

Humanity Formed of Hardship

History has taught us that despite any corresponding struggle or potential interrelation, people frequently find it far easier to oppose one another rather than unite. A stalemate born of fear, and the inherent default toward division is not only heartbreaking and demoralizing, but a measure of self-sabotage that stands in the way of humanity's overall future.

Such an increasingly polarized climate of hate, rage, fear, and a desire for destruction is, today, becoming exceptionally more realistic. With a type of pernicious disdain, contemptuous neocolonialism, and the increasingly unchecked despotic megalomaniacal tyranny, an increasingly more evident civil unrest is not simply a precursor of events to come, but a blueprint from which we have decreasingly less of a choice from which to deviate. The struggle, much as it has historically, continues despite the accelerating instability beneath it.

With intensifying distrust building, an increasingly reinforced hate, suspicion, opposition, and condemnation have taken root, while an oversimplified “all-or-nothing” narrative overwhelms the mutual psychological trust required to engage one another on a humanistic level. As the uncompromising, radical mindset becomes progressively more common, meeting halfway becomes increasingly impossible. With the deepening “us-vs-them” mentality, further socio-political, ideological, and identity-based divides have intensified. Extreme sociopolitical polarization is building deliberate, oppositional factions with intense hostility and strong negative, distrustful, and dehumanizing views. These divisions are no longer peripheral; they are embedded within everyday discourse, governance, and social identity itself. (Pew Research, 2025)

The polarization in current U.S. sociopolitics is also being compounded by profound uncertainty. With rocketing costs, invariably decreasing healthcare, a virtual absence of job opportunities, and immense civic tension amidst relentlessly more violent law enforcement tactics—alongside what appears to be ongoing impunity for the perpetrators—massive stress has been laden on the everyday American. Ongoing fear, anxiety, and anger notably decreases daily quality of life, with the spiraling uncertainty exacerbating the ambiguity of future well-being.

The decline of freedom, independence, and safety is on board with an authoritative magnification of executive power, eroding accountability, depleting oversight power, weaponizing and legitimizing political persecution, and destroying electoral operations. Qualified roles are being slowly lined by nepotism with steadily deteriorating democratic practices. Those familiar with history likely recognize the lead-up to civil war. What once appeared implausible now feels increasingly conceivable. (Mancini, 2026) (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

Yet history has demonstrated that societal unity between extremely polarized groups is possible, becoming substantially more natural during times of conflict. This practice goes beyond the shared desire to fortify justification against a common enemy. It is an inherent capacity for solidarity in times of peril.

The practice is often termed social cohesion and is understood as a functionalist response to acute, existential threats. However, beyond the purely tactical need to defend against a common enemy, unifying in this way serves an intrinsic psycho-social need for safety, that reformats identity and meaning in the face of chaos.

Examining this type of social solidarity has identified four central levels consisting of individual, community, institutional, and humanitarian, all of which collectively shape unity in times of crisis. (Mohamed, 2025) A comprehensive conceptual framework that transcends traditional boundaries—through a multidimensional analysis of how beliefs, motivations, and emotions drive community action, collective consciousness, and social norms—can foster a future shared sense of social order with a new understanding of humanitarianism. Creating public collaboration advances an increased responsibility toward human rights, integrating critical insights to strengthen social resilience, rebuild trust, and support sustainable peace within both war-torn areas and polarized societies.

Conflict acts as a catalyst, forming a shared sense of community and uniting individuals under one conscience and collective goal. Severe fear and increased anxiety tend to motivate individuals to come together, reducing the sense of individualism and refocusing on survival. With this strength in numbers comes a collective resilience that reinforces emotional and psychological support under a growing sense of rapprochement between peoples.

Creating a new, coherent understanding with nonpartisan dialogue is not only a path to improvement but is becoming increasingly critical as the only framework to avoid a comprehensive societal breakdown. The idea of “winning” an argument needs to be reconstructed. Rather than just waiting for a turn to speak with a partisan side, consensus-building must be emphasized as a solution to bring people together on common ground.

Truly hearing the other side, legitimately understanding their fears and motivations, is quickly reaching a point beyond intractability. With the country coming systematically closer to tearing itself apart, the only way for citizens and leaders to talk, listen, and find common solutions is to break down the partisan parameters to the most basic human characteristics shared by all people.

Re-establishing cooperative relations requires reducing that deeply ingrained polarized hostility. This doesn't require complete ideological harmony or an abandonment of core beliefs, but instead necessitates discovering mutual functional needs. The foundation of coexisting—meaning collaboratively communicating, mitigating the oppositional perception, and fostering a long-term, incremental building of trust—becomes essential. Rather than any sense of instant reconciliation, rapprochement sees the context of ideological extremes with a strategic move away from total deadlock, and refocuses potential cooperation on common goals within the otherwise deep-seated animosity.

The concept of “Altruism Born of Suffering” was formally detailed by psychologists Ervin Staub and Johanna Vollhardt in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* in 2008. It is a descriptive psychological development wherein those who've endured trauma or misfortune generate a progressive sense of benevolence, empathy,

and an inspiration to build community. Civic alliances born of collective trauma have frequently emerged from inhumane circumstances, solidifying a type of harmony that has the potential to redefine relationships between marginalized groups through shared mechanisms of solidarity.

This measure of community building may be the only remedial solution in today's polarized era. But the profound social re-orientation needed to achieve long-term success requires sustained mutual support and an ongoing collective resolve toward acknowledging one another's identity. At this point in history, it is hoped that a full armed conflict won't be necessary for society to come together. Though, unfortunately, as societal conditions become increasingly unbearable, more violent, and filled with progressive autocratic policies, misinformation, and cult-like devotion to causes united by hate, those of us on the outside looking in are left with steadily fewer and fewer options.

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