

ARENAS

ANALYSIS OF AND RESPONSES
TO EXTREMIST NARRATIVES



What is an Extremist Narrative?

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What truly distinguishes extremist narratives is **their presentation**—the "story" itself, which leaves no room for alternative perspectives, fostering an environment of intolerance. (Baldauf 2017)

2017



Extremist Aspects

- moral superior and victim in-group: portrayed as underdog, intolerance to other views, hostile action (cause, foster or legitimate)
- Inferior and dangerous out-group

Narratological Aspects

- actors (in-group & out group)
- narrated event contexts: are mostly at the same time a (simplified and mostly implicit) explanation for a complex socio-political problem; a solution for it is suggested
- structure of the told stories and events

Deliberate simplification

- Extremist narratives become more easily comprehensible and thus more persuasive
- This simultaneously bolsters the coherence and plausibility of the narrative itself

Extremism and Populism

- Extremist narratives share systematic structures with populism, simplifying complex social contexts into dichotomies that divide the world into good (the in-group) and evil (the out-group)
- Extremist narratives also utilise language and symbolism to create a sense of unity among disparate ideologies
 - Example: terms like "freedom," "justice," and "truth" can be imbued with various meanings depending on the context (those terms are also called "empty and floating signifiers")
- Populism is not inherently tied to any specific ideology but rather emerges through the articulation of these demands

Conspiracy Theories and Extremist Narratives

- Conspiracy theories serve as the foundation for extremist narratives, framing the "enemy" as a group of conspirators concealing malevolent intentions
- They describe the "enemy" as a group of conspirators hiding their evil intentions
- The conspiratorial narrative exposes the conspiracy and calls for resistance