

Arithmetic Polarization: Social Media and Violence

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Polarization

Partisan Polarization refers to the constraint and consolidation of political opinion within subgroups.

Affective Polarization is the tendency of individuals to align their feelings and beliefs with a chosen “in-group”.

Challenges

- Plenty of anecdotal evidence, academic or otherwise, that polarized societies are prone to violence
- Some more recent work finds non-anecdotal statistical evidence of the relationship between violence and polarization.
- Is context key? Affective polarization in the U.S. is not reliably correlated with support for undemocratic behavior.

Social Media

“Internet-based, disentrained, and persistent channels of mass personal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated content.” (Carr & Hayes)

Advantages

Social media can be used as a tool. Those interested in promoting peace (broadly or narrowly) can, and do, effectively use it to do so.

Potential Negative Effects

Well....

Recommendations

- Individually: try to consume local content more frequently.
- Systemically: Regulation of social media companies or a reorientation of how and why they promote certain content.