Polarization Presidentialism. How social media reshaped Brazilian politics: a case study on the 2018 elections

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1. Introduction[3, 4]

The Brazilian 2018 Elections were, in several ways, a landmark in the political history of the country, reshaping many relatively consensual beliefs on how the campaigns and open public discussions traditionally unfold – at least within the current democratic regime, dating back to the democratic transition in 1985 and the 1988 Constitution. The election that brought to power the self-described outsider and far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro, as well as unexpected names to govern some of the most important states such as Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro, was also – we could say – the first "digital election" in the country. In it, social media not only played a significant role, but also became perhaps the most important resource to

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3 This article uses extensive social media data collected during the experience of the Digital Democracy Room - #observa2018, a 100 days monitoring of 2018 election in Brazil, that can be accessed at observa2018.dapp.fgv.br/en. The authors thank all the researchers that took part of it, bringing together an incredibly diverse team of scholars from different fields, which made possible to address the extremely challenging and innovative objectives it was created for: Ana Celia Guarnieri, Ana Freitas, Ana Guedes, Andressa Contarato, Bárbara Silva, Beatriz Franco, Beatriz Meirelles, Dalby Dienstbach, Danielle Sanches, Danilo Silva, Felipe Cruz, Flávio Costa, Gabriela Lapadula, Janderson Pereira, Júlia Faber, Kimberly Anastacio, Letícia Lopes, Lucas Calil, Lucas Roberto da Silva, Luis Gomes, Mônica Braga, Rachel Bastos, Polyana Barboza, Tatiana Ruediger, Thais Lobo, Thamyres Dias, Wagner Oliveira, Yasmin Curzi.

4 The opinions expressed represent exclusively the opinions of the authors and not necessarily the institutional position of FGV.

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the political dispute, outpacing the TV and regional alliances as the main force in the race. Therefore, it is not an overstatement to imply that social media reshaped Brazilian politics, both in the (growingly digital) public sphere and in the political system.

In 2014, Ruediger, Souza, Luz and Grassi (2014) showed how the 2013 June Journeys had generated a "conflict perspective" to the public discussion, in opposition to a widely consensus-based agenda that had organized Brazilian politics during more than two decades after the constitutional process. This was largely due to the transformations the digital revolution had generated, bringing several new actors to the scene, with new resources for social mobilization and collective action. It was the inauguration of a completely new chapter in our recent history, starting a wave of mass protests that would arise again in 2015 and 2016, culminating with the impeachment of then President Dilma Rousseff. It took no more than a few years after that for the aftershock of those profound transformations to hit the institutional structure that allowed Brazil to reach its most recent years of prosperity. Then, the democratization of social media became a game changer, an extremely powerful toolbox that political actors were still trying to find out how to explore in its full capacity.

The storm that was forming on the horizon could be anticipated, in part, by the astonishing impact of social media in two political events of global dimensions in 2016: the Brexit referendum in the UK and the election of President Donald Trump in the US. Both events shed light, in a radical way, on how the misuse of digital resources could potentially disrupt democratic regimes and hurt the informational environment in our societies. Disinformation and fake news rapidly became popular terms, repeatedly used on political discourses – even by those who perpetrated them the most efficiently in the digital environment. Of course, things would not be different in Brazil, especially after the events that had developed in the past few years and the disruption they were causing in the political system – even though several political analysts and experienced politicians still doubted it could change the way elections were conducted in the country.

In 2018, we at the Department of Public Policy Analysis in Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV DAPP) designed the Digital Democracy Room, an effort to monitor the general elections based on the assumption that we were about to see the most disruptive political process in Brazilian history, with the huge impact of social media and the culmination of social processes we had been watching since the 2013 June Journeys. The events that developed throughout that year could not have had a bigger impact: the arrival of the fake news era in Brazil, the downfall of traditional TV-based

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(and hugely expensive) campaigns and the rise of social media, and an intense public debate on the most relevant topics for Brazilians. Together, these factors made that year a once-in-an-era political earthquake. The election of President Jair Bolsonaro retired several of the most prominent politicians from the last 30 years, based on a novel structure of digital campaign with massive use of Facebook, Youtube and, for the first time in a large scale, Whatsapp. This brought to power not only a new political group which had been marginalized for the past quarter of century, but also a new way of governing.

Since the end of 1980s, when Abranches (1988) suggested that the Brazilian political system could be better described as a Coalition Presidentialism (a presidential system with a coalition-like governing with the National Congress), it became the most used concept by researchers, journalists and political analysts to make sense of the relationship between the Executive and Legislative branches. The pursuit of a stable coalition in the Congress was the lighthouse that oriented the elected presidents, organizing how the government was run and defining the next electoral cycle. However, the 2018 election subverted that logic, giving room to a model most resembling a "Polarization Presidentialism" – a system where the most important asset for a candidate (and for a President) is the capacity to polarize the public opinion, particularly through the extensive use of digital strategies, exploring the most divisive issues in society and fostering anti-establishment sentiments.

We will see that the 2018 election developed into a competition for more engagement inside a massive echo chamber, reinforcing the algorithmic logic of delivering the content people really engaged with. The huge reach of Facebook and an unknown number (certainly hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions) of WhatsApp groups were the perfect space to disseminate videos, campaigning ads and lots of anonymous, fake content, using bots. In other words, these spaces were used to foster political narratives different from the traditional means of political discussion, relying on a digital environments almost completely unregulated by electoral authorities and with the non-interference approach employed by most of the time-oriented social media platforms. Polarization became the rule for politicians, defining a logic of political confrontation that would go beyond the election itself and define the parameter for governing after that – the never-ending promotion of division, confrontation and extremism, pursuing engagement first, as a sign of strength that would enable a better position to negotiate the agenda with other political actors in Congress and with state governors.

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In this article, we present a selection of data and analyses on how the 2018 election unfolded in social media, based on the Digital Democracy Room, enabling a better understanding of the general environment that reshaped Brazilian politics – first in the electoral campaign, but also after that, with a governing strategy of polarization and extensive use of digital resources to defeat traditional communication channels. "Polarization Presidentialism" turned into the main target of political extremism in what would become the main characteristic of the relationship between the Executive, Legislative, and increasingly the Judiciary branch. In the end, we point out a few general trends observed in subsequent years that may help prepare for the main challenges, but also opportunities, for the Brazilian digital democracy.

2. *Heading to election, the impact of "fake news"*

In Brazil's 2018 electoral cycle, the dissemination of fake news in different public and private social networks, as well as the public debate on the web about the emergence of the fake news phenomenon as a political marketing and disinformation tool, played an unprecedented role in the country. With the different sides of the Brazilian political scenario questioning or reiterating information, news articles, memes and publications as false or true (from their respective points of view), with no consensus or widely accepted sources, any potential dialogue between adversaries became very fragile from the beggining, and so did the ability of the traditional press to operate as an interlocutor between adversaries.

Towards the end of the electoral calendar, with the ramifications of the campaigns and the release of news articles about the use of social networks to produce content with no legitimacy – especially WhatsApp –, the protagonism of disinformation in politics became more evident for the Brazilian civil society. However, even before the official start of the campaigns, fake news were already present in the public debate as topics of discussion, following the impact and repercussion they obtained in other recent electoral races, such as in France, Germany, the UK and especially the US – where the use of the term by Donald Trump expanded the concept of "fake news" internationally in the threads of online conversation and as a topic of public interest.

Between August 1st and 15th – the last 15 days before the official electoral campaign –, we analyzed 387.9 thousand publications on Twitter about the dissemination of fake news; among those, there were 206.6 thousand retweets, which compose the following map of interactions. At

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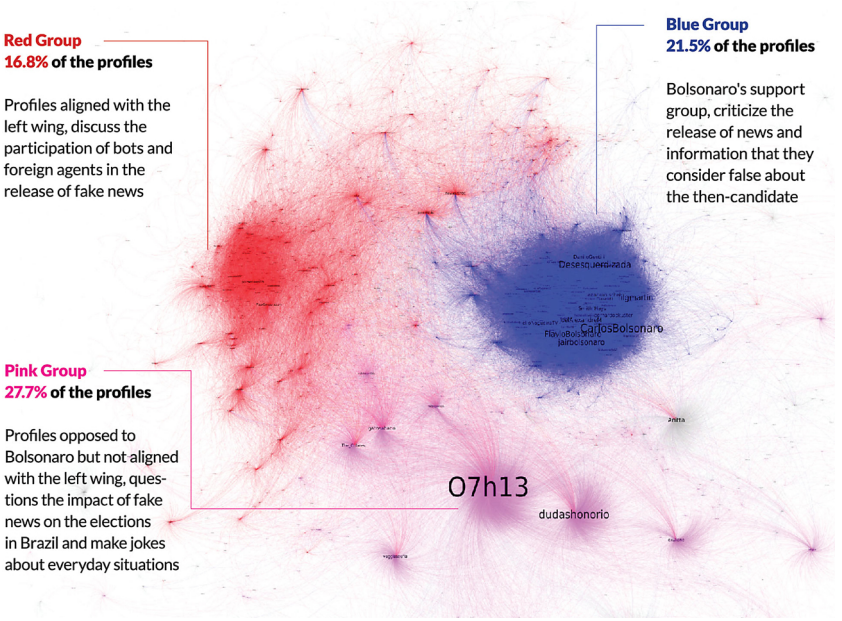
this moment in the debate, the main groups of the general political debate in the country remained as protagonists: the red group, with profiles supporting candidates from center-left (PT) and left-wing (PCdoB) parties; the pink group, with critical or comic discussions usually opposing the right-wing candidacy of the PSL, but with no alignment to any party; and the blue group, which supported the PSL and proved to be very cohesive, active and articulated through the voices of specific and established influencers of the network environment.

Fig. 1 - Map of interactions in the debate about fake news before the electoral period
206.574 retweets | Analysis date: August 1st to August 15th



Source: Twitter | Elaborated by: FGV DAPP

Although it garnered the highest number of profiles in this graph (27.7% of the total), the pink group, the only major group in the political map of the networks which moved away from the left/right polarization, mobilized the least interactions about fake news, which accounted for only 17% of their retweets. The group was organized around tweets that approached the topic of disinformation in a non-polarized way, often jokingly. A common meme used by the group, for example, is the phrase "the biggest

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fake news this year was...", which was completed by users with different themes, such as relationships, job interviews and diets, among other non-political topics; an appropriation of the debate for the ironic discussion of everyday life topics.

The group supporting the PSL candidate was the second with the highest number of profiles, garnering 21.5% of the total number of users present in the map of interactions and mobilizing the most interactions (47.4%). Then-candidate Jair Bolsonaro, his sons Flávio and Carlos, and comedian Danilo Gentili were the main influencers in the group, whose main narrative line was the idea that the candidate was a victim of a fake news "factory", which supposedly involved traditional media outlets.

The suspension of pages and profiles appeared in the blue group in complaint posts and was seen as a sabotage of the PSL campaign. However, some of the users stated that the candidate would be able to fight this "persecution", while other profiles pointed out a "narrative" construed by the left wing to disqualify a potential victory of a right-wing candidate. According to them, the adversaries would attribute the victory to a "false" dissemination of fake news by the congressman.

The red group was as polarized as the blue group, but much less cohesive due to the presence of some profiles; it accounted for 16.8% of the profiles and 19.9% of the interactions registered in the map. The main influencers in this group were Dilma Rousseff and Lula. The discussion about the use of automated accounts associated with the spread of fake news was the biggest highlight in this group, which often reinforced the idea of a supposed interference of bots from foreign countries in the political debate.

The group frequently shared fact checking initiatives done by agencies or by the traditional media. However, the media in general was frequently criticized; similarly to what happened in the blue group, it was accused of producing fake news, although the red group defends that these news were intended to demoralize political actors from the left wing and the center-left. Other pre-candidates could also be found in this group, especially due to their publications associating the right wing with fake news.

3. The election, campaigning in digital environments

Social networks became the axis of political discussion in the 2018 presidential campaign, with the impact of disinformation as a central theme. Analyses indicated a massive use of these strategies in all political fields.

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They used different procedures of virtual campaigning, and automated accounts and fake news were identified on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube.

3.1. The reach of fake news

In the final weeks of the electoral race, we analyzed references to the main pieces of fake news on open social networks – Twitter, Facebook and YouTube – between September 22nd and October 21st, in order to measure the reach they obtained in each platform and what was the network's response to the content – that is, whether they were subjected to fact-checking and the refuted facts shared, or the false information continued to have an impact after appearing on the web.

Among the pieces of fake news, the supposed fraud in the electronic voting machines was mentioned the most on Twitter: there were 1.1 million tweets about the alleged lack of security of the devices, with posts requesting a return of printed voting and reporting "errors" that were supposedly seen by electors in the first round. The so-called "gay kit" also mobilized around 1 million references on the network. The posts spread the fake news that Fernando Haddad, during his administration of the Ministry of Education, supposedly authorized the creation of the material. The third piece of fake news with the most mentions on Twitter – with a much less significant volume of references – was related to lies about one of the books published by the PT candidate: "In defense of socialism". There were 48.7 thousand references.

False publications associated with the right wing had a more limited reach. Speculation about the candidate having "simulated" an attack against himself in order to disguise a cancer surgery was the most mobilized rumor in the period, with 34.6 thousand references. The change of Brazil's patron saint, falsely spread as if proposed by the candidate, was mentioned 16.7 thousand times. An article stating that a right-wing candidate was the most honest politician in the world had 6.5 thousand mentions.

3.2. Fact-checking

Analyses by FGV DAPP in partnership with the fact-checking agency Lupa demonstrated that at least three pieces of fake news figured among the links with the most engagement on social networks in few months. In

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the repercussion of the first presidential debate, a news piece stating that Twitter supposedly removed hashtags in support of one of the candidates had almost 13 thousand interactions on Facebook, figuring among the ten major links. On Twitter, there were 32 thousand references to the supposed "takedown"[5].

News pieces stating that the traditional Veja magazine supposedly received R$ 600 million to defame the PSL campaign also had large repercussion on the networks. Since September 24, when the rumor started, 16 links about the case were identified, mobilizing 117.6 thousand interactions on Facebook and Twitter, and none of those links came from traditional media outlets.

An analysis of the news pieces with the most engagement on the social networks and the demonstrations by the two movements organized to oppose and support the right wing, which took to the streets in Brazil and in dozens of cities around the world on September 29 and 30, also indicated a significant presence of disinformation. The most frequently shared link on Facebook and Twitter in the period between September 28 and October 1st, with 182.6 thousand interactions, was a news article published by the newspaper O Estado de S. Paulo in February, 2017, about the occupation of the public square Largo da Batata by carnival goers. As reported by the newspaper itself, the false affirmations circulating on WhatsApp and other social networks stating that images used in news articles about the act organized by the left at Largo do Batata, in São Paulo, on Saturday were "actually carnival images".

3.3. Suspicions and discussions about the electoral process

The elections were also the target of disputes and different narratives, one of which was the suspicion of fraud in the vote results – anticipating a narrative that would develop continuously in following years. Some episodes were crucial in the mobilization of that debate, such as the suspension of the implementation of a printed voting system by the Supreme Federal Court on June 6 and the denial of former President Lula's candidacy.

5 Together, FGV DAPP and Agência Lupa checked whether the supposed removal of mentions to the presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro was true or false. Available at: https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/lupa/2018/08/10/verificamos-twitter-nao-removeu-mencoes-bolsonaro-durante-debate-na-band/. Accessed on: January 15, 2019.

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In one month, from August 19 to September 18, suspicions about the integrity of the elections mobilized 841,800 mentions on Twitter. The debates were polarized between at least two lines: one questioned an electoral process with the absence of a candidate from a leftist party; the other questioned the reliability of the electronic voting machines and of the whole process surrounding the race. The peak of debate happened on August 29, with around 205 thousand tweets about the topic after a GloboNews interview with one of the candidates, in which the presidential candidate stated that he did not believe in electoral polls.

The mentions associating Lula's denied candidacy with a potential fraud in the elections were more intense in August, especially in repercussion to the note issued by the UN Human Rights Committee recommending that Brazil allowed the former president's candidacy. The hashtag #eleiçãosemlulaéfraude ("elections without Lula are a fraud") garnered majority of the mentions.

In turn, other comments referenced the allegations of adulterated electronic voting machines in previous elections and a statement in which he attributed his potential loss in October to fraud in the voting system. A video released by a candidate in his Facebook page, in which he spoke about the possibility of fraud in the elections, prompted more than 470 thousand comments.

3.4. Bots and disinformation

FGV DAPP carried out daily analyses on the presence of automated accounts in the electoral debate. Beginning on September 6, we observed an increase in the percentage of interactions (retweets) prompted by bots in the discussions about the presidential candidates, which remained above 10% every week in September. The absolute volume also increased, reaching 3,258 accounts on September 27, despite the efforts made by the platform.

The expansion of the interference of automated profiles with the political debate coincided with the approximation of the first round and with the revival of the "useful vote" concept as an argument of persuasion and recruitment of followers and influence on the social networks.

The interferences caused by bots often happened in an articulated and synchronized way through botnets. In the pre-campaign period, at least three botnets were responsible for publishing 1,589 tweets in one week. In general, those messages sought to propel and/or demobilize candidacies, especially inside the most polarized groups: PSL-PT.

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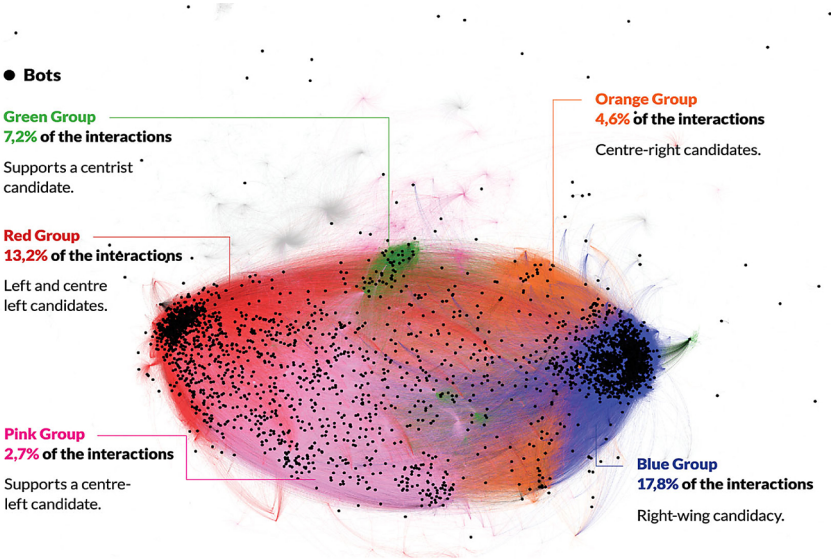
We must clarify that the presence of bots in any discussion group (or in positive or negative interactions about political parties and political actors) does not necessarily signify an intentional action by the campaigns or these actors in conducting disinformation strategies. The research developed by FGV DAPP does not aim to attribute the coordination of digital actions of content automation on social networks to citizens, governments or business entities.

Fig. 2 - Map of interactions with bots about the presidential candidates 5,285,575 retweets | Analysis date: September 12th to September 18th



Source: Twitter | Elaborated by: FGV DAPP

The pro-right and pro-left support groups also presented most of the bot interference in the campaign period. For example, we collected 7,465,611 tweets and 5,285,575 retweets regarding the candidates from September 12 to 18. Inside this database, FGV DAPP's bot detection methodology found 3,198 automated accounts, which prompted 681,980 interactions – 12.9% of the total amount of retweets in the figure below.

Pictured on the right side of the figure, automated accounts were responsible for 17.8% of the retweets in the group; on the other side, the

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interactions aligned with left and center-left candidacies accounted for 13.2% of the retweets.

However, in moments of more organic debate, such as the mobilization of the hashtag #elenão ("not him") – which originated in a women's movement on social media and later expanded online, with references by supporters and artists –, the opposite happened. Between September 12 and 24, while more than 73 thousand users retweeted about the theme, only 164 automated accounts did so as well, representing 0.22% of the debate.

In the period analyzed, we did not identify any automated mass distribution of fake news. Disinformation was present throughout the electoral race, but bots were not the biggest responsible for its dissemination. In the week of the knife attack[6] against Bolsonaro, for example, the biggest interaction group in the debate (64.4% of the total number of profiles), which was also the most organic one (with only 0.9% automated interactions coming from bots), concentrated the largest part of profiles who were suspicious about the veracity of the episode.

3.5 The role of Youtube

The campaign in the second round of the presidential elections has consolidated YouTube as a place for political clashes. In one week, from October 8 to 15, we identified 991 videos about the candidates in the race, Fernando Haddad and Jair Bolsonaro. That volume is higher than that registered in all the three previous months together (from July 4 to October 7), when 939 videos were shared. The publications, which had a variety of contents, formats and target audiences, generated 118 million views and were centered on Jair Bolsonaro; he was present in 63% of the views.

There were 498 videos with references to Bolsonaro, most of them (48%) with positive comments about his performance in interviews and/or debates, as well as support for his candidacy in the second round. The negative videos (15%) criticize Bolsonaro's behavior and the agendas he defends.

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6 Then candidate Jair Bolsonaro was stabbed in the stomach during a campaign activity in the city of Juiz de Fora, state of Minas Gerais, an episode considered by many analysts a central chapter of his rising in the polls during the last month of the election.

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Regarding Fernando Haddad, there were 488 videos mentioning his name directly, often with a critical tone (50%). The negative videos dismantled the proposals and personality of Haddad and his vice president, Manuela D'Ávila, also talking about PT, communism and anti-Christianism as negative aspects. The positive mentions (18%) defended him against supposed fake news, demonstrated support for the maintenance of democracy and showed fragments of the party's TV program and the campaign jingles.

3.6 Whatsapp, the "blind spot"

At the final stage of the second round campaign, WhatsApp became the main topic of debate about the presidential candidates, with notable impact on the discussion on other social networks – which signal the most relevant trends and agendas in the country's political discussion via web. The app is always present in the discussions on Twitter and its repercussion as an electoral topic has been growing; from October 1 to October 21, there were 2.57 million references to WhatsApp on the network, 1.57 million of which happened since the 15th.

The debate about the app started to increase on Twitter in the beginning of October, just before the first round. Until then, the topics of discussion were the impact of message chains and private groups on the dissemination of fake news and data, with a strong ironic tone directed to users who believed blindly in the content that they received and made voting decisions based on unverified information.

4. The after election

After the result of the elections, from October 29 to November 12, the debate about fake news gained a new contour and increased in volume significantly, with 1,444,369 tweets identified, of which 1,026,306 were retweets – five times more than in the two weeks before the start of the electoral campaign. The group with the biggest number of profiles on the network in this period was the green one, with 38.4%, and accounting for the second highest number of interactions (25.9%).

This group maintained discursive and thematic similarities with the pink group (which was predominant in the pre-campaign period) and contained publications using the term fake news jokingly on the network.

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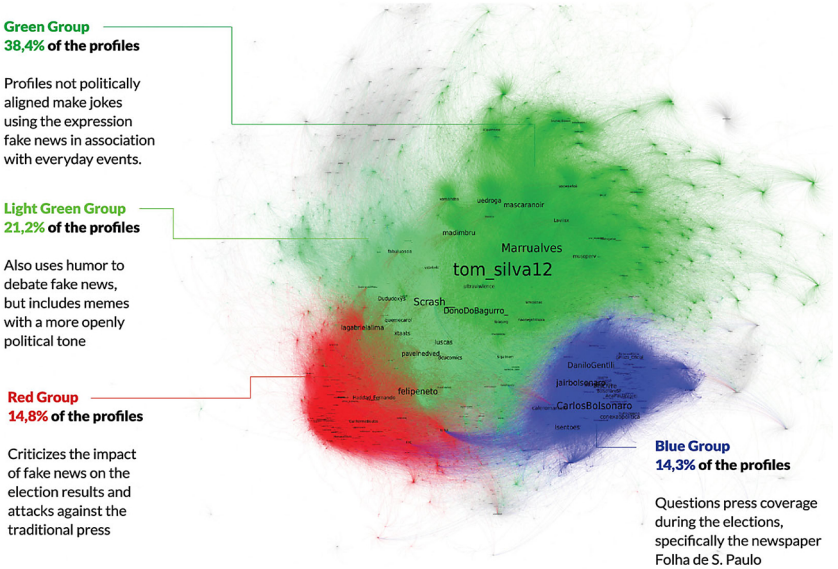
The appropriation of the expression "fake news" as slang, incorporated to everyday vocabulary, was a phenomenon already observed before the electoral race; after the elections, the green group resumed the satire "the biggest fake news this year", which had been used in situations of personal frustration since the beginning of August. In general, what differs the green groups from the pink one is the more explicitly comic contour of their internal debates, with less subgroups that use the expression "fake news" in a "literal" and critical sense.

Fig. 3 - Map of interactions in the debate about fake news after the elections 1,026,306 retweets | Analysis date: October 29th to November 13th



Source: Twitter | Elaborated by: FGV DAPP

The blue group garnered the highest number of total interactions (29%, with 14.3% of the profiles). The red group was the third in total interactions (20.5%, with 14.8% of the profiles) and concentrated its publications on opposing the president-elect and supporting press outlets, integrating politicians and actors aligned with left-wing parties, as well as influencers from other areas of the political spectrum who were opposed to right-wing candidates.

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The blue group produced attacks against the press and to the left wing, criticizing the newspaper Folha de S. Paulo and stating that the media has published false information about him. Comedian Danilo Gentili stated that the Folha de S. Paulo lied when saying that it was denied access at a press conference during the electoral campaign. Due to the acts of these influencers, who are very strong in the blue group, the attacks against the newspaper were highly significant in this part of the debate about fake news, which materialized in the dissemination of several hashtags, such as #folhafakenews and #folhafalhamasnaoemplaca (roughly translated as "the Folha fails and does not make an impression").

In turn, the red group criticized the manipulation of information and stated it was a decisive factor for the elections. The "gay kit" topic became a highlight as an example of a paradigm of the effect of disinformation on the outcome of the electoral race. In addition, profiles in the group called attention to the use of WhatsApp to spread of fake news, which they argue was done strategically by candidates. Lastly, they also criticized the low effectiveness of the Superior Electoral Court in combating disinformation on the network. The clashes with the press – especially with the Folha de S. Paulo – are a reason for concern in this group.

Differently from the map of interactions in the period before the official campaign, a fourth highlighted group was established, with smaller expression in the total interactions (16.7%), but with the second highest number of profiles (21.2%), in light green. This group also had a comic tone regarding the use of expressions associated with fake news, and the main topic in this group was the spread of more critical memes (with more open political association) than the ones present in the green group.

5. What to expect

In retrospect, the timeline described in the sections above portrays an election that clearly represented a breakthrough regarding the electoral process in the previous 30 years in Brazil. It culminated a process initiated back in 2013, with the mass demonstrations all over the country, which were organized mostly through social media and surfaced an entirely new agenda of social demands from recently arrived groups in the public scene. During the following years, Brazilians experienced a spiral of political instability that relied heavily on street demonstrations and massive demonstrations of dissatisfaction through the social media, absorbing a broad sentiment of frustration with the economic crisis, corruption scandals and deep distrust

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in political institutions and the old school politicians that had led the country during almost three decades.

It should not be a surprise that this process culminated in the next election – but it still was, at least for several politicians, journalists and political analysts. The electoral process that brought to power President Jair Bolsonaro, a self-proclaimed outsider and far-right politician, showed that social media had become not only a tool for political communication, but also the primary space where people informed themselves to decide on who to vote. It is for that reason that the candidate that consistently led the digital campaign – even when he was still behind in the polls – was the winner, bringing with him several other candidates for the Congress and in the states.

The observation of the digital public debate also clearly demonstrated the main issues that were driving the winning message, especially corruption, unemployment and public security (a growing concern for Brazilians not only in big cities, but also in the smaller towns). On the other hand, voters became totally exposed to the widespread disinformation strategies that were used by political campaigns, turning into easy targets in an almost completely unregulated digital information space. Social media became the game changer of Brazilian politics.

Nevertheless, this was not the final stop of the general process of reshaping Brazilian politics. Since then, the governing activity has increasingly turned into a constant dispute of narratives in digital environments, the unstopping creation of events to be posted, live streamed and disseminated through all the possible channels, mobilizing a mass of supporters in a 24/7 basis in order to keep the pressure on public opinion, the press, the Congress and the legal system. The following year of 2019 showed a glimpse of what would become a true narrative war on the digital space and the main strategy during the Covid-19 pandemic just a few months later. Polarization Presidentialism, a constant pursuit of division to foster engagement in an algorithmic-like logic, became the key element to understand the actions of the government, having social media as the absolute central piece in its political strategy.

The unfolding of this process is still not totally clear for the following years and the 2022 general election in Brazil, but it is certain that the role of social media in Brazilian politics (just as practically all over the world) is at a point of no return. Of course, Polarization Presidentialism will face the challenge of having stressed its relationship with the institutions too much, with damaging consequences for the economy and public administration, which could probably lead a future government to take a step

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back in the confrontation and in the permanent pursuit of likes, views and shares in all social media platforms.

An evolving public discussion (as well as the growing pressure from governments towards social media) is also changing the general environment of the digital space, prompting more action from the companies or stronger regulations otherwise, as is the case in Brazil with the tightening grip of the legal system on the engineering of disinformation and the Fake News Law currently under discussion in the Congress. The challenges posed by social media to democracies, such as the spread of hate speech or a growing inequality in access to digital services, also come with several opportunities for a "digital democracy building", a development process in which the principles of democracy can be enhanced by governments and society, instead of threatened by it.

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