Major Issues Regarding Polarization:

Roots:

>>Severe polarization involves a division rooted in clashing social identities.

>>The identity basis of the divide fuels the collapse of ‘the normal multiplicity of differences in the society’ into a **binary opposition**, leading citizens to increasingly perceive and describe politics and society in terms of “Us” versus “Them.”

**Ascriptive Identity** (the social **status** a person is assigned at birth or assumed involuntarily later in life. It is a position that is neither earned nor chosen but assigned).

>>Religion, ethnic or tribal identity

**Ideological Identity** (when ideological differences harden into identity divides, belonging to one camp or the other become not just about voting a certain way or preferring certain policies, but also about being a certain type of person with particular social values and belonging to a certain group).

>>Ascriptive identities fortify this ideological cleavage, with both race and religion playing significant roles in defining and sharpening the divide.

**Roots, New and Old** (path dependence)

>>Severe polarization may arise from ‘formative rifts’ that date to the emergence of the country. The divide that emerged in the US in the 1960s and 1970s and has hardened in subsequent decades drew on previous ideological, religious, and racial divides….it caused these different cleavages to overlap one another in a way that had not occurred before.

Trajectories:

>>The tactics of polarizing political actors shape the trajectory of polarization, as do the responses of opposition forces.
Polarizing Actors and Programs (It is striking how great a role individual politicians play in the polarization process. Severe polarization is often associated with one particular political figure: Modi, Erdogan, Chavez, Trump…………)

Opposition and Reciprocity

>>Basic decisions include reciprocate polarizing tactics; try to depoliticize politics; compromise and share power; unite against; use electoral and institutional accountability mechanisms; us extra-constitutional or non-democratic efforts).

Additional Drivers:

Political System Design

>>Electoral system design; centralization of political power; clientelism and corruption.

Guardrail Institutions

>>Well functioning, impartial legal institutions; strong, independent election administration.

Changes in the Media Landscape

Economic Transformation