

- Zaremberg, Gisela, and Alvaro Fernando Guzmán Lucero. 2019. "Aborto, movimientos y femocracias: un análisis relacional." *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* (IIS-UNAM) 81 (1): 143–77.
- Zaremberg Gisela, Katya Salas, and María Dolores López Jara. 2019. "Buscando brújula: política de transversalidad de género en el nivel municipal en México (2006–2018)." In *Marchas y contramarchas en las políticas locales de género: dinámicas territoriales y ciudadanía de las mujeres en América Latina*, ed. Ana Laura Rodríguez Gustá. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

Antigender Activism in Peru and Its Impact on State Policy

Stéphanie Rousseau, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú

doi:10.1017/S1743923X20000070, e5

In Peru, the adoption of a new school curriculum based on gender equality and nondiscrimination against sexual minorities led to the mobilization in 2016 of organizations connected to conservative churches under the slogan *Con Mis Hijos No Te Metas* (Don't Mess with My Children). This new countermovement uses street protests, the courts, and Congress to disseminate an antigender agenda that goes beyond its initial opposition to sexual education. Organizations in the countermovement consider the concept of gender to be a dangerous imperialist ideology, arguing that the state violates individual freedoms when it uses gender as one of the pillars of public policy.

This essay analyzes this movement through its actors, activities, and links to party politics. It shows that the movement is part of a transnational dynamic that benefits from Peru's political context of weak institutions, instability, and a high degree of legitimacy of religion in the public sphere.

TRANSNATIONAL ANTIGENDER ACTIVISM IN LATIN AMERICA

As the birthplace of one of Latin America's strongest transnational antigender organizations, Peru is a central case to study contemporary conservative politics and its negative impact on women's and sexual minorities' rights. The transnational religious right movement called #ConMisHijosNoTeMetas (Don't Mess with My Children or Leave My Kids Alone) was created in Peru in late 2016 by some nongovernmental

organizations connected to conservative Evangelical churches. Its most visible leader, Christian Rosas, trained in international law and politics at the Virginia-based Evangelical Liberty University, heads the conservative Evangelical civil association *Coordinadora Nacional Pro Familia*. Rosas frequently tours Latin American capitals, and as a result, the movement has extended to countries such as Bolivia, Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia, and Mexico.

The impact of conservative Evangelicals on politics varies but can be significant, delaying or impeding reforms aimed at developing state policies around sexual and reproductive rights. Opposition to such policies focuses on the state's efforts to promote sexual education in the curriculum from the point of view of a gender-equal and sexual diversity framework. But other issues, such as equal marriage, adoption rights for homosexuals, and the decriminalization of abortion, are also at stake. In Colombia, for example, the Peace Agreement signed by the government with the insurgent FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) was defeated in a 2016 referendum in part because of the campaign of antigender activists. In Ecuador, social protests arose in 2017 against a bill on gender violence, in which some articles dealt with education and sexual orientation.

While conservatism fueled by religious dogma is not new in Latin America, in the last five years or so, it has gained tremendous terrain in the institutional sphere, mostly through renovated activist repertoires. In Peru, the first #ConMisHijosNoTeMetas march was held in March 2017 and gathered approximately 25,000 people, according to the media. It was organized to oppose a new school curriculum adopted by the Ministry of Education in 2016, which was the immediate event prompting the formation of the movement. It launched its protest campaign against a curriculum that addresses gender equality and sexual orientation within an inclusive and antidiscrimination framework. Religious conservative actors accuse the state of causing sexual perversion and identity confusion. They insist that respect for individual freedoms requires the state to avoid addressing sexuality and gender in school curricula, leaving these matters in the hands of families, but also, notably, churches.

GENDER AND PARTY POLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY PERU

Peruvian gender politics has been marked by strong battles for decades. The most important political party in the country since the 1990s, Fujimorismo,

was a very ambivalent, if not detrimental, force for women's sexual and reproductive rights during the rule of Alberto Fujimori (1990–2000).¹ His government introduced the right to life from conception onward in the 1993 Constitution, and while his government promoted the first Peruvian family planning policy to provide free public access to a range of modern contraception techniques, notably sterilization, it also implemented forced sterilization campaigns in rural areas in the mid-1990s (Ewig 2006; Rousseau 2007).

The end of the 1990s and early 2000s were characterized by strong disputes around the forced sterilization practices of the Fujimori regime (Coe 2004). Yet among those condemning these practices were not only feminist voices but also conservative actors who had not accepted that the Peruvian state had begun promoting publicly funded family planning services. This was only one dispute among several related to sexual and reproductive issues arising in the political sphere. The free distribution of the morning-after pill in public health facilities, for example, was finally adopted in 2016 after more than 10 years of political and legal battles; the project to establish civil union for same-sex couples was defeated in Congress in 2015²; the battle for the regulation of the right to therapeutic abortion, a right that had existed in Peru since 1924 but could not be implemented because of the absence of a state-sanctioned protocol, was resolved in 2014 but still faces a lot of hostility, even among some health professionals.

In all these battles, the key reform proponents were feminist and LGTBI activists, sometimes along with health professionals. The party system was predominantly opposed to reforms, and the role of key members of the executive, usually nonaffiliated technocrats, was instrumental in the gains made by these activists. Fujimori was first elected with the support of some Evangelical churches, but this support faded soon after the 1990 elections. When Fujimorismo regained strength after being almost wiped out in the early 2000s, it located itself clearly on the more conservative side of these disputes and created alliances with new Evangelical actors who had grown in strength recently. Keiko Fujimori, Alberto's daughter and former first lady, became the leader of the Fujimorista Fuerza

1. Fujimorismo is more aptly described as a political force that has manifested itself through different political organizations (parties) over time, even during the rule of Alberto Fujimori. Starting with the profound transformation of Peruvian state and society during the 1990s, Fujimorismo remains a key marker of political cleavage in Peru today.

2. A new Bill on Equal Marriage was presented in February 2017 but still awaited debate at the time of writing this essay.

Popular party and ran as presidential candidate twice, in 2011 and 2016. While she was defeated in both attempts, her party became the main opposition force, especially as of 2016, when it managed to gain control of Congress.

Fuerza Popular is one of the leading conservative parties in today's Peru. It is not surprising, therefore, that the religious right's agenda has found strong echoes within its ranks. But to a great extent, the main impetus against sexual and reproductive rights does not come from the party system but rather from civil society, mainly some neo-Pentecostal Evangelical churches and some sectors of the Catholic Church, along with secular civil organizations affiliated with these churches. Thus, Peru can be compared with several cases in Europe in which parties have made opportunistic gains or have been created based on this new cycle of sexual/gender politics launched by a variety of civil society actors (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017).

THE RISE OF NEW CONSERVATIVE ALLIANCES

In the last few years, a new alliance of conservative sectors mobilized directly or indirectly by the Catholic Church and neo-Pentecostal Evangelical churches has produced what can probably be characterized as Peru's strongest social movement at this moment. These sectors mobilize around traditional conservative issues such as their opposition to the decriminalization of abortion, but their collaboration is also based on a relatively new discursive frame: their opposition to gender as a concept used in public policy. From that perspective, it belongs to the global right's antigender countermovement (Corredor 2019).

This countermovement propagates a discourse against the existence of what it calls a socially disruptive and imperialist "gender ideology." This expression dates from the 1990s, when it was coined at the highest ranks of the Vatican and disseminated in Latin America beginning in 1998 through a text authored by a Peruvian bishop, Oscar Alzamora Revoredo, titled "La ideología de género: Sus peligros y alcance" (Gender Ideology: Its Perils and Scope) (Cornejo-Valle and Pichardo 2017). What is new in Peru and other Latin American countries is that opposition to "gender ideology" has become the basis for social mobilization in the streets, political battle in Congress, judicial claims, and widespread discussion in the media. To explain why it took around 15 years for this discourse to come out of the Catholic Church's highest ranks and form the basis of a

new conservative activism, we need to pay attention to political systems and to the progress made by feminist and LGBTQI movements in generating legal and policy reforms.

Since 2016 in Peru, while the #ConMisHijosNoTeMetas movement has used street protests, an organization of Catholic activists, *Padres en Acción* (Parents in Action), has brought the fight to the courtroom. It asked a judge to declare the school curriculum anticonstitutional, and thus it effectively managed to block the implementation of some parts of it for almost two years, after the Superior Court of Lima found their claim partly valid in July 2017. This caused outrage in liberal circles. In April 2019, the Supreme Court dismissed the first judicial decision and thus allowed the Ministry of Education to fully implement its new school curriculum. Yet this led to renewed actions by these religious conservative groups, who protested in front of Congress in May 2019.

The success of conservative religious sectors is due in part to their capacity to penetrate the political system. In contrast with other Latin American countries, in Peru, the rise of Evangelical churches has not led to the creation of strong electoral machines. This can be partly explained by the relatively low proportion of Evangelicals in the population, 14% according to the 2017 Census (Pérez Guadalupe 2017). That said, Peru's particularly weak party system facilitates the inclusion of a number of Evangelical pastors as party candidates, "invited" by party leaders. Fujimorismo, as part of Keiko Fujimori's strategy to consolidate her *Fuerza Popular* party base from 2011 onward, appealed to Catholic and Evangelical churches for support, welcoming candidates who clearly advocated for a conservative anti-gender agenda. A number of Evangelical pastors created an alliance, the *Coordinadora Cristiana Cívica Pro Valores*, right after the first round of the 2016 national elections. Their objective was to lobby presidential candidates to ensure that issues such as civil union and the decriminalization of abortion would not advance. Just weeks before the vote for the second round of the presidential elections, Keiko Fujimori publicly declared her allegiance to the *Coordinadora Cristiana's* agenda.

While Fujimori lost the presidential election, some of the conservative candidates managed to get elected and were particularly active during 2016–2019, when Fujimorismo controlled Congress. Members of *Opus Dei* and of conservative Evangelical churches in Congress, while still a small minority, were vocal advocates of the critiques against state policy. They were particularly visible in *Fuerza Popular* but were also present in other parties. An example is Julio Rosas, father of Christian Rosas (leader

of #ConMisHijosNoTeMetas) and Evangelical pastor of Alianza Cristiana y Misionera, who was elected with Fuerza Popular in 2011 but moved to another opposition party, Alianza para el Progreso, for the 2016 elections.

The 2016 Congress was a particularly favorable context for conservative religious politics, with around 20 out of 130 members openly endorsing the cause of CNHNTM and other campaigns such as the Marcha por la Vida, a yearly rally against the decriminalization of abortion.³ In this conservative group, we find Evangelical and Catholic members of Congress with different styles in terms of expressing their religious beliefs. Some are pastors, others refer to God in many of their public statements, and others are more discreet. Many are women. Even though these members were a minority in Congress and were not all from Fuerza Popular, gender politics played an important role in the confrontations between the executive and the legislature, leading to the removal of two successive ministers of education in 2016 and 2017 and, in early 2018, the resignation of President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski — although the latter had nothing to do with gender politics per se. Even members of Congress who were not particularly associated with religious conservatism ended up supporting the motions to remove these ministers, in a clear attempt to destabilize the government.

The agenda of conservative religious sectors has moved beyond opposition to school curricula toward a project of defining what “gender” should mean for public policy in general. Such is the intent behind some bills presented by conservative members of Congress in early 2019.⁴ Bill 3610, presented by then president of Congress Fujimorista Luis Galarreta, proposes to define gender as meaning “woman and man” in all the legal norms and public policies of the Peruvian state. It also seeks to replace a number of expressions containing gender that are used in state documents — such as “gender perspective” or “gender violence,” for example — with the concept of equality between women and men. Bill 3610 explicitly defines the expressions to be proscribed as representing a “gender ideology.” It considers equality between women and men to mean equality before the law and equal opportunities, along with “respect for their similarities and

3. Castro, Jonathan, “Religión o Estado: los congresistas del evangelio y su alianza católica en el Perú”, Ojo Público, June 7, 2018. Available online at: <https://ojo-publico.com/730/religion-o-estado-los-congresistas-del-evangelio-en-el-peru>.

4. “Galarreta y Arimborgo sustentan proyectos de ley contra la ‘ideología de género,’” *El Comercio*, March 13, 2019, <https://elcomercio.pe/politica/luis-galarreta-tamar-arimborgo-sustentan-proyectos-ley-ideologia-genero-noticia-616334> (accessed February 4, 2020).

differences” and the “recognition and protection of their characters that distinguish them and are complementary.”⁵ The same bill seeks to modify the name and attributions of the ministry in charge of women’s affairs, which is currently called Ministerio de la Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables (Woman and Vulnerable Populations). The proposed new name is Ministerio de la Familia, Mujer y Poblaciones Vulnerables, thus adding “family” to its name. Its mandate would consider the needs of both men and women understood as members of the family with the right to state protection against discrimination and violence, thus negating gender relations as being socially detrimental to women’s rights in general.

CONCLUSION

The challenge mounted by religious conservative actors has multiple consequences, since it delegitimizes the basic term used by feminist advocates — gender — which has made important inroads in state policy since the 1990s. Not only are several dimensions of sexual and reproductive rights seriously endangered or negated; the conflict has taken on a discursive battle around the meaning of the term “gender,” which generates a great deal of confusion within the population at large and within the media. With a political and judicial system in deep crisis because of the damage done by massive corruption scandals, Peruvian conservative actors have found a perfect context in which to mount their attack.

As this case shows quite starkly, gender has become more than ever at the center of political disputes — a nodal point of articulation of conservative sectors dominated by religious actors, struggling against an increasingly diverse set of social movements defending women’s rights and sexual diversity. The progress in engendering state policy has now entered a critical phase of backlash politics. Feminist political theory and social movement theory can help analyze the resulting tensions brought about by the combination of democratic politics, weak states, and precarious rule of law.

REFERENCES

Coe, Anna-Britt. 2004. “From Anti-natalist to Ultra-conservative: Restricting Reproductive Choice in Peru.” *Reproductive Health Matters* 12 (24): 56–69.

5. Text of the bill is available at http://www.leyes.congreso.gob.pe/Documentos/2016_2021/Proyectos_de_Ley_y_de_Resoluciones_Legislativas/PL0361020181107.pdf (accessed June 14, 2019).

- Cornejo-Valle, Mónica, and J. Ignacio Pichardo. 2017. "La 'ideología de género' frente a los derechos sexuales y reproductivos: El escenario español." *Cadernos Pagu*, no. 50 <https://doi.org/10.1590/18094449201700500009>.
- Corredor, Elizabeth S. 2019. "Unpacking 'Gender Ideology' and the Global Right's Antigender Countermovement." *Signs* 44 (3): 613–38.
- Ewig, Christina. 2006. "Hijacking Global Feminism: Feminists, the Catholic Church, and the Family Planning Debacle in Peru." *Feminist Studies* 32 (3): 632–59.
- Kuhar Roman, and David Paternotte, eds. 2017. *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing Against Equality*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Pérez Guadalupe, José Luis. 2017. *Entre Dios y el César: El impacto político de los evangélicos en el Perú y en América Latina*. Lima: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Instituto de Estudios Social Cristianos.
- Rousseau, Stéphanie. 2007. "The Politics of Reproductive Health in Peru: Gender and Social Policy in the Global South." *Social Politics* 14 (1): 93–125.

The Right-Wing Backlash in Brazil and Beyond

Leigh A. Payne, University of Oxford

Andreza Aruska de Souza Santos, University of Oxford

doi:10.1017/S1743923X20000057, e6

Who is entitled to have rights? This essay examines how right-wing movements attempt to prevent individuals, especially women and members of LGBT groups, from accessing equal rights through the use of terms such as "moral worth" and "family values." At the core of our discussion of the backlash against social rights in Latin America is the need to compare and contrast the case examined here with similar movements outside the region. The vast enterprise of studies on right-wing movements in Western Europe rarely travels outside a few national boundaries. Eastern Europe and the United States are occasionally included. For the most part, right-wing movements are not seen as comparable. Sometimes the reason for excluding Latin America is expressly stated, particularly because the historical experiences are so distinct — for example, the long duration of personal or military dictatorships. Interpretations of right-wing movements in Latin America by scholars outside the region tend to view them as associated with the

The framework for this article is adapted from Payne ([forthcoming](#)).