

Moderating Pluralism at Scale

The goal is not to eliminate factions; it is to prevent any faction from turning its power into intolerable participation for everyone else.

Slide 1 - Moderating Pluralism at Scale

The problem is not disagreement

- A large community will contain competing interpretations, interests, passions, and loyalties.
- The practical task is to preserve energetic disagreement while controlling faction's harmful effects.
- Durable moderation must remain legitimate across rival groups.

Slide 2 - Faction Is Unavoidable

- People differ in opinions, passions, interests, and circumstances.
- Those differences naturally produce organized groups and competing interpretations.
- Trying to make everyone share the same views, passions, or interests is impracticable.
- Eliminating liberty would destroy something essential in the attempt to eliminate faction.

Slide 3 - Define the Actual Risk

A faction is not simply a group with a strong view.

The risk arises when a majority or minority becomes united by an interest or passion hostile to others' rights or to the community's enduring interests.

Moderation question: Is this disagreement, or is this conduct making participation intolerable for other members?

Slide 4 - Majority Power Is Not Automatically Fair

- A numerically dominant group can use superior force to impose its preferences.
- Majority decisions may still sacrifice fairness and the rights of minority participants.
- Popularity, volume, or numerical strength does not by itself establish legitimacy.
- A community can retain the forms of participation while allowing a dominant faction to control who can meaningfully participate.

Slide 5 - Minority Factions Can Also Disturb the Whole

- A highly motivated minority may obstruct ordinary administration or disturb the wider community.
- Regular community decisions can defeat a minority faction's preferred outcome.
- But voting alone may not stop disruption, pile-ons, or coordinated pressure.
- The distinction matters: minority influence is not itself the problem; harmful effects are.

Slide 6 - Two Remedies, One Acceptable Direction

There are two broad ways to address faction:

1. Remove its causes.
2. Control its effects.

Removing the causes would mean either suppressing liberty or forcing uniformity. Neither is a workable or legitimate basis for community governance.

Therefore: design rules and institutions that limit harm without requiring agreement.

Slide 7 - Representation as a Filtering Mechanism

- Directly assembled majorities can communicate and coordinate quickly against weaker parties.
- Representation creates a body responsible for considering broader interests rather than only the loudest immediate passion.
- But representation is not automatically fair: representatives can be factious, locally prejudiced, corrupt, or self-interested.

- Legitimacy depends on safeguards, not merely on appointing decision-makers.

Slide 8 - Scale Can Reduce Coordinated Abuse

A larger sphere contains more distinct parties and interests.

That diversity can:

- Make it less likely that one shared oppressive motive forms across the whole community.
- Make coordinated action against a weaker group more difficult.
- Contain a factional movement before it spreads into a general conflagration.
- Preserve pluralism without assuming factions can be eliminated.

Slide 9 - Institutional Design: Balance Scale and Local Knowledge

- Too little representation can expose decisions to concentrated local pressure.
- Too much distance can weaken knowledge of particular circumstances.
- A workable structure assigns broad, aggregate concerns to wider representation while leaving local and particular concerns closer to the relevant community.
- The aim is neither unrestricted local control nor unaccountable central control, but a deliberate balance.

Slide 10 - A Durable Moderation Standard

When deciding whether to intervene, ask:

- Does the conduct express a disagreement, or threaten others' ability to participate?
- Is a majority using its strength against minority rights?
- Is a minority coordinating disruption beyond ordinary advocacy?
- Would the rule apply equally if the factions changed places?
- Does the intervention control harmful effects without demanding uniform opinions?
- Is the decision transparent enough to remain credible to competing groups?

Slide 11 - The Operating Principle

Do not try to abolish faction. Build enough representation, variety, distance, and procedural restraint that no faction can easily convert coordination into domination.

The test of a durable rule is not whether every faction approves it.

The test is whether rival factions can continue participating under it without one group making participation intolerable for the rest.