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The Fragmented Web: Exploring Cyberbalkanization Through Network Theory and Science Fiction

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Abstract: This paper explores the phenomenon of cyberbalkanization, a fragmentation of the internet into isolated groups or “digital tribes” that leads to significant societal disintegration and the erosion of the internet’s unifying function. Leveraging network theory, postmodernism, media ecology, algorithmic governance, and technological determinism, the study examines how cyberbalkanization contributes to political, economic, and social inequalities, the degradation of privacy and security, and the rise of political manipulation and radicalization. Through a qualitative approach that includes literature review, thematic analysis, comparative analysis, and case studies, the paper underscores the profound implications of cyberbalkanization for global technological advancement, AI development, and the ethical dimensions of privacy and security. Furthermore, it analyzes the depiction of cyberbalkanization in science fiction, highlighting its role in addressing the ethical, moral, and cultural implications of technological advancement, and its impact on storytelling, cultural diversity, and digital identity. The paper suggests that the ongoing tension between globalization and digital fragmentation will remain a pertinent theme in science fiction and broader societal discourse as the internet continues to evolve.

Keywords: balkanization, sci-fi, privacy, AI, technology.

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