

# Divided as ever Toxic Polarization

Christophe.Busch  
@hannah-arendt.institute

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

**TRI**

'A superb book'  
Guardian

~~Fake news~~  
~~American First~~

**ZYGMUNT  
BAUMAN**

VINCENT F. HENDRICKS  
PELLE G. HANSEN

**CRUELTY**

HUMAN EVIL AND THE HUMAN BRAIN

**KATHLEEN TAYLOR**

# Tribalization

(Polarization)

## or the End of Globalization

(Harmonization)



Extremism  
as the New  
Norm

Frameworks  
of Reference



## Extremism as the New Norm

The **growth of extremism**—violent and non-violent—is one of the **key social and political challenges** facing **Western societies** today. Far right political parties are making headway in elections across Europe, populist sentiments are circulating, extremist groups and networks are growing in confidence, and terrorists groups and lone wolf individuals of different kinds continue to aim to commit violent acts and strike terror into communities.

The Institute for Strategic Dialogue - 2012



## Frameworks of Reference

... think rationally, but they think within the limits of belief systems that may be irrational. Unlike the delusions of psychotics, these belief systems are **social constructs** shared by large numbers of people. ... belief systems are **rigid** and **simplistic** and they are defended with great emotional intensity. Anyone who wishes to remain within a ... group must limit his thinking to the parameters of the group's belief system.

(Goertzel, 2002:1)



NEEDS - NARRATIVES - NETWORKS





**Elon Musk** ✓  
@elonmusk

Why is there no Flat Mars Society!?

7:13 PM - 28 Nov 2017

23,843 Retweets 79,005 Likes



3.8K



24K



79K



**Flat Earth Society** ✓  
@FlatEarthOrg

Replying to @elonmusk

Hi Elon, thanks for the question. Unlike the Earth, Mars has been observed to be round

We hope you have a fantastic day!

12:01 AM - 29 Nov 2017

3,052 Retweets 3,949 Likes



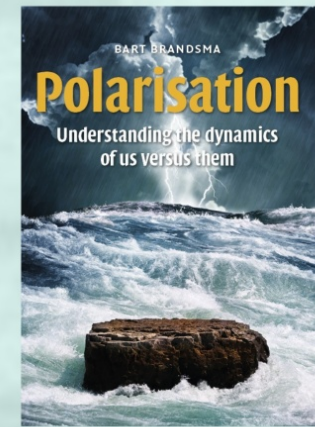
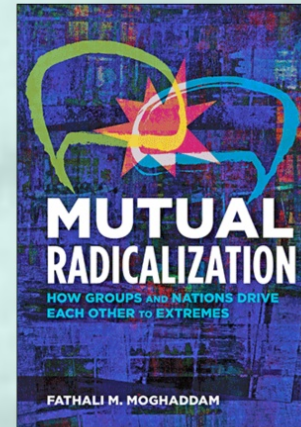
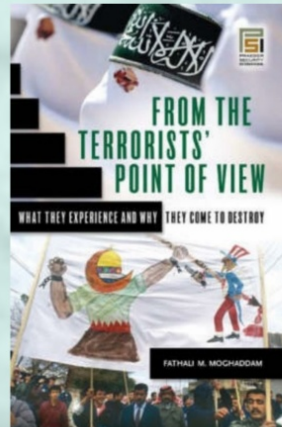
## Frameworks of Reference

... think rationally, but they think within the limits of belief systems that may be irrational. Unlike the delusions of psychotics, these belief systems are **social constructs** shared by large numbers of people. ... belief systems are **rigid** and **simplistic** and they are defended with great emotional intensity. Anyone who wishes to remain within a ... group must limit his thinking to the parameters of the group's belief system.

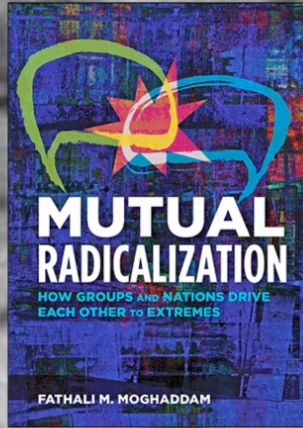
(Goertzel, 2002:1)



NEEDS - NARRATIVES - NETWORKS







# Mutual Radicalization

The process during which **two groups** in effect "radicalize" **one another** - that is, when they become increasingly extreme in their views, develop **increasing distrust** of one another, move further and further **apart** in the process, and often take actions that are contrary to their own apparent self-interests.

Fathali M. Moghaddam, 2017, ix & 6

a **destructive process** that can become self-perpetuating, self-contained, and independent from ideology and other characteristics of groups



emerges through **interactions**  
Dynamic or Mutual  
Oppositional

Cultural  
Carriers &  
Identity

Dynamic  
Model

# Cultural Carriers & Identity

## construction of cultural carriers (psychological process)

*The means and memes through which the culture of a group is perpetuated and propagated*

- a part of the **collective identity** of the group
  - what kind of group
  - what kind of values
  - what kind of actions

influence the **orientation** of the group  
(Group Think - Otherization)

- a part of the **collective memory** of the group
  - particular symbols (e.g. flag, signs, ...)
  - traditional style of clothing
  - particular territory or city
  - combination of colors, practices etc.





# Model for Mutual Radicalization

## Stage 1. Group Mobilization

- Step 1. Heightened Group Salience
- Step 2. Perceived Injustice and Relative Deprivation
- Step 3. Identity Mobilization
- Step 4. Outgroup Denigration and Intergroup Differentiation

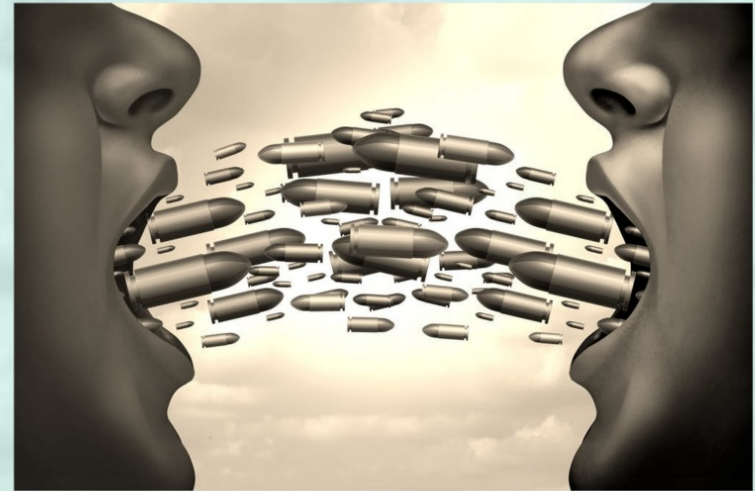
## Stage 2. Extreme Ingroup Cohesion

- Step 1. Aggressive Leadership Dominates
- Step 2. Aggressive Followership Dominates
- Step 3. Conformity and Obedience Enforced
- Step 4. Cognitive Convergence Around an Ideology

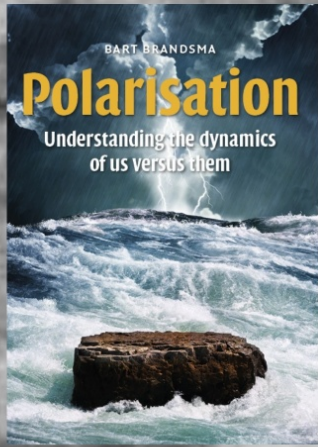
## Stage 3. Antagonistic Identity Transformation

- Step 1. Cycle of Increasingly Hostile Responses to Exaggerated Outgroup Threats
- Step 2. Group Shifts to the Extreme Positions
- Step 3. Radicalized Identities Become Normative
- Step 4. Trigger Events (Re)ignite Direct or Indirect Violent Conflicts

Note. These stages and steps are not necessarily linear. They may overlap with one another or occur out of order, depending on the context.



Political Motivated Reasoning  
Pathological Hatred  
Irrationality - Rationalizations  
**Runaway Selection**

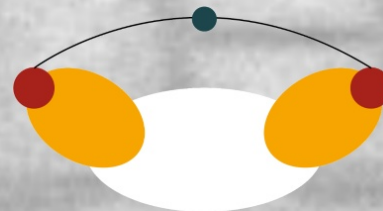


# Polarization

# 3 Rules

# 5 Roles

# 4 Game changers



Political  
or Toxic

Group  
Boundaries

Changing  
the Game

Systemic  
changes



## Political versus Toxic Polarization

Definition: division into two sharply contrasting groups or sets of opinions or beliefs.

**political** polarization versus **inter-ethnic** polarization  
**toxic**

**Political:**

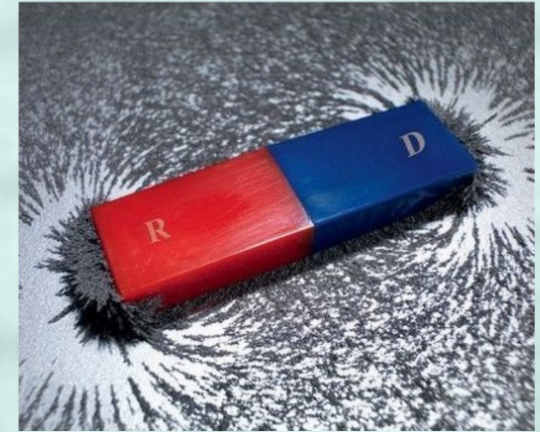
no emancipation without polarization

politics without poles is not possible  
neutral rule of law

**Social:**

disintegration of the social fabric

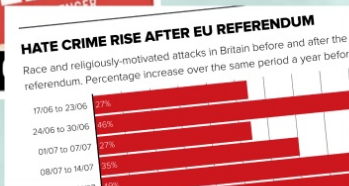
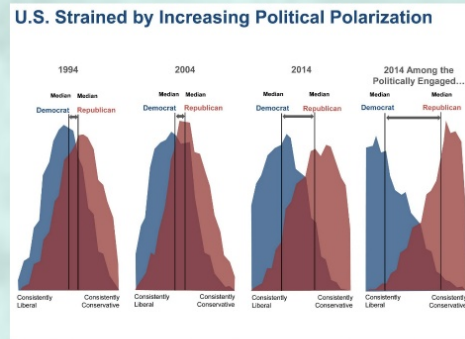
Balkan syndrome (silencing area's)  
Distancing mechanisms  
violent processes are complex & circular



**Necessary: responsible form of political polarization in a heterogeneous and complex society**

# Group Boundaries

Polarization as *a process of articulation of group boundaries* that makes conflict possible, but not necessary.



De 10 stadia van een genocide volgens Gregory Stanton



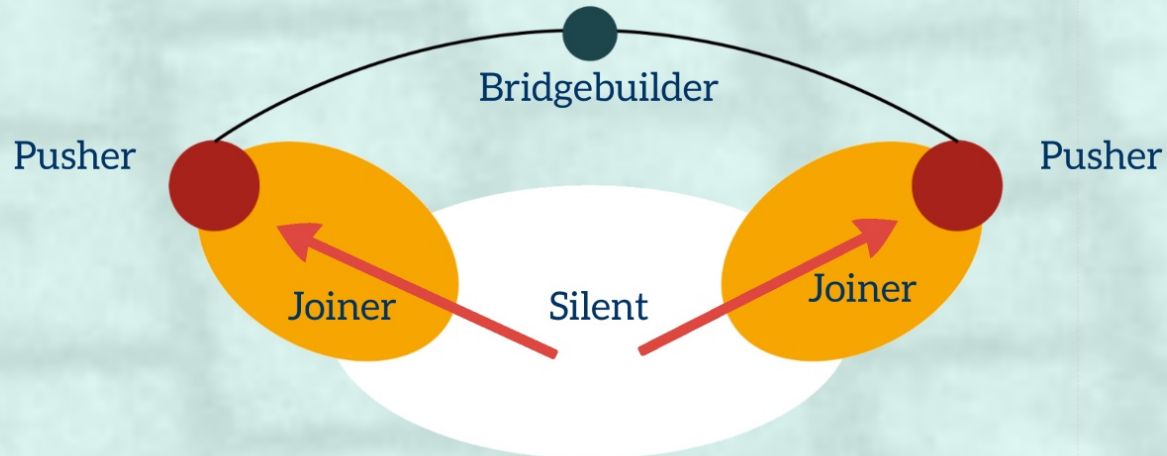
# Changing the Polarization Game



## # 3 Rules

- Polarization is a **thought construct**, 'us-and-them' thinking, based on identities and groups;
- Polarization **needs fuel**; it thrives on talking about identities in combination with judgment. If there is no communication, no energy put into the polarization, it will die out;
- Polarization is about **feelings** and **emotions**. Facts and figures won't do the job.

# Changing the Polarization Game

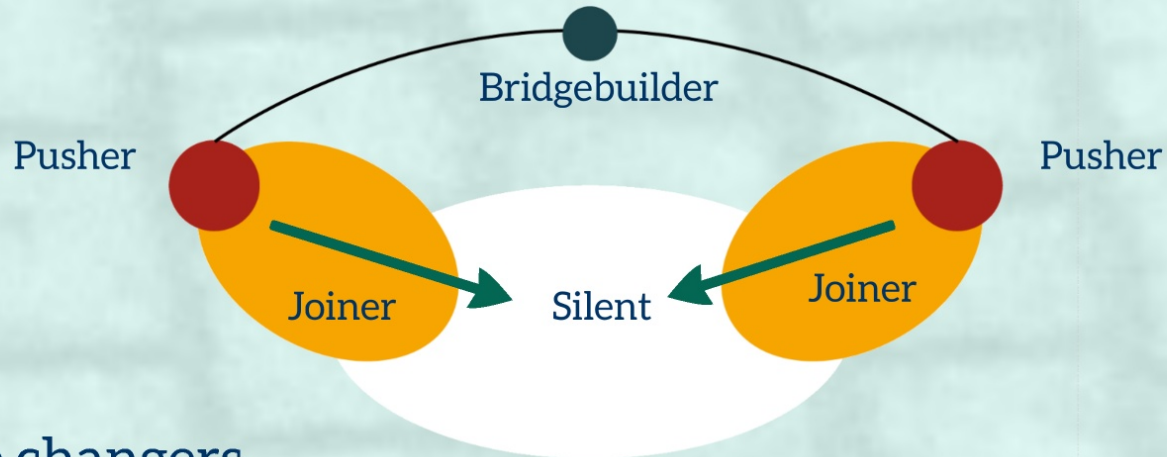


## # 5 Roles

- **The Pushers** are trying to create polarization (*instigators*); claim 100% truth; in the 'send mode' than the 'listen mode'. They don't want a real dialogue;
- **The Joiners** have *chosen sides* and moved towards the pushers; this is polarization taking place;
- **The Silent** in the middle ground, the *nuanced*, are not choosing sides, not taking part in polarization. They could be neutral, scared or indifferent. They are targeted by the pushers;
- **The Bridge-builder** is trying to *bring peace* and *moderation* by reaching out to both opposing poles. But, by doing so, he or she underlines the existence of the two poles, adding fuel;
- **The Scapegoats** are being *blamed* or *attacked*, these could be the non-polarized 'in the middle ground' or the bridge-builders.



# Changing the Polarization Game



## # 4 Game changers

- **Change the target audience.** Pushers portray *an enemy in the other* pusher and target the middle ground. That's where polarization is intended. So, target the middle ground for depolarization;
- **Change the topic.** Move *away from the identity construct* chosen by the pushers and start a conversation on the *common concerns and interest* of those in the middle ground;
- **Change position.** Don't act above the parties, in between the poles, but *move towards the middle ground*;
- **Change the tone.** This is not about right or wrong or facts. Use *mediating speech* and try to engage and connect with the diverse *middle ground*.

Staff is key, system is ...

diversity & inclusivity

neutrality & professionalism



- Diversity policy
- HR policy
- professional profiling
- procedural justice
- moral dilemma training
- community policing
- polarisation management
- **accountability - reliability!!**



FAIRNESS

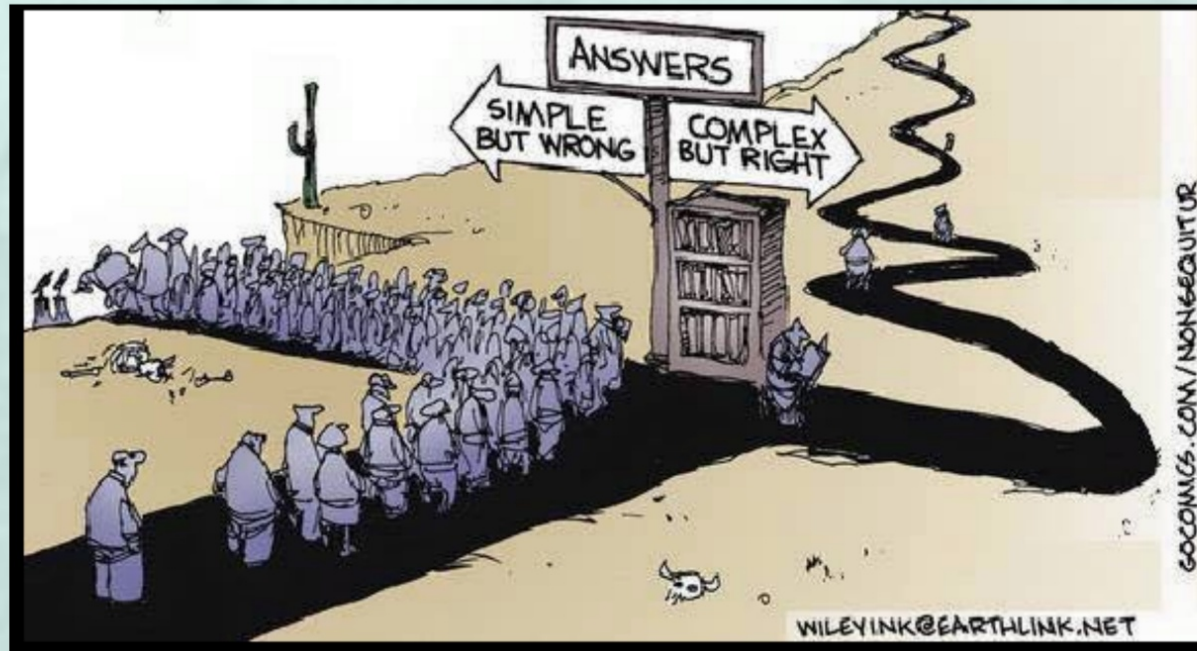
VOICE

TRANSPARENCY

IMPARTIALITY



Complex, circular, interactive





Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
**Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;**  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

**W.B. Yeats, 1919**  
The Second Coming



# Divided as ever Toxic Polarization

Christophe.Busch  
@hannah-arendt.institute



Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,