

Social media and political polarization as threats to democracy

As mídias sociais e a polarização política como ameaças à democracia

Las redes sociales y la polarización política como amenazas a la democracia

Received: 06/14/2024 | Revised: 07/10/2024 | Accepted: 07/11/2024 | Published: 07/14/2024

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Abstract

Technological resources inaugurated a standard economic order, called surveillance capitalism from the perspective of Shoshana Zuboff. Characterized by informational curation, the new model is the result of prediction that is made possible with the capture and use of personal data for commercial purposes. The new social enclosure caused by the formation of informational bubbles is, today, one of the phenomena of amplification of political polarization and, consequently, of the dissemination of hate speech. The radicalization of debates, the mismatch of different ideas and the manipulation of personal data for unknown purposes by internet users are necessary confrontation points for understanding the harmful interference of technology on modern democracy. So, the objective of this study is to understand whether informational curation is related to the increasing polarization and the spread of extremist discourses observed in recent years.

Keywords: Polarization; Information bubbles; Hate speeches; Democracy.

Resumo

Os recursos tecnológicos inauguraram uma norma ordem econômica denominado "capitalismo de vigilância". Caracterizado pela curadoria informacional, o novo modelo é fruto da previsão que se viabiliza com a captura e a utilização dos dados pessoais para fins comerciais. O novo enclausuramento social provocado pela formação das bolhas informacionais é, hoje, um dos fenômenos de amplificação da polarização política e, por consequência, de disseminação dos discursos de ódio. A radicalização dos debates, o desencontro de ideias diversas e a manipulação dos dados pessoais para fins desconhecidos pelos internautas são pontos de enfrentamento necessário para a compreensão da interferência prejudicial da tecnologia sobre a democracia moderna. Assim, o objetivo deste estudo é compreender se a curadoria informacional está relacionada com a crescente polarização e a disseminação de discursos extremistas observada nos últimos anos.

Palavras-chave: Polarização; Bolhas informacionais; Discursos de ódio; Democracia.

Resumen

Los recursos tecnológicos han inaugurado un nuevo orden económico denominado "capitalismo de vigilancia". Caracterizado por la curaduría informacional, el nuevo modelo es fruto de la predicción que se viabiliza con la captura y el uso de datos personales con fines comerciales. El nuevo encierro social provocado por la formación de burbujas informacionales es, hoy en día, uno de los fenómenos que amplifican la polarización política y, por consecuencia, la difusión de discursos de odio. La radicalización de los debates, el desencuentro de ideas diversas y la manipulación de datos personales con fines desconocidos por los internautas son puntos de enfrentamiento necesarios para comprender la interferencia perjudicial de la tecnología sobre la democracia moderna. Por tanto, el objetivo de este estudio es comprender si la curación de información está relacionada con la creciente polarización y difusión de discursos extremistas observada en los últimos años.

Palabras clave: Polarización; Burbujas informacionales; Discursos de odio; Democracia.

1. Introduction

The present article analyzes how technology has shaped social relationships, behavior patterns, and even marketing practices. The Digital Age has brought about a predictive model based on user surveillance, collecting their personal data as an

unconscious method of inducing their actions and thoughts.

Adopting the normative-deductive model, based on national and international bibliographic research, and using the theoretical framework of surveillance capitalism presented by Shoshana Zuboff, as well as the idea of polarization as a threat to democratic equality developed by Jacques Rancière, this work will delve into the formation of informational bubbles as a phenomenon arising from the current business model.

The objective is to understand whether informational curation is related to the increasing polarization and the spread of extremist discourses observed in recent years. To this end, first, the concept of polarization will be explored, tracing the factors that define the idea of radicalization in debate. Next, the way informational bubbles can promote the widening of intolerances will be studied.

The harmful effects of this process on democracy will later be evidenced by this study, which, in the final part, will address possible alternatives to combat this detrimental fragmentation reinforced by new technologies.

The topic is highly relevant when considering that, despite all the conveniences brought by the expansion of digital media, it is necessary to raise awareness among users about the behavioral manipulation behind the capitalist strategy, which, in reality, poses a true threat to the Democratic Rule of Law.

2. Methodology

In the present study, qualitative research was carried out through a bibliographic review defined as a narrative review, which consists of a methodology for comprehensive publication, suitable for describing and discussing the development or "state of the art" of a specific topic, from a perspective theoretical or contextual. Narrative reviews do not reveal the sources of information used, the methodology for searching references, nor the criteria for evaluating and selecting works. Essentially, they consist of an analysis of the literature available in books and articles from printed or electronic magazines, based on the author's personal interpretation and critical analysis (Rother, 2007). It involves reading, studying and analyzing books, scientific articles and legislative and journalistic texts by researchers who have studied directly or indirectly the proposed topic, using doctrine, Google Scholar and the periodical portal provided by CAPES as a database. This approach aligns with the view that "researchers are increasingly discovering that a good researcher should make use of all available resources that can aid in understanding the studied problem" (Goldenberg, 2004, p. 67). The methodological support for this research is based on the studies of Jacques Rancière and Shoshana Zuboff.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Impact of Digital Networks on Polarization

To address polarization, it is necessary to seek a theoretical foundation in the work of Jacques Rancière (2014), a French philosopher known for his critique of the notion of political and social polarization. He argues that polarization is a concept that reinforces inequality and oppression because it suggests that there are groups of people who are naturally superior or inferior to others. Polarization, then, is a form of social differentiation based on an arbitrary division between those who have the power to engage in politics and those who do not. This division is maintained by a dominant social order that claims certain people are incapable of actively participating in politics and decision-making (Rancière, 2014).

Polarization is a form of oppression that hinders democratic equality and limits the possibility of significant political and social changes. The author advocates for a politics based on equality and democratic participation of all individuals, without distinction between those who have power and those who do not. To change this unjust social order, it is necessary to abandon the notion of polarization and embrace democratic equality. According to him, politics should be understood as a

space for mutual recognition and cooperation, rather than a struggle between opposing groups, especially in representative democratic systems.

From this perspective, the polarization of political discourse can be seen as a phenomenon capable of impeding democratic equality and mutual recognition among individuals, as it is based on an arbitrary division between those considered capable of engaging in politics and those deemed incapable, establishing a dominant political order in which certain people have no voice or ability to participate actively in politics.

From another approach, polarization can be seen as a social and political phenomenon characterized by the division of society into distinct and opposing ideological groups. These groups tend to have divergent opinions on various issues and often interact in a hostile and distrustful manner, amplifying intolerance, which is a hallmark of polarization, particularly regarding economic, health, political, and social issues (Rosa, 2021).

It is noteworthy that digital networks play a role in expanding spaces for social interaction and political expression, which can highlight the movement of polarization. This is because the very structure of the internet connects different users with diverse or similar political positions, allowing them to express their political opinions. In this context, social networks become an important public space for debating political positions and identities that influence political processes (Goya et al., 2019).

However, social media does not function as an interconnected public sphere in the Habermasian sense of producing rationalities to construct political debate and public opinion (Magrani, 2014), as digital media often express passions and plurality following a logic of political clashes and discursive confrontations. Social networks have become a space for symbolic disputes over the interpretation of political events through user discourse, especially with the popularization of social media and its use for political mobilization (Goya et al., 2019).

The phenomenon of social and political polarization is characteristic of the interactivity of social networks (online or offline), where there is a tendency towards homophily, which can be understood as a principle of greater interaction between similar people with the same ideological affinities (McPherson et al., 2001).

Social networks tend to reinforce this tendency by creating conditions for organizing ideological circles among people who share the same point of view, mainly through the operation of interaction algorithms that lead to the formation of filter bubbles and echo chambers. The establishment of these feedback spaces of information and interaction among individuals with similar thoughts reinforces and expands the movement of political and social polarization (Del Vicario et al., 2017). Sunstein (2017) states that this movement of polarization poses a risk to the dynamics of liberal democracy, primarily by creating environments conducive to the spread of misinformation and fake news.

Thus, digital networks have expanded polarization in various ways. Firstly, social networks allow people to connect and share information with those who share their opinions and beliefs, a situation that can lead to the strengthening of polarized opinion groups and the widening of the division between them. Additionally, social networks are also a source of news and information, but they are often used to disseminate false and distorted information, contributing to polarization.

Moreover, polarization in digital networks can also be exacerbated by recommendation and prediction algorithms that suggest content to users based on their interests and browsing behaviors. As data on a specific user's information search and consumption accumulates, the ability of algorithms to personalize searches becomes more refined. Therefore, while search engines typically facilitate information consumption, they can also increasingly shape the types of information users encounter. As user inputs (e.g., search terms, clicks) reflect their existing political preferences, the use of search engines may eventually lead to users being segregated into their own ideological and political views (Cho et al., 2020).

Recommendation algorithms on social networks can also form "filter bubbles" around users, limiting their exposure to

different perspectives and strengthening the polarization of political discourse. In general, polarization is a concerning trend in societies, and the expansion of polarization through digital networks is seen as a challenge to democracy and social harmony. According to Rancière's (2014) thought, the polarization of political discourse is a barrier to democratic equality and active participation of all individuals in politics. It is important, then, to take measures to promote democratic and respectful discussion on social networks and combat the spread of false information. This can allow for the construction of a more equal and democratic society.

Social networks have been viewed with suspicion regarding the expansion of political discourse polarization for several reasons: (i) the formation of filter bubbles: recommendation algorithms tend to show users content similar to what they are already interested in, creating "ghettos" that limit exposure to different perspectives; (ii) the dissemination of false information and the increase of misinformation; (iii) the favoring of hate speech and political intolerance; (iv) the expansion of the herd effect due to the widespread (and unrestricted) tendency to irrationally and uncritically defend a certain political bias.

The polarization of political discourse is detrimental to democracy because it limits the possibility of dialogue and cooperation among individuals with different perspectives. When political discourse becomes highly polarized, people tend to refuse to listen to or consider divergent opinions, making it more difficult to find democratic solutions to complex problems. In extreme cases, the fragmentation of society and the strengthening of hate groups threaten the stability of democracy.

3.2 Informational Bubbles and the Amplification of Polarization

The information society elevates personal data to the status of primary commodity or value. Providers of goods and services, now having access to personal data from billions of users, benefit from a viable and effective platform for mapping consumer profiles and structuring strategic advertising. It is now possible, with great ease, to track the likes and preferences of each user solely based on the traces and signals left by their online navigation.

Shoshana Zuboff (2021), dedicated to studying the impacts of technology on society, reflects on the creation of information bubbles as a phenomenon stemming from surveillance capitalism itself—an economic order based on prediction and certainty. Under this order, data collection by companies aims to feed algorithms, thereby developing each internet user's individual experience with greater accuracy, resulting in profit generated by personalized consumption.

Through the extraction, mining, and sale of data based on prediction from targeted online advertising, human experience becomes the raw material rather than the product itself. In the context of diminishing individual sovereignty, the author warns about the correlation between information bubbles and polarization. Restricting content to familiar information that only reinforces individual perceptions ultimately leads to a loss of empathy towards differing opinions and values. This reveals a dangerous effect: the manipulation of human opinions and behaviors (Zuboff, 2021).

Regarding algorithmic content personalization, Eli Pariser (2012, p. 50) describes it as "prediction mechanisms that constantly create and refine a theory about who we are and what we will do or desire next (...) creating a universe of information unique to each of us (...) altering (...) ideas and information."

The filter bubble or informational bubble creates an environment of pre-selected ideas and pre-approved by the internet user, reducing their access only to content that aligns with their values, ideas, and beliefs. Understanding this phenomenon necessarily involves these concepts: (i) each user is isolated in their bubble; (ii) the bubble is invisible, meaning there is no autonomy in choosing filtering criteria; seemingly accurate and true realities are actually immensely partial; and (iii) there is no prior expression of will or interest upon entering the bubble (Pariser, 2012, p. 15).

The political fragmentation resulting from filter bubbles represents a new form of political marketing highly influenced by the metamorphosis of consumption dynamics, no longer centered on satisfying basic human needs but rather on

reaffirming subjectivities. Similar to consumption, the quest is for human self-expression, as "voters increasingly evaluate candidates according to how they represent an aspired version of themselves" (Pariser, 2012, p. 141).

Mason (2013) defines polarization based on two initial propositions: (i) polarization regarding specific political issues, which strengthens extremes by erasing the center, known as positional issue, and (ii) polarization resulting from partisan ties or the reinforcement of prejudice and anger towards the competing party, known as behavioral polarization.

As a third way, affective polarization emerges, defined by the degree of belonging to a certain political group, generating negative feelings towards the opposition and predisposing mutual strengthening through distrust, displeasure, and antipathy (Shanto et al., 2019). The role of empathy here cannot be underestimated, as it intensifies political polarization. Contrary to the initial notion that people would unite and be more receptive to diversity, empathy, reinforced by digital groupings, tends to sharpen political divisions by strengthening personal convictions and increasing intolerance towards opposing ideas (Simas et al., 2020).

In a scenario where individuals are drawn towards similar political opinions, they are less likely to understand the opposite viewpoint. The deepening division and increased animosity between political groups stem from the union of those who share similar political beliefs. Thus, information bubbles create an environment conducive to mass mobilization of unconscious affection as a mechanism to increase resistance to change.

If information bubbles provide a significant multiplier effect, exposing individuals to targeted partisan content, the rise of affective polarization is a direct consequence. The formation of identity between parties transcends politics and permeates personal relationships, as argued by the authors (Shanto et al., 2019).

In "Madison's Constitution Under Stress: A Developmental Analysis of Political Polarization," Paul Pierson and Eric Schickler (2020) seek to understand the roots of political polarization, which, although always present in U.S. history, has intensified in recent decades. The association of media with parties has been present in American history since the 19th century, when conspiracy theories about slavery were propagated. Today, however, the intertwining of political ideologies and social media reinforces Republican conservatism, fostering the growth of what is known as hate media. Madisonian pluralism is weakened by intense polarization founded on the gathering of groups around increasingly radical identity aspects. The ideological differences between the two major political parties in the United States and the tendency to aggregate towards the extreme position are factors that hinder bipartisanship solutions. Ideological differences are hardly recognized in this new reality, where there is no commitment to respecting beliefs that differ from individual convictions.

In recent years, Brazil has experienced a widespread crisis of representation through the manipulation and instrumentalization of emotions. The inseparable link between politics and emotions allows discourse to engage citizens' imaginations, captivated by a discourse alternating between fear and hope. Thus, "affection manifests itself in encounters, and politics is made of encounters. It is impossible to think of politics without affection. This has been refined over the years with political marketing strategies" (Jornal da USP, 2022). Fear and anger are discourses that create the figure of the common enemy as a factor of cohesion among people. Confirmation bias, stimulated by bubbles, articulates the expansion of radical groups.

In the field of social psychology, the role of affect and social media is studied in persuading and disseminating certain extremist and nationalist ideals, such as anti-immigration, anti-corruption, and anti-minority sentiments: "Brazilians are considered (...) the most active on social networks (...) hate is the emotion that most leads users to share content and news (...) thus the emergence of political actors, especially from the far right in Brazil" (Oliveira Junior and Xavier, 2019, p. 225).

As seen, affective polarization, an extension of political polarization, is a phenomenon amplified by algorithmic curation. Personal exposure to familiar content that confirms pre-existing beliefs creates an environment unfavorable to

dialogue and diversity. Hate speech, characterized by the choice of a common enemy, is one of the consequences of empathy/affection that unites those who share the same political opinions, making them intolerant of alternative perspectives. The internet, once seen as a potential for political-democratic engagement and a space for the development of participatory and deliberative dialogues between government and the population (Magrani, 2019), now harbors antidemocratic acts arising from the creation of bubbles that intensify political disputes.

3.3 The threatened democracy

José Luis Bolzan de Moraes and Edilene Lôbo (2019) are skeptical of the optimistic view that the public sphere is expanding due to the emergence of new technologies. For them, the internet has shed light not only on the phenomenon of users' loss of privacy but also on the rupture of the ideals of equality and free will of the actors involved in the democratic game:

The use of big data to exclude or prevent access to information, places, or goods simply due to economic status, gender, skin color (...) among other discriminatory variables (...) all of this leads to the hijacking of democracy, when its rules are not respected, when it fails to make these same rules effective (...) it is the "novelty" that seems to indicate the "end" of utopian cyber-democracy and the emergence of a critical reading that points towards technodemocracy (De Moraes, Lôbo, 2019, p. 35).

Despite all the conveniences provided by the personalization of information bubbles – where desired content can be accessed swiftly based on a system of suggestions corresponding to the user's profile and viewing/liking/purchasing history, as seen with Amazon, Netflix, and YouTube – one must not lose sight of the fact that, alongside cognitive comfort, there exists a real democratic threat. Without critical awareness, internet users distance themselves from diversity of perceptions and ideas, essential to the activation of the virtual public sphere. Without pluralization, there is a compromise to democratic discourse.

With the intensification of individual conceptions in the digital realm, divergent or antagonistic ideas seem not to transcend the limits of the informational bubble, thus failing to engage in dialogue with each other. The silencing of diverse viewpoints reveals a widespread tendency towards the radicalization of political stances that become hostile to counterpoints. The polarization of debate spaces may serve as "the embryo for ideological extremism and harm to the democratic public sphere" (Magrani, 2020, p. 125).

In the process of profile mapping, which underpins surveillance capitalism, users confine themselves to their pre-existing convictions, constantly reinforced by selectively placed advertisements and promotions within their reach (Martins, Tateoki, 2019). The context discourages the ideal of consensus and harmonization of political opinions, characteristic of a plural environment. Content direction and the resulting radicalization favor the erosion of social cohesion and rationality in deliberative processes.

Pariser (2012, p. 19) notes that "in the bubble there is less space for chance encounters," creating "a world built from what is familiar," a world in which "we have nothing to learn." By reinforcing user choices, the filter bubble perpetuates an endless cycle of "click, filter, and personalize," trapping users in a static and simplistic version of reality.

Immersed in information bubbles, individuals unquestioningly receive information that comes to their attention, even if untrue or distorted. Civic discourse is heavily compromised by blind cults formed collectively by bubbles: "(...) filters are forms of manipulation that place the misinformed user at the service of shady political interests (...) due to the uninterrupted repetition of the same, the one-sided view eventually generates fixed, dulled beliefs (...)" (Santaella, 2018, p. 7).

In bubbles, personal beliefs create a false picture of social plurality, as everyone seems to agree with each other and present the same actions and ideas on a particular matter. There is a false impression of expanding debate based on illusory

consensus or supposed discourse maturity, when access is limited to similar ideological content shared by highly interactive individuals on social networks.

Filters reveal a detrimentally paternalistic character because they "may imply restrictions on fundamental rights and guarantees, autonomy of individuals, and freedom of expression, being generally detrimental to debate in the connected public sphere" (Magrani, 2020, p. 119). If the consolidation of the democratic regime is reflected in the activity of deliberative processes without the "filtering" of conflicting ideas, the fragmentation caused by information bubbles represents a true risk to it.

The avoidance of integrative possibilities by informational curation is detrimental to democracy. Unexpected encounters positively impact society because they offer opportunities for overcoming and revisiting paradigms or crystallized individual behaviors (Sustein, 2017). Extremism resulting from bubbles does not engage with the democratic regime as it leads to the phenomenon of balkanization by weakening the "social glue" that generates individual belonging to a particular group or community (Magrani, 2019).

According to Jacques Rancière (2014), the discourse of intolerance, extremism, and authoritarianism that emerges with polarization challenges the democratic ideal and political justice, especially as it results in the excessive concentration of power in the hands of a dominant elite and the exclusion of certain social groups from political life. The closed and aggressive identity formation, including a common enemy, denies the recognition of the adversary, serving as a stimulus for violence and discrimination against minority groups, as well as rights holders.

It is also necessary to highlight the lack of transparency or ethics of companies operating digital platforms and handling large volumes of data, according to the political and economic outcomes they target. With the manipulation of human intellect by algorithms, what prevails is no longer the quality or truthfulness of the discourse itself, but rather the figure of "the most sponsored, the most engaged, the fastest growing, or the one that captures the most attention" (Costa, 2021, p. 24).

Regarding the lack of awareness or authorization of individuals regarding the predictive model of information bubbles, the loss of informative self-determination of the voter, a true offense to the free electoral process, is an immediate consequence. The propagation of personalized content is one of the tools used by electoral campaigns for voter manipulation. The success of electoral marketing reflects the social experiment to which citizens are subjected, reacting to stimuli without discursive autonomy or dialogue establishment. The voter no longer chooses what they want to publicize or make available to others; rather, they are induced to share what is already pre-programmed (Silva, 2019, 2022).

The legitimacy of the democratic system is thus heavily challenged and undermined by the widening polarization, which, revealing violent and adversarial discourses, promotes social disintegration. It is therefore necessary to reflect on ways to protect the Rule of Law in the face of the fragmented reality imposed by filter bubbles.

3.4 Fragmentation and the necessary protection of democratic integrity

As previously discussed, the polarization process is amplified by digital networks, notably through content personalization and the framing of individuals into filter bubbles. Segregating people into specific niches based on political, ideological, and social profiles, these spaces echo ideals and information of interest to the established group.

The clustering of people with similar profiles in ideological and political biases stresses the democratic system. This is because creating conducive environments for democracy, such as spaces for deliberation and social interaction, is crucial for political debate; polarization and fragmentation, however, hinder the creation of these spaces. In this context, the intervention of some force or power would be necessary to take measures that encourage communication among the diverse and the success of communities that fulfill a valuable social function, such as discussing political issues (Hartmann, 2010).

It becomes evident that promoting coexistence and tolerance among the unequal, ensuring communication among different communities in cyberspace, and encouraging plurality are essential tasks of the Rule of Law State and equally of digital platforms in seeking to implement measures that promote interaction of the diversity of ideas and people. Maintaining a cyberspace that includes different individuals with distinct perspectives is ultimately a public service in support of democracy. Regarding measures aimed at mitigating fragmentation, Magrani (2014) discusses:

[...] the maintenance of a civic common space in virtual environments should, from this perspective, also become a matter of public service. This could be proceduralized through the creation, at least in a subsidiary manner, of quality spaces conducive to debate, aiming to minimize fragmentation. These spaces would consist of online libraries, archives and compilations of information, discussion moderation services, support for activism, creation of forums for technical and specialized discussions, and mechanisms for summarizing arguments raised in discussions. This would provide the minimum necessary tools to ensure reliable debate spaces, allowing consultation, deliberation, and decision-making, affirming the prominent role of virtual spaces in the political landscape of contemporary societies.

Indeed, if individuals are exclusively exposed to narratives and people that reinforce their own thoughts, Habermasian democracy, considering biased virtual deliberation spaces, would be compromised. Hence the need for implementation of measures to mitigate fragmentation and polarization, improving the quality of political debate and deliberation spaces.

From this perspective, protecting the democratic integrity of deliberation spaces and public debate in a context of fragmentation is indeed a significant challenge for contemporary societies. With increased internet access and the spread of social networks, public debate and political participation have become more accessible but also more complex. The fragmentation of society, polarization, and the spread of false and manipulated information can undermine the integrity of the democratic process, as previously discussed.

Therefore, digital education can play a crucial role in protecting democratic integrity by helping develop skills to navigate and critically evaluate information available on the internet, identify reliable sources, and distinguish between facts and opinions. Additionally, it can contribute to promoting a culture of respect for diverse opinions and the value of evidence-based public debate, "even though it is a long-term process, particularly regarding policies restricting hate speech, racism, and discrimination against minorities" (Sampaio et al., 2021).

Digital education should be seen as an essential tool for shaping critical and active citizens in society. This includes promoting critical reading skills, reflective thinking, constructive dialogue, and active participation in political decision-making. Universal access, regardless of social and economic backgrounds, is crucial to ensuring a fair and equitable society.

Lastly, it is important to note that the responsibility lies not only with individuals but also with political institutions and governments to ensure that digital spaces are transformed into environments that are diverse and pluralistic in thoughts and discourse. Governments and democratic institutions should collaborate to promote policies and practices that protect and foster democracy, ensuring an environment conducive to healthy and constructive public debate.

4. Conclusion

The present research aimed to verify and understand whether informational curation is related to the growing polarization and propagation of extremist discourses observed in recent years. Based on the concept of surveillance capitalism and the idea of polarization as a threat to democratic equality, the formation of information bubbles was analyzed as a phenomenon arising from the current business model.

The concept of polarization was introduced, wherein the phenomenon is a characteristic of the interactivity of social networks (online or offline), where there is a tendency towards homophily. Polarization was also understood as a form of oppression that impedes democratic equality and limits the possibility of political and social change.

It was identified that digital networks have expanded polarization in various ways, allowing people to connect and share information with those who share their opinions and beliefs, thereby influencing the exponential increase in polarization.

It was found that recommendation algorithms on social networks can also form "filter bubbles" around users, limiting their exposure to different perspectives and strengthening the polarization of political discourse. Affective polarization, an extension of political polarization, is a phenomenon that has been amplified by information bubbles. This perception reveals that the internet, once seen as a potential for political-democratic engagement and a space for the development of participatory and deliberative dialogues between government and the population, now harbors antidemocratic acts stemming from the creation of information bubbles as a mechanism to intensify political disputes.

On another note, it was understood that the fragmentation caused by information bubbles represents a latent risk to the democratic regime, as the withdrawal of integrative possibilities by informational curation would mitigate debate and interaction among individuals with different ideological and political profiles.

It was noted that the legitimacy of the democratic system is severely undermined by the widening polarization, which, by highlighting violent and adversarial discourses, promotes social disintegration. Therefore, there is a need to reflect on ways to protect the Rule of Law amidst the fragmented reality imposed by filter bubbles.

Regarding forms of protection for the democratic regime, it was observed that digital education can play an important role in safeguarding democratic integrity by fostering critical thinking and skepticism around all technological conveniences, beyond the purely romanticized view provided by media. This includes promoting skills in critical reading, reflective thinking, constructive dialogue, and active participation in political decision-making.

Clearly the topic discussed in the present study requires greater understanding and analysis, especially with regard to the effects of the polarization of political discourse on the intensification of disputes between the extreme right and the democrats, and could be a topic to be researched in future studies.

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