

THE DEPOLARIZATION

ACADEMY



Academy Curriculum, Presenters and Facilitators

The Academy program will take place from **Monday November 16, 2026 – Friday December 4, 2026**, and will encompass a total of 15 hours of participation structured as follows:

1

A “live” opening session of **1 hour** featuring an in-depth conversation between [Mark Freeman](#) (*IFIT Executive Director*) and [Tom Carothers](#) (*Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Harvey V. Fineberg Chair for Democracy Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*), with moderation by [Dana Habib](#) (*IFIT Associate*). The panel will discuss:

- What polarization is (and is not)
- What dangers polarization presents
- What responses to polarization do (and do not) work

2

Access to a video-based curriculum consisting of **7 hours** of pre-recorded short lectures by leading global experts from IFIT’s 400+ network examining different facets of depolarization. Academy participants will receive a unique access code allowing them to watch the content on their own schedule and summarize key takeaways. Topics and speakers include:

Bloc I: Depolarization through Structural Reforms

- **Depolarization and electoral design** | [Kevin Casas-Zamora](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Secretary-General of International IDEA)
- **Depolarization and security sector reform** | [Amit Ahuja](#) (Member of IFIT International Advisory Council & Associate Professor at UC Santa Barbara)
- **Depolarization and land reform** | [Thomas Bimba](#) (IFIT Nigeria Country Manager)
- **Case study (Kenya)** | [Samuel Kobia](#) (Member of IFIT International Advisory Council & former Chair of Kenya's National Cohesion and Integration Commission)

Bloc II: Depolarization through Fact and Narrative Strategies

- **Narrative theory and practice** | [Sara Cobb](#) (Member of IFIT Inclusive Narratives Practice Group & Professor Emerita at George Mason University)
- **Mis/disinformation and depolarization** | [Juanita León](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Founder and Director of La Silla Vacía)
- **Depolarization and AI** | [Saiph Savage](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Director of the Civic AI Lab at Northeastern University)
- **Depolarization and social media** | [Justin Kosslyn](#) (Member of IFIT International Advisory Council & Chief Digital and Technology Officer at AIT Worldwide Logistics)
- **Case study (USA)** | [Tim Dixon](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Co-Founder and CEO of More in Common)

Bloc III: Depolarization through Outreach and Dialogue Strategies

- **Conversation and depolarization** | [Hakan Altınay](#) (Member of IFIT International Advisory Council & Professor of Practice at Tufts University)
- **Disagreement and depolarization** | [Martha Maya](#) (IFIT Deputy Global Director)
- **Trust brokering** | [Theresa Peterson](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Senior Vice President at Edelman Trust Institute)
- **National dialogues** | [Ana Paula Hernández](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Coordinator of Mexico's National Dialogue for Peace)
- **Online dialogues** | [Nahid Ahmed](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Chief Program Officer at Soliya)
- **Case study (Northern Ireland)** | [Avila Kilmurray](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Honorary Professor at Queens University Belfast)

Bloc IV: Other Depolarization Strategies

- **Depolarizing the brain** | [Leor Zmigrod](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Award-winning writer and political neuroscientist)
- **Depolarization and religion** | [Dicky Sofjan](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Associate Professor at Universitas Gadjah Mada)
- **Urban depolarization** | [Eric Rosand](#) (IFIT Partner & Executive Director of Strong Cities Network)
- **Depolarization from exile** | [Lea Bolt](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Executive Director of Fundación Sin Límites)

- **Depolarization through positive virtues** | [Pamela Wadende](#)
(Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Senior Lecturer at Kisii University)
- **Depolarization through amnesties and accountability** | [Sarah Nouwen](#) (Member of IFIT Law and Peace Practice Group & Professor of International Law at University of Cambridge)

3

A total of **3 hours of film** that can be watched on a participant's own schedule, as well as **1.5 hours** of "live" discussion:

- [Invictus](#) (2009)
 - 45-minute discussion with [John Carlin](#) (Member of IFIT International Advisory Council & Award-winning author and journalist). The film is based on Carlin's book, *Playing the Enemy: Mandela and the Game that Made a Nation*.
- An episode of reality TV produced by **Search for Common Ground**
 - 45-minute discussion with the Search for Common Ground team

4

A total of **1.5 hours** of facilitated "live" small group discussions, allowing Academy participants to correlate ideas and knowledge acquired via the pre-recorded material with the depolarization challenges they face in their respective contexts. Participants will be able to choose from a range of discussion date and time slots, which may also include options organized by language (e.g., Arabic, Spanish). The discussion facilitators include:

- [Hilary Pennington](#) (Member of IFIT International Advisory Council & Co-Convener of Global Initiative on Polarization)
- [Chom Bagu Deme](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Founding Member of IFIT Middle Belt Brain Trust)
- [Simba Makoni](#) (Member of IFIT Zimbabwe Resource Group & former Minister of Finance and Economic Development)

- [Sawsan Abou Zainedin](#) (IFIT Senior Advisor for MENA & Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice)
- [Angelika Rettberg](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Dean of School of Social Sciences at Universidad de los Andes)
- [Saba Almubaslat](#) (MENA Regional Director at Ford Foundation)
- [Aries Arugay](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Professor at University of the Philippines Diliman)
- [Guillermo Aveledo](#) (Member of IFIT Depolarization Community of Practice & Dean of Law and Politics at Universidad Metropolitana in Caracas)
- [María José Daza](#) (IFIT Associate)

5

A “live” closing session of **1 hour** to allow Academy participants to exchange on key insights and tools acquired through the Academy program, and to discuss further ideas for the format of the permanent Academy. The session will feature [Mark Freeman](#) (IFIT Executive Director), [Dana Habib](#) (IFIT Associate), [María José Daza](#) (IFIT Associate) and the team of IFIT research interns, externs and fellows who were instrumental in the design of this pilot version of the Academy.

There will be one required Academy reading: IFIT’s draft **Depolarization Strategy Framework (2026)**. The draft will be circulated to participants along with a unique access code following acceptance into the Academy.

The [Institute for Integrated Transitions](#) (IFIT) is an international non-governmental organization comprised of 400+ local and global experts dedicated to innovation and dialogue as the pathway to peace and reconciliation in conflict and crisis settings. Often working behind the scenes, we aim to bridge social and political divides by expanding the spectrum of perceived solutions.

IFIT's [Global Initiative on Polarization](#) is supported by the Ford Foundation, the Andrew Carnegie Foundation, the Templeton World Charity Foundation, the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, the Swiss foreign ministry and the LEGO Foundation, which is providing earmarked support for this pilot version of The Depolarization Academy.

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