection on the differences between communism and fascism, and 4, which features a prominent politician justifying the use of Spanish on Catalan television —, the comment sections of all videos contained aggressive, condescending, insulting, ridiculing and/or fallacious exchanges. The reinforcement of binaries (between democrat and totalitarian, violent and pacifist, left-wing and right-wing, conservative and progressive) and the visceral hate expressed for those deemed adversaries shattered any attempt at building bridges between ideologies and generations.

5. NEXT STEPS FOR POLICY-MAKERS, TIKTOK & ACADEMIA

5.1. PIVOTAL POINT ON EUROPEAN SOIL

Many of the topics discussed in this thesis echo the — some recent, some upcoming — European Union legislation on matters of privacy (GDPR), data (Data Act), Artificial Intelligence (AI Act) and digital services and markets (DSA and DMA). Each of these regulatory frameworks has the potential to greatly impact TikTok, given the controversies it has been involved in for the past few years. Its unclear privacy policy and affiliations with the Chinese government (Zeng, Abidin & Schäfer, 2021), its alleged effect on young people's attention span and mental health (Cummins, 2022), along with the weaponisation of some of its editing features in spreading mis- and dis-information (ibidem), all count among the many phenomena that have motivated European policy-makers to implement these regulations. Similarly, TikTok's zealously-guarded algorithms and data processing strategies, responsible for its unstoppable market growth, could also be liable to more careful inspection and required to apply stricter rules. The pressure of these legislative initiatives has certainly been felt in TikTok's Headquarters, so much so that they have announced their intention to establish a European Transparency and Accountability Centre (Mayer, 2020).

However, it is still hard to estimate how much European regulations will affect the social media platforms in practice. The Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act), for instance, contains greatly ambitious provisions, including the prohibition to 'manipulate persons through subliminal techniques beyond their consciousness', or 'exploit vulnerabilities of specific vulnerable groups (...) in a manner that is likely to cause them or another person psychological or physical harm' (European Commission 2021, 12). It also includes the obligation to make sure users are 'properly informed and have free choice not to be subject to profiling' (idem, 13). Other transparency obligations included in the Act demand that AI systems that 'interact with humans', 'detect their emotions', 'determine association with (social) categories based on biometric data' or 'generate or manipulate content' make users aware of their operations and offer information on the use and purpose for such data collection and processing (idem, 14). All of these

stipulations have the potential to apply to the platform and, if so, to turn it into a very different entity than what it is today, potentially also compromising the very traits responsible for its popularity. However, the open-ended, vague and even abstract nature of many of these provisions might also allow the platform to circumvent them altogether.

Other equally relevant legislation coming from the European Commission includes the General Data Protection Regulation (2016), the Privacy and Electronic Communications Directive (2002), the Electronic Commerce Directive (2000), and the upcoming Digital Services Act (DSA). These bind online platforms to offer information on 'when and on whose behalf the advertisement is displayed', making it easy for users to understand why 'that specific advertising is to be displayed to them', and allowing them to 'refuse or withdraw their consent for targeted advertising purposes' without experiencing restrictions in the use of said platform (European Parliament 2022, 31). Similarly, they must apply special protections for minors, who cannot be subject to 'direct marketing, profiling and behaviourally targeted advertising', as well as vulnerable groups, whose special characteristics can't be used for those purposes either (idem, 33). TikTok would certainly have a long way to go if it wanted to comply in a rigorous and transparent manner to all of these provisions, should they be strictly applied.

5.2. TARGETED RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the effect of Recommendation Systems (RS) on how citizens 'receive information and ultimately perceive the world', and the inability and/or unwillingness of those who train them to 'offer detailed or complete explanations about them' (Boeker & Urman 2022, 2), there is a clear need for independent, collaborative and in-depth audits that precede the introduction of these AI systems into the mainstream.

Platforms must find creative ways of bursting the filter bubbles they create, especially through serendipitous recommendations, and the provision of an easy way to access and modify the platform's 'list of inferred user interests' (idem, 8). Similarly, boosting disinformation-fighting efforts, starting with more widespread and ambitious warnings, could help alert users of potentially misleading content. Such posts

are often produced without ill-intent, including 'memes, parody and role-playing videos' (Nilsen et al., 2022), but the built-in editing tools used in their creation make them extremely convincing.

Current attempts to battle disinformation consist of adding a banner with a link to governmental sources on a very restricted subset of issues (e.g. the Covid-19 pandemic), making certain hashtags not searchable and including a warning of potentially 'hateful behaviour' (e.g. 'alphamale'), or issuing warnings of potential harm to oneself or to others (e.g. on videos about self-induced abortion methods). Furthermore, as previously indicated, the simple substitution of a few letters by numbers circumvents these measures entirely (e.g. as found during the research, M4CH1SM0), and several academic works have proved that reporting an account isn't enough to induce any action (Bay, 2020).

Cautionary tales on the potentially chilling effects of an unrestricted use of technology abound, with predictions that stretch from the serious decline in users' ability to critically process information and make autonomous decisions to the hijacking of electoral processes, political opinions and democratic institutions (Deller, 2018). Journalist Jamie Bartlett goes as far as saying that social media drives us to delegate 'moral and political reasoning' to them (ibidem). In his words, 'either technology will destroy democracy and the social order as we know it, or politics will stamp its authority over the digital world' (ibidem). It's up to us to decide which one will be.

5.3. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As previously mentioned, this research has followed in the footsteps of similar studies of TikTok and other comparable social media platforms. However, it recognises its several limitations, and thus is to be considered a purely exploratory first point of contact with the specific context of political discussions taking place on Spanish TikTok.

It is clear that the phenomena deserves greater academic attention, and a more ambitious mixed-methods approach carried out by several researchers on a bigger sample, in order to dilute biases and subjectivities

as much as possible. Studying social media isn't easy for many reasons: it is constantly changing, it is relatively new, and its medium- and long-term effects are still impossible to assess. However, it has entered peoples' daily lives with unprecedented speed and intensity, thus it is never too early to start challenging, questioning, monitoring, and assessing it.

This research would have benefited from 'more data-backed methods', which could have assisted in uncovering the reasons behind the uneven popularity of each post, allowing to verify whether divisiveness and antagonism truly make a meaningful difference (Vijay & Gekker 2021, 730). Higher familiarity with the tools needed for TikTok data scraping would have been enormously helpful in that process. Moreover, methods for multi-modal content analysis are still in their infancy (ibidem), and still have a long way to go until they become mainstream. However, given the relative scarcity of in-depth analysis of specific trends on TikTok — even more so in a political context, let alone specifically in Spain —, the results are still considered to be valuable in contributing to the collective endeavour of advancing academic research of this kind.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper presents an account of how TikTok users' dynamic interactions among each other and with the platform shape discussions on- and offline within the Spanish political context. More specifically, the spotlight has been placed upon the far-right movement, which seems to have a disproportionate presence on the platform, despite not necessarily garnering higher rates of engagement.

The research emphasised the importance of factors like gender, age and ideology in shaping users' experiences on the platform, and the role played by emotions (most saliently, laughter, mockery and antagonism) in influencing the quantity and type of engagement a post receives, and more widely, its virality and ability to influence the public discourse on the platform.

Given the great and growing presence of young users on the platform, it is of prime urgency and importance to amp up investigative efforts that can help estimate the ways in which social media affects mental health, social relations and political sensitivities, and enact the necessary measures to prevent its most pernicious effects. Correspondingly, it is just as imperative to improve digital literacy and skills in order to allow users of all ages to experience the positive ramifications that can come from the use of yet another novel, creative and exciting way of connecting across ideas, identities and borders. Its promised benefits are way too tempting not to try.

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ANNEX 1. This spreadsheet contains all relevant data extracted from the sample and its subsequent categorisation process.

	Images/video	Sound (voice/pri	Caption	Subtitles	Comments (num	Comments (cont	Likes	Views	Shared	Engagement rat	Hashtags	User's popularity	Date of Upload	Retrieved on:	Length	Gender featured	Theme	Source of conter	Actor featured	Emotions elicite	Ideology
1	Speech at the regi	Yo entiendo que p	-	Sound (principal)	4432	Ppl from LATAM	224.200	3800000	22100	0,06598210526	#política #españa	164.4K	19-12-2021	03-03-2022	0:29	1	Anticommunism	Parliament YT ch	Leader (IDA)	Pride/hope/inspir	(far) right
2	Speech at the nati	En este país hay d	-	Sound (principal)	1711	Reclaiming she ac	45.900	760.200	3844	0,06768613523	#ayuso #política #	164.4K	17-1-2022	03-03-2022	0:21	1	Anticommunism	TV	Leader (IDA)	Pride/hope/inspir	(far) right
3	Images of the 4 m	Albert Rivera (C'	Vengo a rememor	-	2417	Celebrating the er	157.200	915.700	9427	0,1846063121	#parati #fyp #espa	26.5K	2-11-2021	03-03-2022	0:54	1	Funny moments c	TV	Leaders (national	entertainment	transversally appe
4	TV close-ups of t	Cayetana Álvarez	-	Sound (principal)	1644	Celebrating her sp	78.200	1.400.000	2334	0,05869857143	#cayetanaalvarezd	164.4K	2-12-2021	03-03-2022	0:35	1	Anti-independent	TV	Party member (PI	inspirational, emo	transversally appe
5	TV close-up Jorge	Jorge Buxadé in the EP: "Este docum	Sound (principal)	1385	Thanks for makin	102.500	1.600.000	15200	0,074428125	#jorgebuxade #po	1.2M	28-12-2021	03-03-2022	0:50	2	Covid (mistrust in	EP YT channel	Party member (Vc	inspirational, emo	universally appeal
6	Tomás Fenati, the	Curiosidades sobr	Curiosidades de E	Summary of facts	4151	National pride an	71.700	421.600	1465	0,1833870968	#greenscreen #apr	1.2M	11-8-2021	03-03-2022	2:37	2	Fun facts	TikTok	User	pride	transversally appe
7	Pablo Iglesias in a	Pablo Iglesias (sir	¿En tu país la polí	Jokes about his sir	632	37000	246.300	2067	0,161181486	#foryou #lentejas	409.4K	5-5-2021	03-03-2022	0:22	2	Funny moment +	TV/YT	Leader (PI)	entertainment	transversally appe
8	Two men (one of	Conversation betv	Viva vox, Viva Esp	Viva España, Viva	238	14900	567.300	4831	0,03520007051	#política #españa	27.7K	28-10-2021	03-03-2022	0:15	2	Race/migration -	Video by anonym	Anonymous	entertainment	(far) right
9	Esteban and Rajo	Aitor Esteban (PN	La política de tu p	1816	Jokes about the Pi	195200	-	-	#CapCut #viral #	5093	15-2-2021	03-03-2022	-	2	Funny moment +	Parliament YT ch	Leader (Rajoy & A	entertainment	transversally appe
10	Arturo Pérez Reve	"Hay una irrespor	-	Sound (principal)	291	Mostly widespread	9453	193.500	2075	0,06108010336	#arturoperezrever	164.4K	27-1-2022	03-03-2022	0:27	1	Irresponsibility pc	TV	Celebrity	inspirational, emo	universally appeal
11	Rufián in one of t	Rufián: "Señor C	así es la política er	2	2 users tagged	73	2072	28	0,04971042471	#españa #política	407	20-6-2021	15-03-2022	2:15	2	This is Spain + my	LaVanguardia YT	Leader (Rufián)	entertainment	transversally appe
12	Snippets of a Yout	Jordi Wild: "¿No t	-	820	Mostly self-identifi	28100	-	#españa #política	29.9K	17-5-2021	15-03-2022	-	2	Republican	Jordi Wild's Yout	Celebrity	neutral	universally appeal
13	Spanish politician	"Medidas como es	Okupacion LEGA	"La okupación ser	1697	Show of approval	10800	623.400	7452	0,03200032082	#paratii #política	1411	11-2-2022	15-03-2022	1:18	1	Okupación + fake	Parliament YT ch	Party member (Vc	fear, anger	universally appeal
14	Collection of snip	Reenactment of th	Amante bandido...	Sound (principal)	3302	Things that can or	137300	773.900	1601	0,1837485463	#PedroSanchez #N	9285	9-12-2021	15-03-2022	0:34	2	Funny compilatio	Snippets from TV	Celebrity/public	entertainment	transversally appe
15	Scenes from a TV	President of the Fi	Presidente de la Fi	1580	Viva Franco, how	37600	497.700	792	0,08031344183	#Política #España	103.2K	9-11-2021	15-03-2022	1:20	1	Francoism as ridic	TV	Celebrity/public	entertainment, an	(far) left
16	Interview by a ma	"El hecho de que y	Ver hasta el final	1072	Many people com	89800	741.200	6254	0,1310388559	#humor #parati #	20.8K	18-4-2021	15-03-2022	0:16	1	Feminism as ridic	unknown (TV/YT	Anonymous	mockery	(far) right
17	Interview of Karl	"La política me tie	Genial Arguiñanc	122	Everyone agrees: g	1778	56.200	587	0,04425266904	#arguiñano #polit	17.1K	22-9-2021	15-03-2022	2:43	2	Irresponsibility pc	TV	Celebrity	inspirational	universally appeal
18	Carla Galeote, Spa	"Voy a responder	La libertad de exp	¿Alguien puec	3252	Very well said, you	106000	776.600	2992	0,1445325779	#politicaespañola	328.5K	14-3-2021	15-03-2022	0:59	1	Freedom of speecl	TikTok	User	anger, sadness	(far) left
19	Álvaro Ojeda, gue	"Quillo, España or	A mí un communist	308	"As someone from	7020	200.100	468	0,03896051974	#alvaroojeda #fyp	426	24-7-2021	15-03-2022	0:26	2	Anti-communism	TV	Celebrity/public	pride	(far) right
20	The Tiktok user a	"Qué tal estás, vot	Querido votante c	Querido votante c	1510	The same user cor	18700	195.100	2523	0,1165197335	#politicaespañola	9399	18-9-2021	15-03-2022	2:59	2	Leftists as ignoran	TikTok	User	mockery	(far) right
21	Possibly the user t	"Cuando el PSOE	Sound (principal)	1378	Most users widely	33600	501.400	4460	0,07865576386	#infovlogger #poli	164.4K	25-10-2021	15-03-2022	0:19	2	Anti-PSOE + wel	Infovlogger (EDA	Celebrity/public	anger	(far) right
22	Press conference b	Journalist: "Querí	Como destruir a u	119	People discrediting	1618	38.400	126	0,048515625	#política #españa	2828	14-10-2021	15-03-2022	0:42	2	Questioning the le	EDA TV	Party member (Po	mockery, anger	(far) right
23	Minister Escrivá ir	"Y por - El punto	Ministro español l	3954	People celebrating	285600	2.900.000	27100	0,1091910345	#iberoesfera #espa	34K	27-10-2021	15-03-2022	0:35	2	Funny moment	YT/TV	Party member (PS	entertainment	transversally appe
24	Interviewer from	"Policialmente, so	OPINIONES? O!	Cuando un sociali	262	This is the average	11100	18300	108	0,6267759563	#política #españa	36K	15-3-2021	15-03-2022	0:59	2	Offensive, ableist c	TV	Anonymous	mockery	(far) right
25	Talkshow by Inter	"Lo que tenemos c	Sound (principal)	458	Fight in the comm	12000	155.900	1999	0,09273252085	#liberales #política	164.4K	16-9-2021	15-03-2022	0:37	2	Conspiracy-laden	TV	Celebrity/public	inspiration, anger	universally appeal
26	President of the A	Díaz Ayuso: "Porc	No tengo palabras	"Si te llaman F*sci	3431	Most comments d	115700	652.300	5321	0,190789514	#politicaespañola	328.5K	15-3-2021	15-03-2022	0:59	1	Anti-fascist reactic	TV	Leader (IDA) + u	anger	(far) left
27	Parliamentary Ses	"No sé por allí per	Concejala de Pode	844	Most comments d	40700	524.800	3638	0,08609375	#politicaespañola	27.7K	31-10-2021	15-03-2022	1:16	2	Misogynistic dism	Parliament YT ch	Party member (Po	mockery	(far) right
28	Man being intervi	"Sóc d'Equador, p	ecuatoriano catala	Ecuatoriano indep	1632	It's great to see he	14000	357.600	5172	0,05817673378	#Ecuador #españa	745	9-8-2021	15-03-2022	0:32	2	Interview to racia	Possibly TV/YT	Anonymous		
29	Interview to form	"España es una na	Aznar define qué	826	Viva Franco; the k	17000	349.200	1555	0,05550114548	#aznar #josemaria	164.4K	1-10-2021	15-03-2022	0:19	2	Pro Spain's unity	TV/YT	Fomer party leade	pride, inspiration,	(far) right
30	EDATV Interview	"Y nada, me empe	Que bonito se está	Mujer catalana inc	5586	People like this are	79700	882.300	3768	0,1009339227	#españa #cataluña	164.4K	18-12-2021	15-03-2022	0:49	1	Ridicule of indep	TV	Anonymous	mockery, anger	(far) right
31	Exchange during t	Iglesias: "Permítan	IMPECABLE	175	This is a true femi	4282	45.600	216	0,1024780702	#política #españa	334	22-4-2021	28-03-2022	0:30	1	Calling Iglesias mi	Leaders (IDA + P	anger (sense of sup	unclear: traditiona
32	Young man laying	"Espera, tengo una	Así me imagino E	España dentro de	1324	Not this please, i v	27700	160.300	368	0,1833562071	#podemos #vox #	9399	30-5-2021	28-03-2022	0:14	2	Exaggeration and	TikTok	User	mockery, anger	(far) left
33	Scene from a meet	"(after the audio of	Cómo dicen las ac	1373	She speaks great ai	26200	133.100	1218	0,2163110443	#politicaespañola	328.5K	29-3-2021	28-03-2022	0:59	1	Anti-fascist reactic	TikTok	User	anger, fear	(far) left
34	A young woman a	"Soy mujer, femin	Mujer, Feminista,	491	An initial commer	34500	251.700	216	0,1398768375	#humor #fyp #par	111.6K	11-10-2021	28-03-2022	0:09	1	Funny moment (lr	TikTok	User	entertainment	(far) left
35	A young man sitti	"La meritocracia n	La meritocracia n	2950	This is absolute tr	30300	251.700	1987	0,139996027	#Política #Econon	103.2K	2-11-2021	28-03-2022	1:00	2	Against meritocra	TikTok	User	(mild) anger	(far) left
36	Fernando Díaz Vil	¿Por qué razón el	Sound (principal)	323	Rusia, China, Cul	7676	104.500	263	0,07906220096	#fernandodiazvilla	164.4K	10-12-2021	28-03-2022	0:33	2	Pro-capitalism	YT/other social m	Celebrity/public	inspiration, hope,	(far) right
37	Juan Luis Steegma	"Mire, señor minis	Esto es dar EJEM	Esto es dar EJEM	162	Idol, demagogy, "e	29900	900.100	460	0,0339095656	#política #españa	7537	8-1-2021	28-03-2022	0:28	2	Anti-government	Parliament YT ch	Party member (Vc	inspiration, hope,	transversally appe
38	Exchange in Parlia	"Si hubiéramos ap	Ya somos más de 1	Sound (principal)	382	Many reformulati	10800	181.800	1750	0,07113311331	#política #españa	164.4K	10-11-2021	28-03-2022	0:20	2	Antagonism & mc	Parliament YT ch	Party members (P	mockery, pride	(far) right
39	Pedro Sánchez in a	"Aquí hemos vacu	Como le agradece	Sound (principal)	588	Same with taxes; t	4020	130.700	1290	0,04512624331	#pedrosanchez #p	164.4K	14-9-2021	28-03-2022	0:10	2	Against Sánchez	TV/media	Leader (PS)	anger, mockery	transversally appe
40	Rufián in one of t	Rufián: "Señor C	MACH4ISMO E	5230	Most people expre	179400	-	-	#politicaespañola #parati #españa	E	22-1-2021	28-03-2022	-	2	Against misogyny	Parliament YT ch	Leader (Rufián)	anger	unclear: traditiona
41	Rubalcaba in a TV	"Imagínese la que	Sound (principal)	359	RIP, he was great,	10600	257.600	2456	0,05207686335	#rubalcaba #psoe	164.4K	18-10-2021	28-03-2022	0:23	2	Funny moment	TV	Fomer party leade	pride, anger	(far) right
42	Kid role playing in	(Acting as Sánche	España siendo Esp	La política en Esp	169	Spain being Spain	15800	90.200	567	0,1833259424	#viral #trend #fyp	566.9K	27-9-2021	28-03-2022	1:29	2	Funny moment --	TikTok	User	entertainment	transversally appe
43	Doorstep intervie	"2/3 de la factura,	Sound (principal)	583	Vox is the future;	11000	165.400	794	0,07483071342	#ivanespinosadelo	164.4K	6-9-2021	28-03-2022	0:22	2	Against governme	TV	Party member (Vc	anger	universally appeal
44	Images of the poli	No spoken word,	"Puntuando polít	Comparing them	477	32600	266.200	1202	0,1287716003	#españa #política	32.9K	20-3-2021	28-03-2022	0:18	2	Funny moment	TikTok	Leaders (all)	entertainment	(far) right
45	A young man reac	"Y claro, la mayor	Pobre mi país	Diferencia entre iz	992	One person saying	22500	159.600	823	0,1527324121	#fyp #izquierda #c	28.6K	10-4-2021	28-03-2022	0:38	2	Caricature of lefti	TikTok	User	anger, mockery	(far) right
46	Teodoro García Eg	"De momento, la	¿Jubilación a los 7	366	People explaining	10600	207.900	1957	0,06215969216	#teogarciaegea #teamcasado #política	1-10-2021	28-03-2022	0:21	2	Against governme	YT/TV	Party member (Vc	anger, mockery	universally appeal
47	Pedro Sánchez eat	Someone yells "¡Pi	Xd	Es el gesto de Sánc	7385	Most comments s	257800	3700000	33000	0,08059054054	-	14.1K	6-10-2021	28-03-2022	0:07	2	Funny moment	El Mundo	Leader (PS)	-	transversally appe
48	María Jesús Mont	Jesús Montero: "E	Sonido (principal)	723	The best thing th	11800	262.700	8542	0,08018654455	#mariajesusmonte	164.4K	16-10-2021	28-03-2022	0:11	1	Caricature of gove	TV	Party member (PS	anger, mockery	transversally appe
49	Exchange between	Serra: "Usted lo ú	isa serra funda	Any time a woma	2834	218400	1.800.000	1562	0,1237755556	#lentejas #españa	33.7K	4-3-2021	28-03-2022	0:14	1	Feminism + Pode	YT/other med	Party member (Po	anger, pride	unclear: traditiona
50	Pedro Sánchez spe	"Creo que entre tc	Sonido (principal)	1979	Jokes about how s	27800	367.500	12600	0,1153170068	#pedrosanchez #fz	164.4K	18-9-2021	28-03-2022	0:13	2	Funny moment +	TV/YT/other med	Leader (PS)	mockery, frustrati	universally appeal
51	Doorstep intervie	Journalist: "Bueno	#ElReyDeEspaña	El Rey Emérito ya	776	Most people expre	2410	199.100	805	0,02004520342	#Política #Manuel	29.2K	8-1-2022	29-03-2022	0:26	2	Juan Carlos I's mc	TV	Public persona (fc	neutral	-
52	Rufián in the Spa	"Bueno, democraci	El político Rufián	So often people sa	232	5472	107.300	157	0,05462255359	#viral #parati #fyp	23.8K	17-3-2021	29-03-2022	0:48	2	Questioning Spair	YT/TV/other mec	Leader (Rufián)	anger, frustration	(far) left
53	Bertín Osborne as	Osborne: "Ya quis	hablando alto y cl	2288	Discussions on wl	103600	1.300.000	13300	0,09168307692	#política #vox_esp	64.8K	17-1-2021	29-03-2022	0:46	2	Pro-neoliberalism	TV	Celebrity	pride	(far) right
54	Rufián on a press	Journalist (Javier	Gabriel Rufián, el	Atentos a la hipoc	127	Cynical; jokes abo	1863	49.100	107	0,04270875764	#política #españa	2828	5-10-2021	29-03-2022	0:43	2	Against Rufián	EDA TV	Leader (Rufián)	anger (provocateu	transversally appe
55	User shows differe	"De los creadores	Arranca la segund	-	3236	Everyone congrat	263800	1.500.000	29500	0,1976906667	#humor #comedy	98.8K	3-8-2021	29-03-2022	0:38	2	Funny moment	TikTok	User	entertainment	transversally appe
56	User speaking to t	"Seguramente me	Hay que dar voz a	3998	User references in	136300	786.700	13700	0,1957518749	#feminismoespaño	12.6K	18-9-2021	29-03-2022	2:24	2	Anti-feminism	TikTok	User	anger, frustration	(far) right
57	User looking at th	Only the song is tl	Me da igual lo que	The names of the	1171	Most people conc	28900	322.300	200	0,09392181198	#viral #fyp #parati	109.7K	16-1-2021	29-03-2022	0:07	2	Against all politic:	TikTok	User	anger, pride	universally appeal
58	Casado in a confer	"Aquí no, aquí a la	La palabra es nucl	"Ni un solo día que	171	Mostly jokes abou	4237	-	2274	#casado #pablocas	60.2K	15-11-2021	29-03-2022	-	2	Satire of Pablo Ca	TV/YT/media	Leader (Pablo Cas	mockery	

59	Jano García, youtu	"Y en España, el p	-	Sound (principal)	339	Comments declar	10000	140.700	635	0,07799573561	#janogarcia #espa	164.4K		23-6-2021	29-03-2022	0:20	2	Neo-liberalism +	YT channel/simila	Celebrity/public p	pride, anger	(far) right
60	Ayuso speaking to	"Ni el País Vasco n	#Ayuso lo deja cla	Sound (principal)	761	You're the next pr	13700	214.200	1332	0,07373015873	#España #spain #p	59.9K		2-8-2021	29-03-2022	1:02	1	Pro Spain's unity	TV	Leader (IDA)	pride	(far) right
61	Esteban and Rajo	Esteban: "Si bien	Subo videos de de	Clásicos de la polí	12	Sad that Esteban v	330	6593	67	0,06203549219	#parati #foryou #l		8724	18-7-2021	29-03-2022	0:20	2	Funny moment	Parliament YT ch	Leaders (Rajoy +	entertainment	transversally appe
62	Young man reacti	Only the song in	Otros partidos en	Cuando entras al	133	Everyone support	10600	114.500	347	0,09676855895	#greenscreen #fy		1516	28-4-2021	29-03-2022	0:08	2	Funny moment (p	TikTok	Party members +	entertainment	transversally appe
63	Group of 3 men i	Only the anthem	☆Himno de Espa		1162	People congratula	23600	249.800	895	0,1027101681	#españa #barcelon	23.6K		23-10-2021	29-03-2022	0:42	2	Pro Spain's unity	Video by anonym	Anonymous	mockery, pride	(far) right
64	Gabriel Rufián in	Rufián: "¿Qué ha	-	Jorge Javier Vázqu	730	Most comment or	19500	270.400	487	0,07661612426	#lapringada #jorje	164.4K		9-9-2021	17-04-2022	0:31	2	Against feminism	Rufián's YT chan	Leader (Rufián) +	anger, fear	universally appeal
65	Arturo Pérez Reve	"Todo el problema	-	Sound (principal)	396	Inspiring quotes	15300	247.400	3206	0,0764025869	#arturoperezrever	164.4K		23-8-2021	17-4-2022	0:41	2	Lack of education	Celebrity	anger, frustration	universally appeal
66	Antena3 news bro	"Les hablamos aho	-	UNA MÁS DE L	604	But are they going	7907	191.500	3025	0,06024020888	#españa #política	17.1K		29-11-2021	17-04-2022	0:47	2	Against the gover	TV	Celebrity/public p	anger, frustration	universally appeal
67	Talkshow in 8tv,	"Dicho esto, a mí	-	Comunismo y fas	309	There's quite a nu	6377	106.100	324	0,06606974552	#comunismo #fas		6904	28-12-2021	18-04-2022	1:47	2	Fascism v Commu	TV	Celebrity/public p	neutral	-
68	Man in his fifties	"Garzón, mira. Br	Garzón Vago, Bra	Garzón Vago, Bra	267	People tease him a	3060	47.800	466	0,07935146444	#politica #españa	18.8K		8-1-2022	18-04-2022	1:00	2	Against Garzón +	TikTok	User	anger, mockery	transversally appe
69	User speaking to t	"Ayer, en mi Twit	Detrás de las pant	Comentarios men	3557	People divided bet	101600	434.700	2219	0,2470117322	#politica #españa	328.5K		15-6-2021	18-04-2022	2:56	2	Against racism +	TikTok	User	anger, pride	(far) right
70	Scenes broadcast	"¡Puta madre! Qui	Gentuza totalitari	Gentuza totalitari	1546	User claims that tl	17800	512.200	1369	0,04044318626	#politica #españa	27.7K		9-2-2021	18-04-2022	0:55	2	Leftists as totalit	EDA TV	Anonymous	anger, pride	(far) right
71	Youtuber WallStre	"En España se está	-	Sound (principal)	626	Easy to say by the	14900	241000	700	0,06732780083	#wallstreetwolveri	164.4K		22-1-2022	18-04-2022	0:24	2	Neo-liberalism +	Wallstreet Wolveri	Celebrity/public p	anger, frustration	(far) right
72	Pedro Sánchez in	"Es muy diferente	-	Sound (principal)	760	We're walking tow	20300	271.200	2853	0,08817477876	#pedrosanchez #p	164.4K		29-1-2022	18-04-2022	0:26	2	Against Sánchez	YT/similar	Leader (PS)	mockery	(far) right/transve
73	Frank Cuesta spea	"Yo voté al Partido	-	Sound (principal)	2909	People lamenting	98600	1.500.000	7916	0,07295	#frankcuesta #ron	164.4K		5-2-2022	18-04-2022	0:24	2	Pro-Vox + against	Celebrity/public p	frustration	(far) right/univers
74	Young man makin	hay como un ester	El profesor de hist		1122	Use of 'communis	30100	182.500	433	0,1734520548	#parati #españa #p	17.4K		19-12-2021	18-04-2022	0:11	2	Worry about trivia	TikTok	User	sadness, fear	(far) left
75	Comparison betw	La gran diferencia	"Pedro Sánchez en		1093	Some claim him to	45000	664.200	2720	0,07349141825	#españa Ⓔ Ⓢ #po	58.2K		13-2-2022	18-04-2022	0:32	2	Against Sánchez	TV scenes in a Til	Leaders (PS + Azr	pride, inspiration,	(far) right/transve
76	Adolfo Suárez ent	"Usted no tiene ga	Político español, f	Adolfo Suárez. Co	256	Considered the be	4767	116.500	1868	0,05915021459	#España #entrevis	19.9K		20-10-2021	18-04-2022	2:51	2	Homage to Adolf	TV	Former leader (Su	pride (passion)	universally appeal
77	Animation that ar	"Soy el doctor que	Gobierno Franker	Sound (principal)	129	While leftists won	2938	87.400	1644	0,2470160183	#politica #yosoyes		6229	14-12-2021	18-04-2022	0:55	2	Against Sánchez	Various scenes in a	entertainment	transversally appe
78	Press conference	" A mí me sorpren	El Gobierno de #F		790	Many celebrate he	14400	264.100	2370	0,06648996592	#Madrid #Spain #	59.9K		10-9-2021	18-04-2022	2:33	1	Anti-government	TV/YT/similar	Leader (IDA)	pride, anger	(far) right/transve
79	Protest at the arri	Crowd mixed voic	-	Recibimiento del	221	"Sánchez dimisión	3797	170.700	2166	0,03622729936	#politica #españa	164.4K		18-5-2021	18-04-2022	0:49	2	Anti-communism	Video by anonym	Leader (PS)	anger	(far) right
80	Abascal and Ayus	"La educación, tas	-	Abascal y Ayuso. A	1032	Many comments a	55800	868.800	4082	0,07011279926	#españa #ayuso #a		4485	11-5-2021	18-04-2022	0:13	1	Funny moment	LaTuerka YT chan	Leaders (Abascal)	entertainment	transversally appe
81	Manuel Llamas in	"Una empresa púb	-	Sound (principal)	131	Some agree; other	7040	50.300	475	0,1520079523	#manuelllamas #p	164.4K		19-2-2022	18-04-2022	0:13	2	Against political	YT	Celebrity/public p	neutral	(far) right
82	News commentat	"Y ahora se nota q	-	Gritos de Sánchez	1427	You can clearly her	12900	236.200	1881	0,06861981372	#pedrosanchez #d	164.4K		12-10-2021	18-04-2022	0:27	2	Against Sánchez	TV	Leader (PS)	-	(far) right
83	User speaking to t	"Creo que una de	-	República o mon	881	Looking up to the	54100	261.600	1819	0,2171253823	#politicaespañola	328.5K		8-9-2021	18-04-2022	2:58	1	Republican	TikTok	User	neutral	(far) left
84	La Hora de la 1 in	"Hola, señor Abasc	Santiago Abascal	"SANTIAGO AB	705	Great answer, con	9036	175.300	713	0,05963491158	#vox #santiagoab	24.2K		7-2-2022	18-04-2022	0:39	2	Anti-government	TV	Leader (Abascal)	anger, pride	(far) right/univers
85	Antonio Escohota	"El capitalismo sie	Antonio Escohota	"EL COMUNISM	255	Mostly anti-comm	11500	211.300	6068	0,08434926645	#comunismo #pol	164.4K		5-10-2021	18-04-2022	1:54	2	Pro-capitalism	TV	Celebrity/public p	sadness, anger	(far) right
86	User speaking to t	"El viernes salió u	La justicia patriar		1270	Most users expres	65900	240000	1998	0,2882	#politicaespañola	328.5K		12-4-2021	18-04-2022	0:59	1	Feminism	TikTok	User	anger, frustration	unclear: traditiona
87	Madrid's mayor A	"Hay una parte de	-	Sound (principal)	271	A few say they're r	6918	88.600	232	0,08375846501	#almeida #pp #soc	164.4K		7-10-2021	18-04-2022	0:11	2	Against leftists +	TV/YT	Leader (Almeida)	anger, frustration	(far) right
88	Abascal being inte	"A los okupas hay	Patada en el culo a	¿Y si fuera tu casa.	1425	Division between	23500	456.400	4773	0,06507011394	#santiagoabascal #		8467	22-1-2022	18-04-2022	0:38	2	Anti-okupas + fak	TV/YT/other med	Leader (Abascal)	anger, frustration	(far) right/transve
89	User speaking to t	"Siempre que defi	Ya se votó si quer	Sound (principal)	1468	The majority of co	96700	639.300	1697	0,1562099171	#politicaespañola	328.5K		14-10-2021	18-04-2022	2:58	1	Pro-Republican re	TikTok	User	neutral	-
90	Pedro Sánchez du	"Yo quiero dejar a	-	Sound (principal)	312	Every single perso	7254	180000	1359	0,04958333333	#politica #pedrosa	164.4K		22-06-2021	18-04-2022	0:12	2	Against Sánchez	YT	Leader (PS)	mockery	(far) right
91	Federico Jiménez	"Esto es lo que pas	Esta mañana, Fed	"Federico Jiménez	631	Everyone laughing	11400	407.600	8954	0,05148429833	#politica #españa		2991	4-2-2022	18-04-2022	1:19	2	Against political r	YT	Celebrity/public p	anger, frustration	transversally appe
92	User speaking to t	"Vale, voy a dar la	Responder a @air	-	373	There is about a tl	22100	167.500	1045	0,1404059701	#politicaespañola	328.5K		16-3-2021	18-04-2022	0:59	1	On political book	TikTok	User	neutral	(far) left
93	Videoclip from T	Ayuso: "Porque es	Difundiendo el hu	¿Cuenta atrás par	131	There is surprising	4118	96.500	1084	0,0552642487	#humor #viral #po	13.8K		17-2-2022	18-04-2022	1:57	2	Humourous depic	TV	Leaders (IDA + C	entertainment	transversally appe
94	Obama during his	"Hold up (x10). L	Igual que en Espa	"Cómo reacciona	492	There is a discussi	143700	1.800.000	1153	0,08074722222	#Lentejas #España		2783	21-06-2021	18-04-2022	0:57	2	"This is Spain"	TV	Leader (Obama)	admiration	transversally appe
95	The user focuses	"Aúpa a todos y to	FerMando Grand		186	Everyone either ex	30100	183.100	1917	0,1758765702	#humor #comedy	98.9K		8-8-2021	18-04-2022	0:30	1	Funny moment	TikTok	User	laugther	transversally appe
96	News broadcast ac	News anchor: "Le	Aprender lenguaj	"Advertencia dura	745	Completely dismi	3112	170.700	2020	0,0344288225	#irenemontero #u		8467	16-2-2022	18-04-2022	0:15	1	Buffoonery of Mi	YT	Party member (M	mockery	(far) right
97	An image of Putin	Song in the backg	-	"Si Putin ataca Esp	1717	Following along w	18200	1000000	6985	0,026902	#rusia #putin #esp	43K		27-2-2022	18-04-2022	0:14	2	Pro-Abascal	TikTok	Leader (Abascal)	pride	(far) right
98	Cecilio G intervie	Cecilio: "Un pa	Cecilio G defi	"Los politicos sois	51	Some people cont	7483	136.100	95	0,05605437179	#cecilio #ceci #ce		1465	16-2-2022	18-04-2022	0:38	2	All political politi	Rufián's YT chan	Leader (Rufián)	dismissal	transversally appe
99	Gabriel Rufián sp	Rufián: "Doceava	Décimo segunda	-	1837	Mostly jokes abou	174600	1.400.000	3908	0,1288178571	#españa #política	131.6K		9-2-2022	18-04-2022	0:07	2	Funny moment	Parliament YT ch	Leader (Rufián)	entertainment	transversally appe
100	Santiago Abascal s	Abascal: "Al señor	"A la gente no le p	Sound (principal)	2530	Most first comme	125800	1.800.000	13300	0,07868333333	#vox #vox_espana	10.6K		16-2-2022	18-04-2022	2:23	2	Against governme	Parliament YT ch	Leader (Abascal)	anger, pride	transversally appe