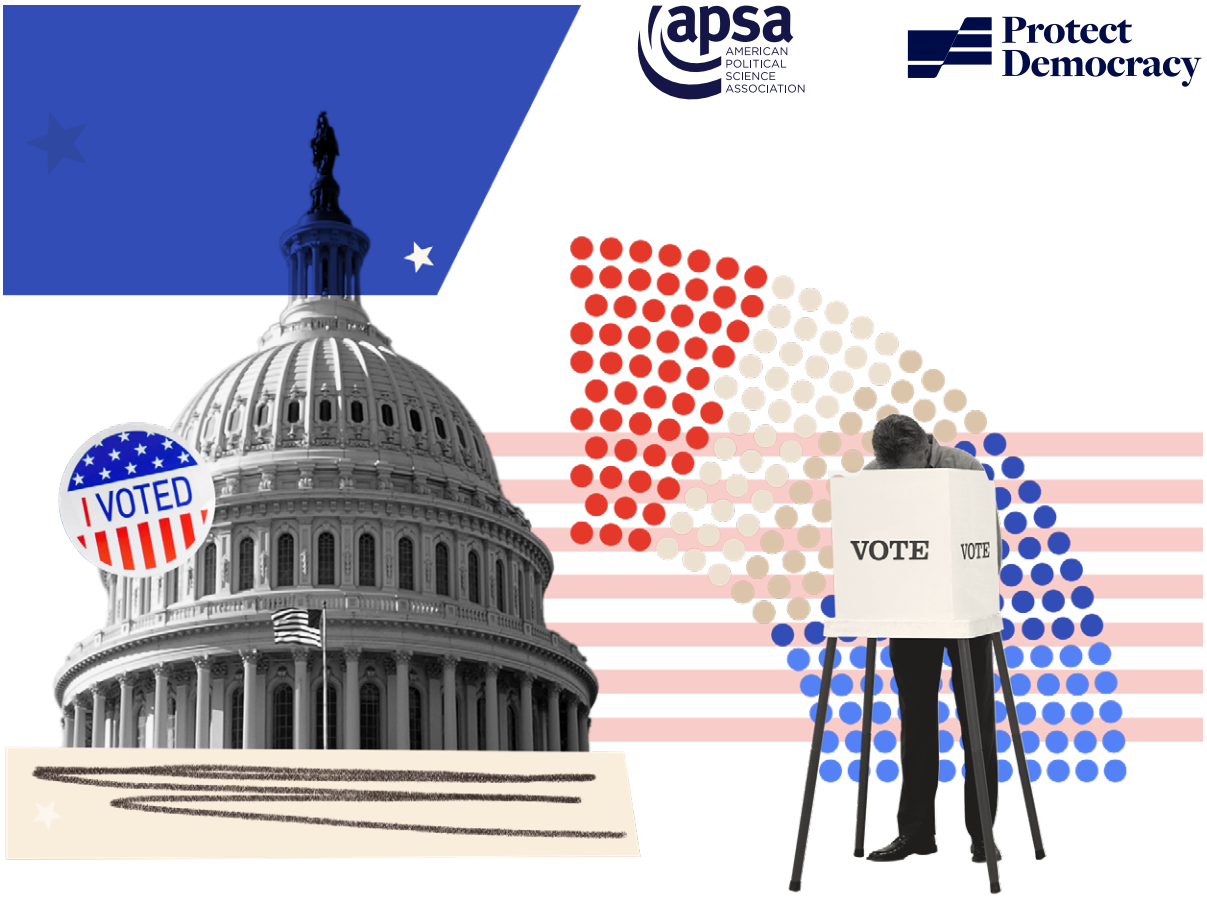

MORE THAN RED AND BLUE:
POLITICAL PARTIES AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

JULY 2023

APSA PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON POLITICAL PARTIES

The American Political Science Association and Protect Democracy are deeply grateful for the expertise generously provided by those whose work and reviews helped shape this report. A special thanks to Julia Azari and Frances Lee for offering comments on an early draft of the report. Frances Cayton, Rachel Funk Fordham, Aura Gonzalez, Karra McCray Gibson, JD Mussel, Babajide Tella, and Jamie M. Wright provided research assistance to members of the Task Force. Special thanks to the leadership and staff of the American Political Science Association and Protect Democracy who supported the work of the Task Force and the production of this report, especially Steven Smith, Betsy Super, Abby Paulson, Farbod Faraji, Justin Florence, and Christopher Parr.

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APSA PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON POLITICAL PARTIES

AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT, 2021-2022

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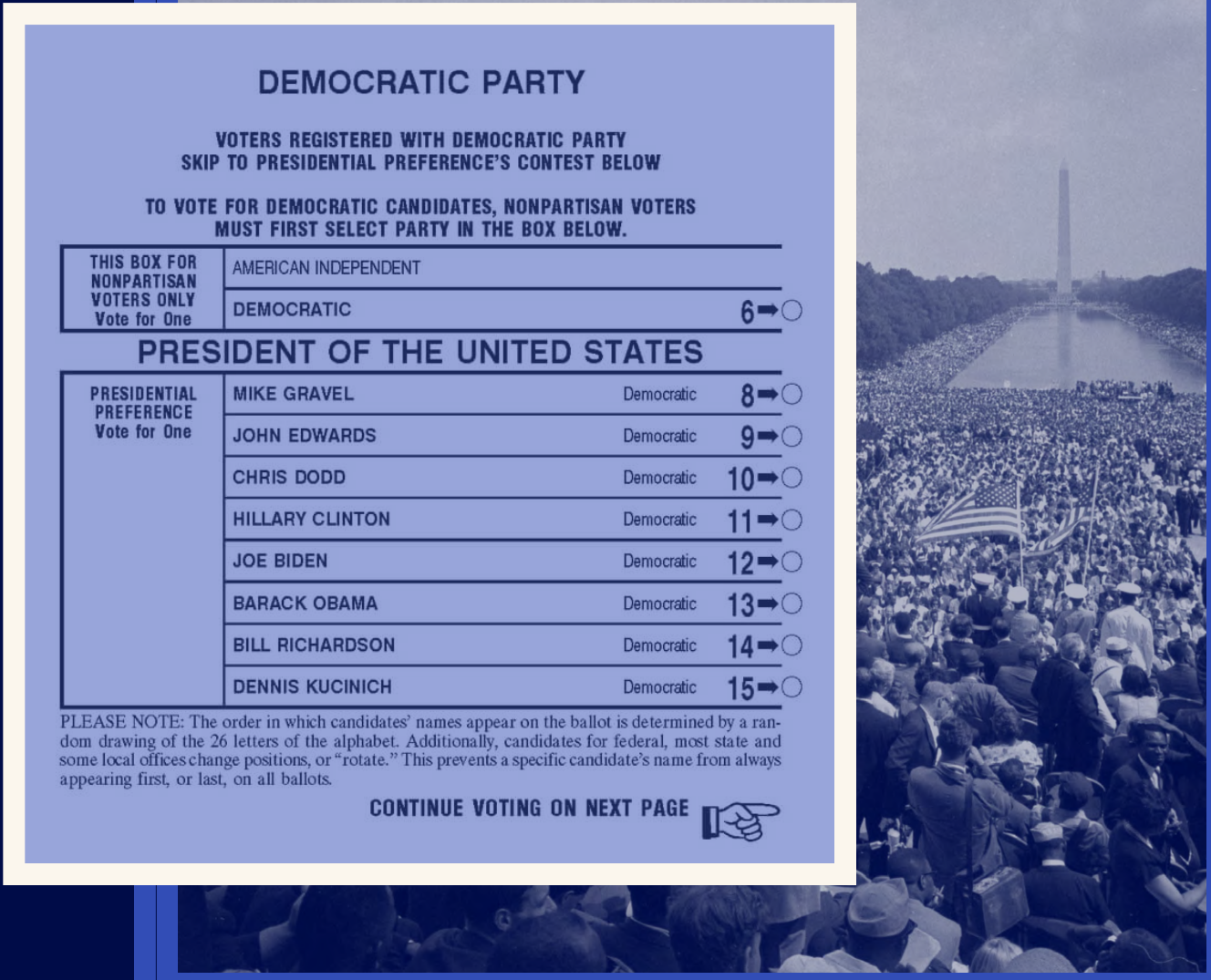

WHY NOW? THE PURPOSE OF THE TASK FORCE ON POLITICAL PARTIES

American democracy has been under inordinate stress, exacerbated by our political parties.

The ultimate purpose of this Task Force is to provide a comprehensive understanding rooted in the academic literature of why and how our parties have changed as well as positive means of moving forward to encourage these key political participants to be more responsible promoters of democracy and prevent a decline into a more authoritarian form of government.

The United States is not immune from the global trends challenging democracies. Like many other countries, American democracy is under pressure. In particular, political parties in the United States have emerged as a point of weakness, a vulnerability in the system rather than a bulwark of democracy. The American Political Science Association (APSA) and Protect Democracy have partnered to support the APSA Presidential Task Force on Political Parties in summarizing for a general audience the existing political science research on responsible political party behavior. Leaders and parties who behave responsibly engage in institutional forbearance, refraining from using the full breadth and scope of their politically allocated power, when doing so would undermine the democratic system. They also adhere to the norm of mutual toleration, respecting one another as legitimate players in the political system. Today, American political parties fall short on both. We don't pretend that both parties face equal challenges on this front - as many chapters indicate, the bulk of the problematic party behavior today comes from the contemporary Republican Party. But the research presented here can be applied to party responsibility across the ideological spectrum.

There is substantial skepticism of political parties in the United States, a feature of our political culture dating to the founding. Yet research on democracies around the world yields the consistent finding that political parties are an essential feature of nearly all large democracies.

What are the functions of political parties in democracies?

Political parties play a range of vital roles, especially in large, diverse democracies. These include:

- Connecting interests and groups together in coalition,
- Mobilizing voters and resources during campaigns,
- Organizing political ideas more coherently and providing a "brand" that voters can easily identify, simplifying decision-making and providing interparty accountability,
- Coordinating office holders to advance policies and provide effective governance, and
- Constraining individual politicians from acting against democratic norms and rules.

There are many ways in which political parties in the US are failing to fulfill these functions or doing so in ways that do not meet the standards of forbearance and mutual toleration inherent in responsible party behavior.

Americans do not express much trust in political parties, consistently ranking them below the police, judges, and even the legislatures which parties help to organize. In this, Americans are like citizens in other democracies. While extreme distrust of parties might weaken democracy, some skepticism is healthy, with various democracies taking measures to protect against parties that might threaten the democratic order.

How did we get here? What explains the current state of American political parties?

The US party system has changed several times throughout its history, moving from a set of elite groups organizing inside Congress and the Executive branch, to more mass-based parties. Over time the contours of the system have shifted several times, with different geographic, identity, and policy divisions distinguishing parties.

Several features and trends help to explain the current contours of the American party system and the party behavior within it:

- While partisan ties are connected to many factors, racial identification and racial views are a central feature of partisanship, even more so than in the recent past. This realignment has generated problematic electoral incentives and spurred efforts to restrict access to the democratic process to sway elections and entrench parties in power.
- American parties have always been remarkably permeable, providing opportunities for different groups to shape parties and for parties to reach out to new interests. But this permeability also raises the risk of party capture by antidemocratic actors.
- The innovation of party primaries democratized the nomination process but also lead to a loss of control of the party by its leaders. Party leaders have ways of influencing primary outcomes, but the significant coordination difficulties posed by the current campaign environment limits their ability to provide effective gatekeeping.
- Parties have become organizationally weaker due to the rise of the partisan news media and social media. Changes in campaign finance law have empowered groups at the expense of parties themselves, inhibiting the ability of parties to serve as gatekeepers against antidemocratic forces.

What's to be done? What does political science tell us about possibilities for change?

While there is no single panacea, research offers insights into several potential avenues for change. These insights include:

- The accumulated body of research cautions against a Pollyannaish hope that voters will spontaneously realign the party system away from polarized divisions. Voters are far more driven by psychological dynamics favoring in-group bias and the two major parties have adopted mobilization strategies that interact with this tendency in different ways. Though still unlikely, there is some possibility for a partisan realignment around pro-democracy issues which could be fostered by various methods of reducing animosity among voters.
- Change could conceivably come not from voters writ-large, but from pressure via factions or from organized social movements. Such movements have a complex history of interaction with US political parties. Typically emerging when parties

are not proactively addressing the concerns of some mass group, social movements are sometimes successful in reshaping parties, but at other times their influence is limited.

- Ultimately, parties' behavior is driven by the incentives they face, so the surrounding institutional landscape may need to change as well. Electoral system reforms such as ranked choice voting or proportional representation can alter the incentives parties face and provide new opportunities to break gridlock and combat anti-democratic forces. Following the lead of states that have begun experimenting with a range of reforms could help create a less permissive environment for irresponsible behavior and democratic backsliding.

In sum, political parties in the United States operate in a social, political, and legal environment that leaves them vulnerable to capture by antidemocratic influences and frequently incentivizes irresponsible political behavior. Scholarship on these topics offers practitioners guidance for the challenges that will need to be met to successfully reform. The causes of parties' current behavior are multifaceted. There is likely no single change that will address all of them, but there are paths forward.

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FOREWORD

The APSA Political Parties Task Force

JOHN ISHIYAMA, University of North Texas

MISSION STATEMENT

The ultimate purpose of this Task Force is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which political parties can be responsible promoters of democracy, to prevent a decline into a more authoritarian form of government. The Task Force will achieve this goal by highlighting insights rooted in the academic literature that can inform policy development and strategy.

The idea for this task force was the result of two separate but parallel sets of conversations—one that began during my presidency of APSA, and one that preceded it. Both were motivated by a profound concern with the state of democracy not only in the United States, but in the world. More importantly, we were all concerned with the lamentable role our political parties have played in undermining democracy, rather than strengthening it. The first conversation was with David Lublin, who mentioned to me that the time was right for APSA to issue some kind of report about the state of our democracy—something akin to the famous 1950 report of APSA's Committee on Political Parties, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System." At the same time, former APSA Deputy Director Betsy Super had been in contact with Jennifer Dresden at the organization Protect Democracy, investigating ways to focus on producing a report that would focus on political parties, tapping into the broad range of scholarly expertise in the political science community. Prompted by Daniel Ziblatt and Steven Levitsky's observations about the role of political parties in their book *How Democracies Die*, and conversations with other experts, Protect Democracy had been looking for solutions to some of the challenges related to political parties in the current moment. At the APSA meeting in Seattle in 2021 APSA Executive Director Steven Smith and I discussed combining these efforts to create a presidential taskforce to address the state of political parties in the United States. The creation of this taskforce was authorized by the APSA Council in Spring 2022, with David Lublin and Lilliana Mason as co-chairs of the task force.

This following publication is a product of the task force's efforts. The contributions were motivated by the following purpose for this task force.

The motivation for this task force begins with an old idea. **Parties have long been cited in the literature as a critical component of democracy.** For instance, E.E. Schattschneider once remarked that "the political parties created democracy and modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the political parties" (Schattschneider 1942, 1). Although perhaps overstating the case, there is indeed a general consensus in the scholarly literature that parties are essential entities in the building and consolidation of competitive democracy. The notion of the indispensability of parties is rooted in the idea that they perform essential democratic functions, and that while these functions may not be the exclusive domain of political parties, they are thought to perform these

functions better than any other type of organizations (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000; Diamond and Linz 1989; Gunther and Diamond 2003 2019; Webb, Farrell, and Holliday 2002; Webb and White 2007). One of the critical functions performed is political integration and the promotion of a responsible political discourse.

Events of recent years suggest that democracies are under a great deal of pressure, particularly in the United States. In particular there is growing alarm that our political parties are not engaging in responsible political behavior. What is responsible political behavior? According to Eisen et al (2019) responsible political behavior has two components: Leaders who behave responsibly engage in "institutional forbearance" and "mutual toleration." The norm of institutional forbearance holds that politicians should refrain from using the full breadth and scope of their politically allocated power, when doing so would undermine the democratic system. A second norm crucial to democratic functioning is "mutual toleration", which addresses how political opponents treat one another with respect and tolerance.

Both are becoming less evident in our politics.

To address the mission of this taskforce, the chapters address some critical questions. These include:

1. What does the scholarly literature say about the functions of parties in democracies, and are these functions being performed by the major parties in the United States?
2. What are the reasons for the current state of the political parties in the United States?
3. How do we get our parties and leaders to behave "responsibly"?
4. What are the major insights from the scholarly literature that may suggest opportunities and constraints for institutional and organizational changes that can help promote responsible political behavior?

The focus of the task force is not on recommending grand solutions to the current dilemma facing the country (such as recommending the introduction of a system of responsible parties that was part of the first APSA report on parties so many years ago), but to make public the scholarship on political parties so that practitioners can use what we know. We have collaborated with Protect Democracy, whose role is to translate our expertise into usable bits of information to help promote the reform of our parties. That is our role as political scientists—to make public our knowledge so others can act on this expertise.

Working with our partner Protect Democracy, the following publication is a compilation of short chapters that address some of the fundamental challenges and issues that face political party development in the United States from a scholarly (and comparative) perspective. The intention is to make available such knowledge to practitioners and the public at large. In this way we hope that our association and profession can help address some of the fundamental challenges that face our democracy.

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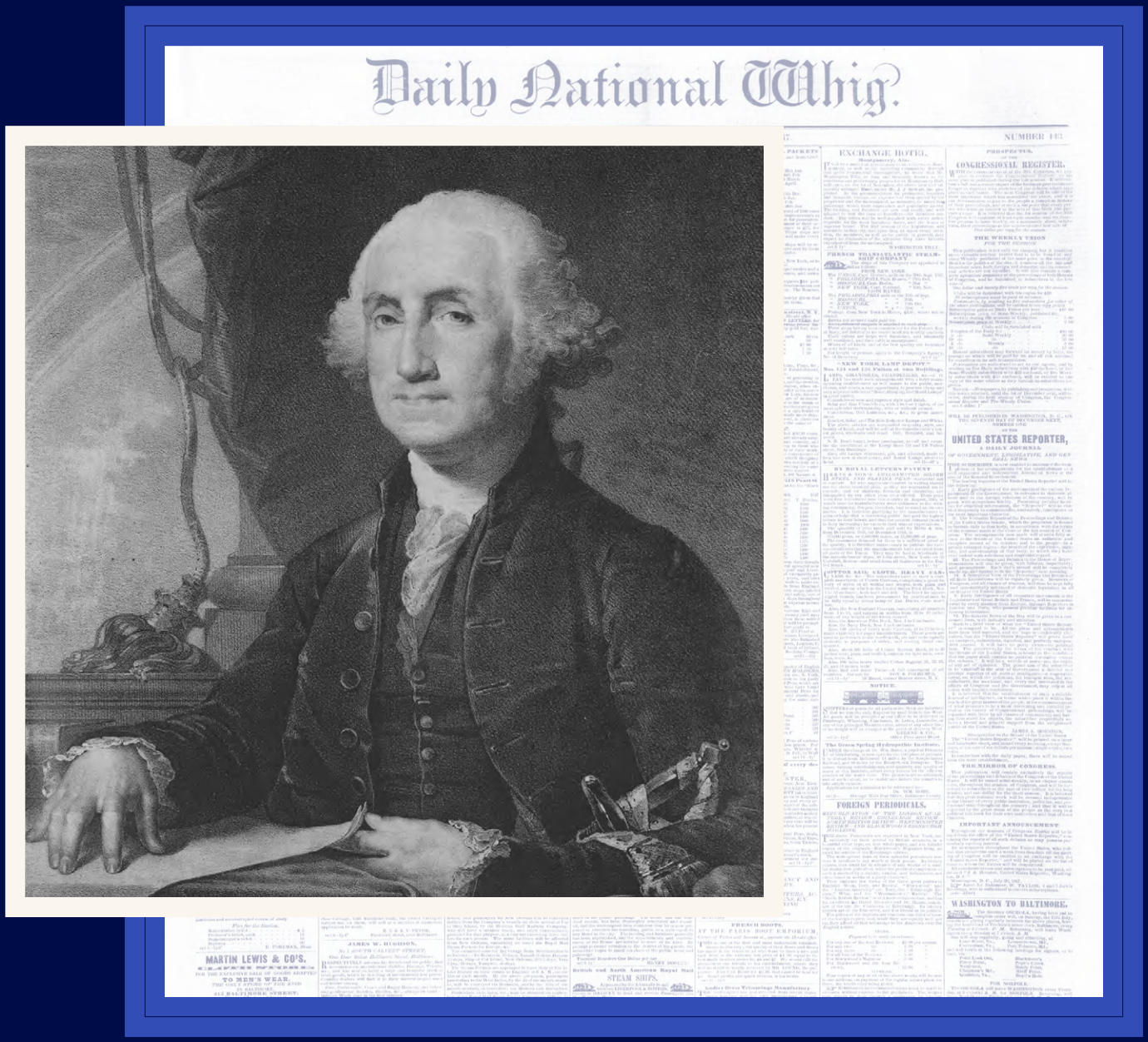
Preface

MARK D. BREWER, University of Maine



This report exists in no small part because of where we are currently in American political time. American politics and indeed American society are highly polarized and deeply divided. Many people from various vantage points are increasingly worried about the state of American politics. A good amount of the responsibility for this situation is laid at the feet of America's two major political parties. While which party is more to blame depends on whom one asks, it is widely believed that today's Republican and Democratic Parties have evolved to a place where they emphasize difference, stoke fear and animosity, and incite conflict. Indeed, if there is one thing on which deeply divided Americans agree, it is that parties have gotten us to the highly undesirable and dangerous place in which we currently reside.

Americans' consternation with and distrust of political parties is, of course, not a new development. Such feelings date to the earliest days of the republic and were strongly held by many of the nation's founders. Whether it be Madison (1787) railing against "the mischiefs of faction" or Washington (1796) warning his fellow Americans "against the baneful effects of the spirit of party," many of the original architects of the American governing arrangement were strongly opposed to parties, as is noted throughout the chapters in this report. However, it is also true that many of these same figures soon turned to parties as the primary mechanism for advancing and enacting their agendas and goals. While not quite Schattschneider's ([1942] 2004, 1) "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties" view, these American political practitioners came to the same conclusion that the generations of practitioners who came after them have reached: political parties are extremely useful, if not essential, in the practice of politics under the American governing arrangement.

One could argue that Americans today find themselves in this very same situation: they are deeply troubled by and distrustful of the place of parties in politics and government while at the same time reliant on political parties to accomplish their goals. The contributors to this report recognize this tension but find themselves more or less in agreement on the necessity of parties. For them, the key to improving our current situation is to alter the political environment and/or rules of the game in such a way as to stack the deck in favor of parties as beneficial entities rather than harmful institutions. This is where a brief history of American parties will prove useful. Political parties did not show up in American politics fully formed. American political parties have proven highly malleable and have changed significantly over time. There have been important continuities as well. Understanding these changes and continuities will not only help us make sense of where we are right now but will also prove useful in envisioning where we might go moving forward.

During this fight for support, parties will exploit anything and everything they think will give them an advantage.

Despite appearing nowhere in the Constitution, presidential parties began forming before George

Washington completed his first term as president. Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton's economic plans provided the initial partisan sparks, but the division soon grew to include fundamental questions of federalism and foreign policy as well. By the time Washington ended his second presidential term, the U.S. had its first party system (1796-1824)—the Federalist Party, led by Hamilton and John Adams, and the Jeffersonian (or Democratic) Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, but these parties were not like the parties of today. America's first parties were elite parties, with their origins and members inside of Congress and the executive branch. This made sense as democratic elements were quite limited in the political system of that time. This began to change in the first two decades of the 19th century and, as this occurred, parties began to change as well.

The first American party system did not end abruptly so much as it gradually faded away. By the 1810s, the Federalists were reduced largely to New England, and, by 1820, they had disappeared entirely. Indeed, this so-called Era of Good Feelings is the only period of American history where there was only one major political party. The presidential election of 1824 brought this period to a close (Banning 2004; Chambers 1963). This election featured four major candidates, none of whom got a majority in the electoral college. This threw the election to the House of Representatives where the leading vote getter in both the electoral college and the popular vote (in those states where it existed)—War of 1812 hero Andrew Jackson—was denied the presidency in favor of John Quincy Adams. This infuriated Jackson's supporters, who felt their candidate deserved the presidency as the people's choice. Jackson and his supporters immediately began looking toward the 1828 presidential contest, vowing to not be cheated again. It is in their efforts that the modern American party system emerges.

Jackson's supporters recognized that their candidate was very popular with the masses and worked hard to maximize this advantage. Martin Van Buren, Democratic-Republican U.S. Senator from New York, took the lead in directing Jackson's campaign and created a new model for seeking public office. Universal white male suffrage had been growing at the state level during the 1810s and 1820s, as had states selecting their electoral college electors by popular vote rather than by state legislatures. Van Buren used these changes to Jackson's advantage and built the first grassroots party in the U.S. (Silbey 2002). Jackson defeated Adams for the presidency in 1828, with the popular vote increasing more than three times than that of 1824. The days of elite parties In the U.S. were over. From 1828 forward, the major American parties would be the mass parties with which we are familiar today.

These developments ushered in the second American party system (1824-1860). The Democratic Party, as the Democratic-Republicans are now known, was opposed by the newly formed Whig Party. The Whigs learned from Van Buren's example, and each party developed complex organizational structures at the local, state, and national levels to attract voters and recruit candidates. The two parties competed vigorously for supporters nationwide with muscular grassroots operations. The Democrats and Whigs took different positions on important issues, and they also appealed to voters based on sociodemographic characteristics and regional differences. Sometimes, this involved high-minded debates over substantive differences on policy. Other times, one would see unsavory appeals rooted in racial/ethnic, religious, or class differences, but all actions were aimed at winning elections.

The second party system came to end in the rising tensions caused by the debate over slavery and abolition. The Whigs collapsed and were replaced by the newly formed Republican Party, marking the beginning of the third party system (1860-1896). While the Civil War took place in this system's early years, even here, the two-party system proved resilient. The Republicans came to dominate the northern states, and the Democrats were even more dominant in the South. While the Democrats and Republicans remained as the two major parties, the third party system would eventually end as well, giving way to the fourth (1896-1932), which gave way to the fifth (1932-1968), which at some point gave way to the sixth (1968-?). Parties scholars increasingly question if the sixth party system ended and if we currently find ourselves in the early stages of a still somewhat ambiguously defined seventh party system.

Each party system is, in many ways, unique, marked by differences in dominant issues, party coalitions, and partisan control. In addition to the potent legacy of the Civil War (both parties "waved the bloody shirt"), the third party system was marked by a significant rural/urban divide. The fourth party system saw conflict framed initially by currency issues and, later, fights over machine politics versus progressive reform. The fifth party system was the famed New Deal party system rooted in class differences and economic conflict while the sixth party system added racial and cultural conflict to the mix. It is not yet entirely clear what will dominate the seventh party system, if we are in fact in the seventh party system. Each party's coalition also changed at least somewhat as each party system moved into the next, but, for the purposes of this report, it is perhaps more important to focus on the ways in which American party systems, at least since the second party system, have remained the same. The rules of the American political game are heavily stacked in favor of two major political parties. These two parties fight to attract voters at every level in the American federal arrangement. During this fight for support, parties will exploit anything and everything they think will give them an advantage. Issue positions, group identities and differences, election rules and laws, all are fair game in the eyes of parties as they pursue their ultimate goal—winning elections, so they can make public policy as they see fit. Keeping these facts in mind—facts that have been in place for almost 200 years—will be crucial in reading the chapters that follow. Parties are inherently neither moral nor immoral. They exist as a political means to a political end. If we want parties to behave in certain ways and contribute to certain outcomes, it is incumbent on us to create the conditions that will force them to do so.

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PART I

THE FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES

ASPA PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON POLITICAL PARTIES

AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION + PROTECT DEMOCRACY

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

DAVID LUBLIN, co-chair
LILLIANA MASON, co-chair

Why parties?

Political parties don't get much respect. President George Washington warned against them in his farewell address. The two parties that have dominated American politics since 1860 are little trusted. "Partisan" is an epithet.

Yet parties play a vital role in our democracy.

They bind disparate groups together in our extremely large and diverse country, helping organize Americans into one people despite their differences. In contrast to countries where compromise is negotiated primarily at very elite levels of government, our leading parties tend to bring together a hodgepodge of groups, if only to capture a majority. Though our parties often seem increasingly narrow today, this "big tent" approach has usually served parties and the country very well—making politics a game of addition and coalitions. Parties work to mobilize voters and resources during campaigns. Once in office, they coordinate, albeit often querulously, to advance favored policies, knowing that voters will evaluate them collectively for their performance. Ideally, this need to advance collective goals, if only due to individual desire to advance their personal goals or gain higher office, constrains individual politicians from acting completely as free agents or against democratic norms or rules.

By providing candidates with a label, parties can serve as a valuable cue and shortcut for voters. Much like people associate brands with a specific type of product, voters link parties to policy menus and develop positive or negative feelings towards them. In a country where voters cast ballots for myriad offices—not just state and federal executives and legislators but a panoply of local officials—party labels are not just a convenience that makes voting easier but a virtual necessity to sort out candidates on lengthy ballots. Besides providing valuable cues to voters, parties also help organize political ideas more coherently and ideologically in a way that most voters lack the time or interest to do (Converse 1964).

Though Americans tend to think of voters as choosing parties based on policy, the long-term psychological ties between voters and parties also allow parties to influence voters. Effectively, voters often act like supporters of a team, inclined to approve of their team's actions and to disapprove of competitors (Cohen 2003). While this can lead to normatively bad outcomes through a reduction in intraparty accountability, it can also, in the best case, help to guide the electorate toward normatively positive goals such as policy moderation (Slothuus and Bisgaard 2021).

Parties can also facilitate interparty accountability. Even for voters with little sense of policy or interest in politics or parties, party labels aid voters who want to punish the "ins" and reward the "outs" based on retrospective evaluations of the state of affairs (Fiorina 1981). As V.O. Key (1949) identified in his analysis of the then-one-party South, accountability is more difficult in places without parties or governed by a single party (but see Caughy 2018). It is far harder for voters to determine who to reward and who to punish. One-party rule facilitates elected officials changing their positions once in office because there is no linkage between a label or a party apparatus and a set of policies.

While party polarization is currently associated with immobility and gridlock in the United States, party linkages can also facilitate governance among officials linked together by a party label and at least a semblance of a party program. Even under divided government, having competing power centers can at least identify groups and leaders whose buy-in will be needed to achieve compromise to pass legislation.

The solution to today's political problems is not to eliminate parties altogether. Instead, we hope to gather enough current knowledge in one place so that those working to improve American politics are all starting on the same page. This report is intended to help others know what political scientists know and move forward without repeating mistakes or chasing wild geese. Sometimes, the conventional wisdom is right but other times it encourages the adoption of reforms that only make matters worse. American democracy needs informed and rapid action from those who are working to defend it.

Why now?

In 1950, the APSA Committee on Political Parties released a report titled, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System." The report argued that "popular government in a nation of more than 150 million people requires political parties which provide the electorate with a proper range of choice between the alternatives of action" (APSA Committee on Political Parties 1950, 15). Its authors contended that the two major parties were not sufficiently differentiated to provide voters with meaningful choices.

Today, American politics is in a very different place. Most of the common wisdom tells us that the contemporary Democratic and Republican parties are so polarized and incompatible that their differences prevent legislative action, fuel zero-sum thinking, and even provoke violence. If anything, the range of choice provided by today's parties is too wide.

One consequence is that American democracy is at higher risk. Partisans increasingly view their opponents as an existential threat to the American way of life and accordingly feel far more hostile to opposing partisans than previously. Though any political party is vulnerable to the same weaknesses, refusals to accept and efforts to overturn democratic outcomes are centered among Republicans. Nevertheless, while violence is most heavily associated with the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol, support for violence to achieve political ends is by no means exclusive to Republicans and is on the rise in both parties (Safarpour et al. 2022). A "responsible" two-party system today should include equal commitments to democracy from all parties. The American separation of powers, moreover, requires a willingness to compromise to function well since a single party often lacks effective control. This report is meant to help strengthen American democracy at a time when it is under unusually high levels of stress by addressing the partisan roots of democratic threats.

Here, along with Protect Democracy, we have gathered some of the most insightful scholars of political parties, partisanship, and democracy to write a new report. Importantly, we do not intend to repeat the mistakes of the 1950 report—widely criticized for, among other things, "normative slovenliness and empirical inaccuracy" (Kirkpatrick 1971, 979). Some have even blamed the prior report for contributing to some of the very problems, particularly polarization, that we now find our democracy facing. We take a broader and less normatively prescriptive approach. Instead, we hope to offer a picture of the knowledge that currently exists regarding political parties, partisanship, and risks to democracy as a resource for those who are working toward a resolution of our modern American political dysfunction. Beyond having a strong pro-democracy bias, our goal as scholars is to present a balanced view of the literature and not to enter public policy debates, even as

we acknowledge that the threats posed to the health of our democracy by the two major parties are not, as noted above, symmetrical. As much as we acknowledge the democratic and societal disruption that American parties currently inspire, we also understand that political parties in American politics are not only inevitable, but under the right circumstances they can be beneficial.

Plan of the Report

The remainder of the report lays out the perils and possibilities of American political parties and some considerations for change. Susan Scarrow's chapter starts us off with a look into the common lack of trust in political parties. She explains how a lack of trust in parties can, in fact, indicate a healthy skepticism among voters—and mirrors an institutionalized wariness of party power that is often conceptualized as "militant democracy."

The following five chapters describe the current state of political parties in the United States. Zoltan Hajnal's chapter describes the increasingly racialized difference between the Democratic and Republican parties. Christina Wolbrecht then explains the permeability of parties to new factions, and the potential threats to democracy that come with weakened institutional parties. Katherine Tate describes the recent increase in the influence and visibility of female and minority politicians in the Democratic Party—leading to an intensified focus in the Republican Party on divisive social issues rather than other political matters, ultimately generating undemocratic policies that seek to weaponize the power of the state for partisan outcomes. Seth Masket and Hans Noel clarify common misunderstandings around partisan primaries and explain the challenges that primaries present to party leadership and its ability to pursue the goals of America democracy. Jake Grumbach finishes this section of the report by explaining the risks to democracy posed by the U.S. federal system—allowing state governments to undermine democratic institutions.

The final section of the report looks for sources of positive change in political parties. Lilliana Mason explores the options for reducing partisan animosity drawn from intergroup conflict research and discusses the possibility for positive change driven by a rift in the Republican Party. Keneshia Grant and Marcus Board, Jr. describe the power of social movements to influence party politics. Rachel Beatty Riedl explains how the parties are weakly institutionalized, which damages their ability to constrain anti-democratic factions. She describes mobilization challenges that face parties that find themselves in opposition to authoritarian incumbents and suggests options for strategies. David Lublin and Benjamin Reilly offer electoral system reform opportunities to realign party incentives away from ideological extremes. Jack Santucci, Matthew Shugart and Michael Latner describe an alternative set of electoral reforms aimed at fully representing racial, ethnic, and linguistic minority groups in the U.S. Finally, Seth Masket and Hans Noel explain that reforms seeking to incentivize responsible party behavior will need to engage parties and harness them for good, understanding that the current constellation of political institutions in the United States often undermines parties.

We hope that this report can be a resource for any groups or individuals currently working to mend the cracks in American democracy and buttress it against further damage.

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CHAPTER 1—COVER PHOTOS

"Photograph of President William Jefferson Clinton Greeting People in a Large Crowd at a 'Get Out the Vote' Rally in Los Angeles, California." William J. Clinton Library, 2 November. 2000, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/5899910. Accessed 29 May 2023.

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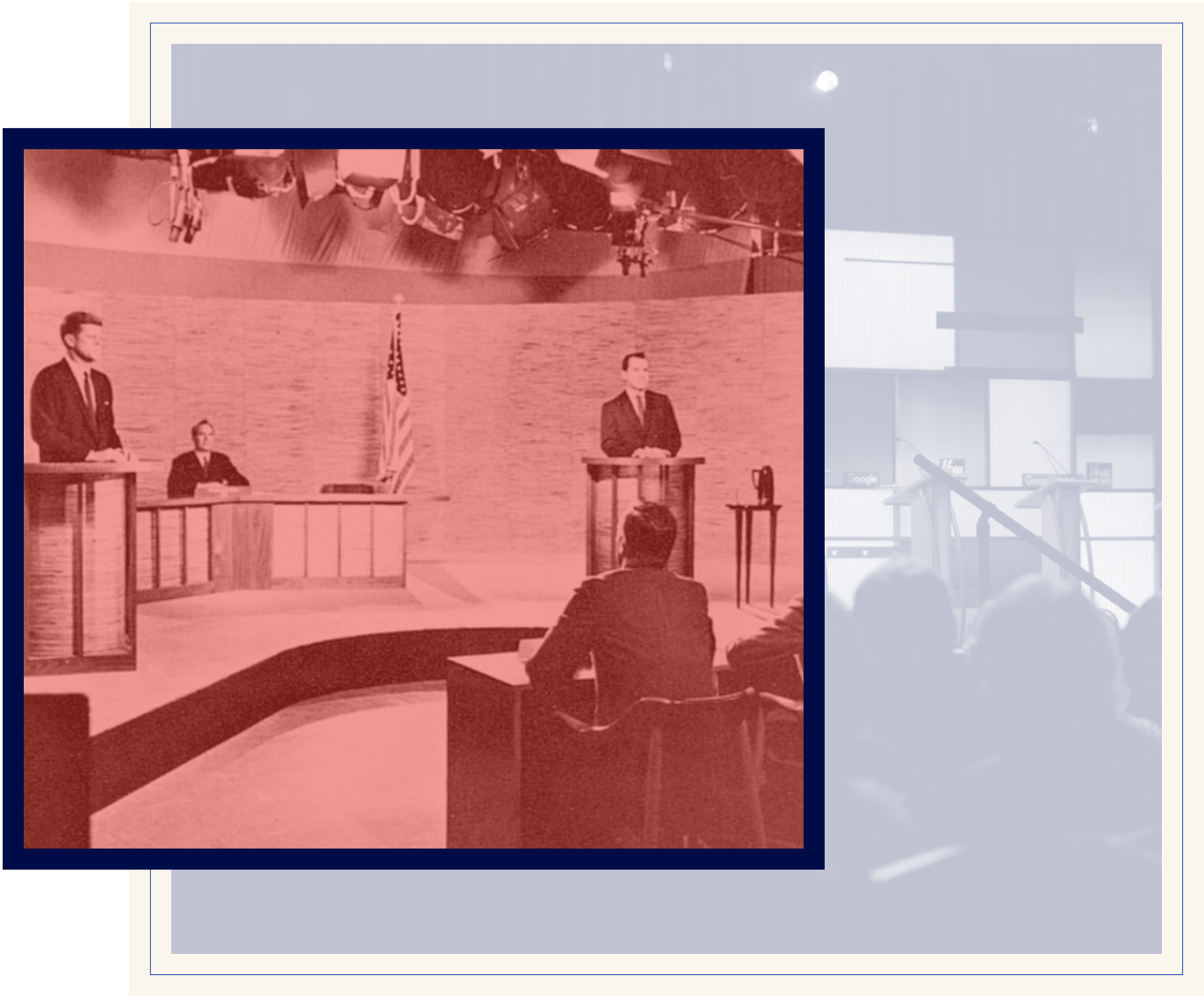
CHAPTER 2

How Much Should We Trust Political Parties?

SUSAN E. SCARROW, University of Houston



ABSTRACT

According to recent opinion polls in the United States and other democracies, political parties are the least trusted public institution, consistently ranking below the police, judges, even the legislatures which parties help to organize. Such polls are often cited as evidence of democratic malaise with the assumption being that it must be difficult for citizens to support representative democracy if they do not trust the parties that dominate representative processes. Yet is this the right inference to draw from such evidence? This chapter provides context to the notion of trust in political parties, considering the historical origins of anti-party attitudes and the possible benefits of such skepticism. Finally, it relates distrust of (some) parties to the constitutional doctrine of militant democracy, discussing both the theory and practice of measures various democracies have taken to protect against parties that may threaten the democratic order.

Distrust of parties: a democratic pathology?[1]

According to recent opinion polls in the United States and other democracies, political parties are the least trusted public institution. For instance, surveys of 18 European countries conducted over the past two decades found that political parties were consistently the least trusted institution, ranking below the police, courts and even the legislatures which parties help to organize (see Figure 1).[2] Parties stayed at the bottom of the trust ladder even as average trust scores fluctuated and while other institutions changed their relative rankings.

The results are similar for the United States. Thus, in multiple waves of the World Values Survey (Inglehart et al. 2020; hereafter WVS), political parties emerge as the public institution in which Americans express the least confidence (see Figure 2). In the most recent wave of this survey, only 11.1% of U.S. respondents expressed "a great deal" or "quite a bit" of confidence in political parties. Parties fared only a little better across the other 39 other democracies included in the 2017-22 WVS wave, with an average of 17.1% of citizens expressing strong confidence in political parties, and with parties ranking well below other institutions (see Figure 3).

Numbers such as these are often invoked as evidence that something is wrong with contemporary political parties, and, by extension, with the democracies within which they operate (Dalton and Weldon 2005; Ignazi 2014; Kim 2007; Mjelde and Svåsand 2016; Teixeira, Tsatsanis, and Belchior 2016). The usual conclusion is that it must be difficult for representative democracy to flourish if citizens distrust the very parties that play a key role in such representation. These conclusions have been bolstered by studies in both the U.S. and elsewhere that explore the political implications of low trust in public institutions in general, and of political parties more specifically. Some of the more worrying findings suggest that citizens with comparatively low political trust have an above-average tendency to

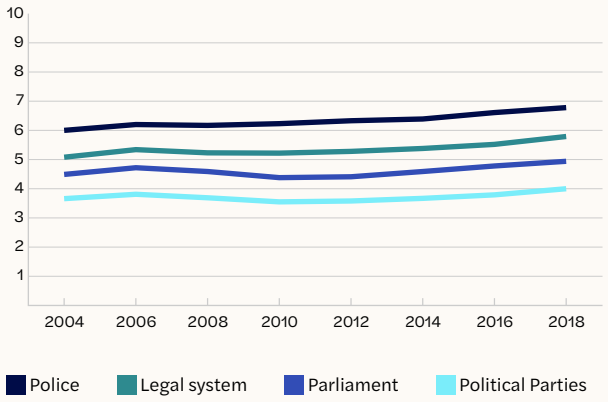
1 Thanks to Jamie M. Wright for her assistance in preparing this chapter.

2 Rounds 2-9 (2004-2018). This covers 15 countries included in all 9 rounds (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom) and 3 countries for which data were available for all but one round (Estonia missing Round 1, Czechia missing Round 3, Denmark missing Round 8). From *European Social Survey* 2018.

FIGURE 1

TRUST IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS: EUROPEAN SOCIAL SURVEY

Average Score On a 0-10 Point Scale With 0 Being No Trust and 10 Being Complete Trust

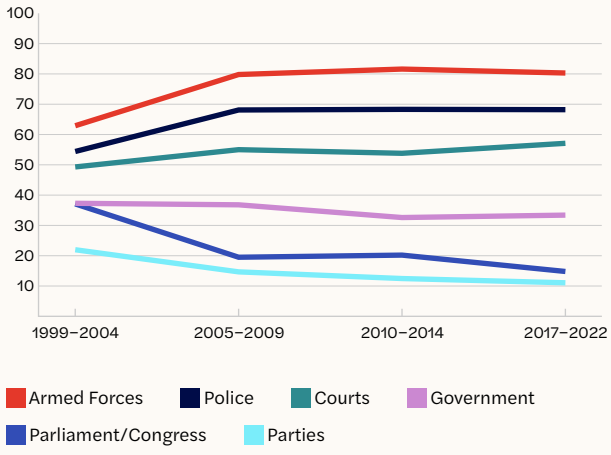


Note: Across this 14 year period in Europe between 2004 and 2018, political parties are consistently viewed as the institution with the least amount of trust compared to the police, legal system, and Parliament.

FIGURE 2

CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS: UNITED STATES WORLD VALUES SURVEY

Percentage of Respondents Expressing a Great Deal or Quite a Lot of Confidence in Institutions



Note: When looking specifically at the United States from 1999-2022, political parties have consistently been assessed as the public institution with the least amount of confidence compared to other legal and political institutions.

vote (using "voice" rather than "exit), but they are disproportionately likely to vote for anti-incumbent and outsider alternatives, including radical ones.[3] However, other studies contradict these findings, leaving uncertainty about the extent and direction of such relationships (Citrin and Stoker 2018; Gabriel 2017; Levi and Stoker 2000).

Other evidence also suggests that caution is in order when interpreting these eye-catching surveys. For one thing, as both the European Social Survey and WVS figures show, this is not a new development. Parties have been *persistently* placed at the bottom when comparing responses to questions about "trust" or "confidence" in various public institutions. While the scores have indeed gone down slightly in the U.S. over the past 15 years, they have slightly increased in the European sample, which argues against seeing this as a monolithic or one-directional phenomenon. Also, it is relevant to note that the institutions in which citizens express more confidence—including the courts, the police, and the armed forces (see Figure 3)—are institutions which deliberately cultivate public trust because, in democracies, these institutions cannot function well if they lack a high degree of popular legitimacy. In that sense, they are much different from parties (plural), which contribute to functioning democracies by competing with each other.

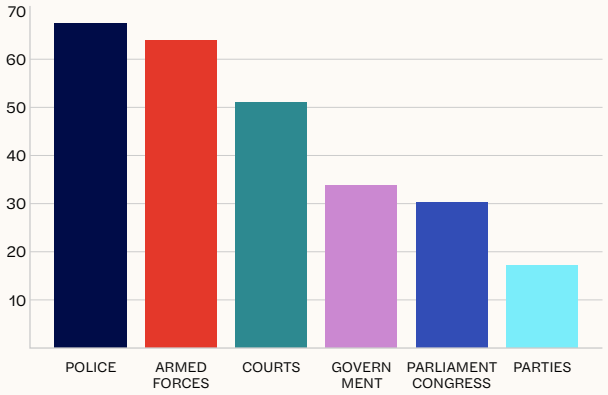
Moreover, these same surveys show that the countries in which residents are most likely to express strong confidence in parties are one-party and one-party dominant regimes. In the most recent WVS sample, among countries earning Freedom House "Free" scores, only Norway and Sweden have over 30% of residents who express such confidence. None of the most populous democracies in the sample score above 26%; in most, the proportion of respondents

3 On the impact of party trust, see Ceka 2013 and Okolikj et. al. 2022.

FIGURE 3

CONFIDENCE IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS ACROSS DEMOCRACIES (EXCLUDING U.S.): WORLD VALUES SURVEY

Percentage of Respondents Expressing a Great Deal or Quite a Lot of Confidence in Institutions



Note: Democracies are defined here as countries with Freedom House "Free" scores as of 2022 (N = 39). The data show that parties are the public institutions which enjoy the least amount of public confidence; this is true in multiple democracies, not only in the United States.

expressing such confidence lies between 10% and 25% (see Figure 4). While the United States is towards the bottom of this range, it is by no means an outlier. Overall, public wariness towards political parties is the rule in all democracies, at least when measured in this way.

These varied results suggest that perhaps we *should* be rephrasing our question to ask: "how much should citizens trust their parties in a democracy?" If extremely high confidence in parties is associated with autocracies and one-party regimes, it may be worth considering if there are ways in which a distrustful or wary citizenry could be an asset for democracies. And indeed, it is a central premise of the "responsible party" (Ranney 1954) and other ideal-type models of representative government that citizens will use elections to hold parties accountable for delivering on their promises: citizens are expected to monitor parties, not just trust them. In addition, the notion of partisanship itself assumes that politically engaged citizens will favor (and therefore trust) one party more than others. It is not irrational for a person to express skepticism about parties in general (parties plural) while also expressing support for a specific party. In fact, this resembles the tendency of Americans to express negative views about Congress while expressing positive views about the Member of Congress who represents their district (Fenno 1978; Parker and Davidson 1979). Regarding political parties, in the 2017-22 WVS wave, 83% of the U.S. respondents who expressed no or not very much confidence in political parties also described themselves as supporting *one* of the parties; 46% described themselves as party members. It thus may be that the expressed lack of confidence in parties is a verdict on how parties interact with each other, inasmuch as "partisanship" has become a synonym for unproductive conflict, as opposed to approaches to politics that are seen as more cooperative and effective (Klar and Krupnikov 2016). All this suggests that skepticism of parties may be closely linked to some of the central drivers of electoral representation, and therefore at least some of its effects may be healthy.

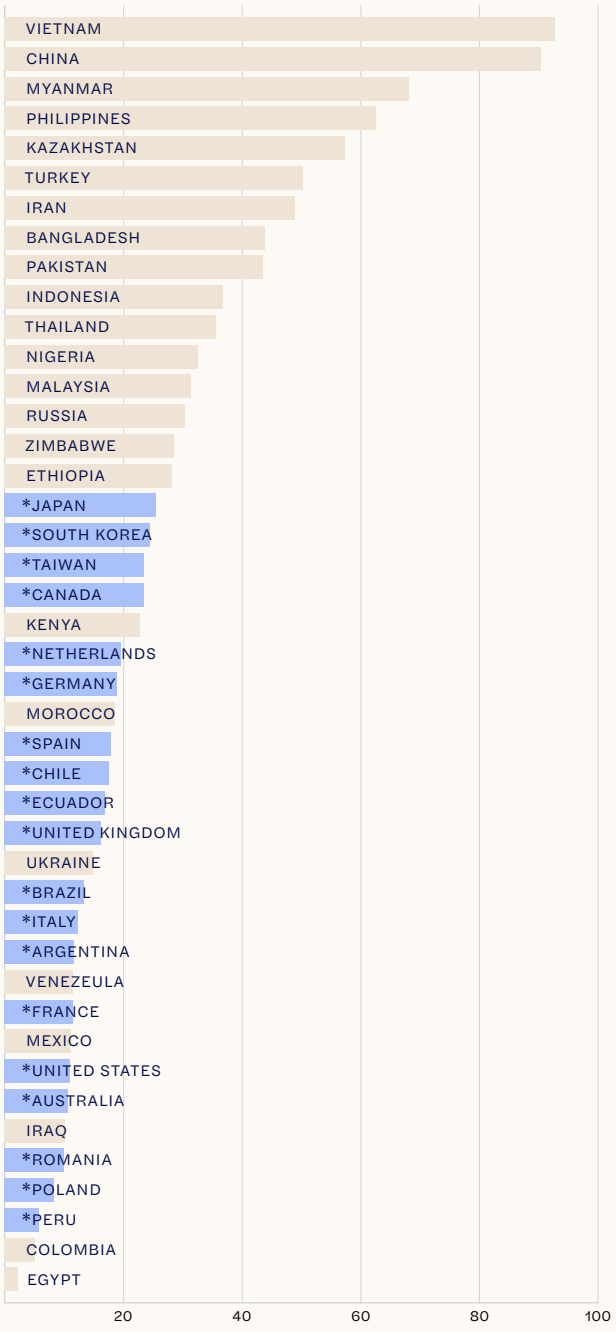
The Long History of Party Distrust

We can better understand contemporary views of political parties by remembering that distrust of parties is an attitude with a long and distinguished pedigree. When James Madison (1787) warned against "the mischiefs of faction" in *Federalist 10*, he was drawing on a well-established strand of political thought which portrayed parties as inimical to national welfare. Indeed, prior to the 20th century—which means prior to widespread experience with mass electoral democracy—many writings on political parties started with an etymological nod, pointing out that the word "party" ("partie" in French, "partei" in German) came from the Latin verb *partire*: to divide. Because disunited countries were considered to be particularly vulnerable to outside enemies, forces which aggravated internal divisions were viewed as

FIGURE 4

CONFIDENCE IN POLITICAL PARTIES (2017-2022): WORLD VALUES SURVEY

Percentage of Respondents in Each Country Expressing a Great Deal or Quite a Lot of Confidence in Political Parties



*Represent Freedom House "Free" Countries as of 2022

Note: The figure includes large democracies (in blue) and autocracies (in tan), representing the 43 countries in the WVS survey with populations above 17 million residents (19 democracies and 24 autocracies). The figure shows that willingness to express strong confidence in political parties tends to be much higher in non-democratic countries than in democratic countries. In regards to political parties, a skeptical majority is the norm in contemporary democracies.

threats to a country's welfare.[4] During the nineteenth century, many commentators began expressing more grudgingly accepting views of parties, often marked by efforts to distinguish between healthy "parties" (which prioritized the national welfare) and unhealthy "factions" (which always put their particular interest ahead of the common good) (Rosenblum 2010, 2). As the Swiss legal theorist Johan Caspar Bluntschli phrased it in 1869, "A faction is a distorted party; it is a denatured party. Just as parties are necessary and useful at the highest levels of conscious and free public life, so factions are unnecessary and corrupting...Parties complete the state; factions rip it apart" (Scarrow 2002, 80). At the end of the century, Henry Jones Ford (1898, 127) (future president of the American Political Science Association) still made such a differentiation when he noted that, "The distinction between party and faction seems to be this: party aims at administrative control, while faction is the propaganda of a particular interest."

Ideas about political parties' role in national political life continued to evolve in more favorable ways alongside the emergence of mass electoral democracy, and the concomitant rise of new modes of party organization. To be sure, party practices were often seen as corrupt, and the late nineteenth and early twentieth century brought reforms in several countries aimed at curbing perceived excesses of party-based electoral competition. These included the adoption of stringent campaign spending restrictions in the UK (the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act 1883) and such U.S. Progressive-era reforms as the adoption of non-partisan municipal elections, primary elections, and referendums (Scarrow 2006). While these reforms may have weakened U.S. municipal party machines, they did not undermine (and probably helped strengthen) the electoral dominance of the

4 On the holistic arguments against parties, see Rosenblum 2010, 1.

two major parties. More generally, as an increasing number of countries adopted broad electoral suffrages in the first decades of the twentieth century, political observers came to accept political parties as inevitable parts of the machinery of representative democracy. This manifested itself in the emerging pluralist consensus in the U.S. academic community that viewed multiple and competing political parties as benign forces that helped to articulate and channel competing social interests (Key 1942; Truman 1951). In this vein, Schattschneider's much-cited book on *Party Government* begins with a chapter titled "In defense of party government." (1942).[5] A general wariness of divisive parties had been displaced by a greater wariness of the unchanneled energies of the masses and by a respect for the many "functions" that parties could play in organizing representative democracy.

The militant democracy mindset would argue that some skepticism towards parties is a healthy thing, especially when that skepticism is translated into institutional guardrails.

Yet for some scholars this perspective was tinged by fears that malign parties could also use the procedures and liberties of electoral democracies to undermine democratic systems. This view was expressed in particularly strong terms by scholars with firsthand experiences of the collapse of European democracies in the 1920s and 1930s, who argued that some types of parties should not be trusted, and definitely should not be entrusted with the levers of state. Unlike nineteenth century efforts to distinguish healthy uniting parties from unhealthy divisive factions, for these observers the main concern was parties which aspired to dominate the political sphere, and were willing to use all means to suppress competitors (Loewenberg 2006; Neumann 1932; 1954). One of the first scholars to spell out the policy consequences of this view was the German émigré scholar Karl Loewenstein(1935; 1937a; 1937b), who introduced and elaborated on the "militant democracy" term in a series of articles published in the *American Political Science Review*. Loewenstein's calls to action were filled with recent European examples of democracies that had failed to protect themselves from forces seeking to overturn the democratic order; he also presented examples of a few countries that had acted more decisively and successfully. Loewenstein (1937a, 431) decried the "legalistic self-complacency and suicidal lethargy" that had prevented other democracies from taking similar steps to protect themselves from internal enemies. The militant democracy solutions he praised included prohibitions against parties that advocated subversion and those adopting paramilitary formations. Regarding the latter, he argued that parties seeking to organize their own armies of partisans threatened democracy by the power of their emotional appeals, as well as by threatening the state's monopoly of force (Loewenstein 1937b). Loewenstein's calls to action did not stop the tide of fascism in the 1930s, but the militant democracy response he called for—a response prompted by distrust of (some) political parties—has had a more lasting impact in shaping state responses to actual or possible threats of parties seeking to overturn the democratic order by electoral means.

Party Distrust and Militant Democracy

In contemporary discourse, the militant democracy label is applied to constitutional approaches that treat democratic institutions as requiring protection

5 Key, Truman, and Schattschneider all served as presidents of the American Political Science Association.

against (mis)use. In this view, "for the purpose of preventing a doom scenario for democracy, it seems to be justifiable to limit and restrict certain fundamental rights, if this is based on and is in accordance with the rule of law" (Klamt 2007, 153). Legal or constitutional practices that are considered "militant democracy" approaches generally focus on banning, or limiting privileges enjoyed by, political parties or other associations that are considered to present a threat to democracy—sometimes with the further requirement that this threat must be more than ideological and must include plans for, or incitement of, violence. Some militant democracy provisions, such as those in Germany's constitution, go further by allowing the state to strip political rights or privileges (such as the right to civil service employment) from individuals advocating the overthrow of the democratic order, including those who belong to parties legally recognized as hostile to the constitutional order (Capoccia 2013; Muller 2012, 1263).

Although the concept of militant democracy was first elaborated in the flagship journal of the American Political Science Association, it has been more influential on constitutional and legal practice outside the United States (Capoccia 2013; Klamt 2007; Müller 2012; Pedahzur 2001; Thiel 2009). This was not for lack of trying, and more because some militant democracy responses proved difficult to square with U.S. constitutional traditions which prioritize individual rights. For instance, these U.S. constitutional traditions led the Supreme Court of the 1960s to overturn legislative efforts to suppress the Communist Party on grounds that political speech and assembly were constitutionally protected as long as the groups were not actively violent (in other words, criminal); it also rejected laws that punished or restricted the rights of individuals solely on the basis of their party affiliation (Barber 1966; Issacharoff 2006; Tushnet 2009). Some have also argued that in the U.S. the perceived need to develop such protections has been low because the country's first-past-the post electoral system makes it much harder for smaller (potentially more radical) parties to win legislative seats compared to countries that use proportional representation election rules (Bourne 2018; Issacharoff 2006). In addition, the U.S. Constitution is comparatively difficult to amend, making the U.S. system relatively less vulnerable to being rapidly and radically changed by individual leaders, whatever their popularity or populism (Lutz 1994; Weyland 2020).

Outside the U.S., the doctrine of militant democracy has been particularly influential in post-authoritarian democracies, with a notable early example being the 1949 constitutional Basic Law for the Federal Republic of (West) Germany (Karvonen 2007; Klamt 2007). Here and elsewhere, political parties have been the focus of many of the measures associated with the militant democracy tradition. Such measures include requiring parties to adopt internally democratic structures or restricting or even banning parties which seek to undermine such fundamental aspects of democratic systems as multi-party competition or protection of minority rights (Issacharoff 2006; Müller 2012). The constitutions and party laws of at least 30 contemporary European countries provide for banning parties that threaten the democratic system, whether that threat be violent or ideological (Bourne and Casal Bértoa 2017). Decisions on when such threats reach a critical level are usually settled by the country's high court or other judicial authority, a practice explicitly endorsed by the Council of Europe (2000). These provisions have been used only sparingly, but often enough to make them more than hypothetical devices. For instance, Bourne and Casal Bértoa (2017) document 36 parties banned in 19 European democracies between 1945 and 2015 (with another 16 banned in Turkey in those same years). The obvious risk of employing militant democracy

responses to perceived threats to the democratic order is that such measures resemble the very malady they seek to treat. Nevertheless, some contemporary constitutional theorists in the European tradition continue to argue for the legitimacy and even necessity of a militant democracy legal culture as long as it is implemented under strict legal procedures. It is unlikely that the U.S. will re-open discussions about whether it could ever be constitutionally permissible to restrict parties which are ideologically anti-democratic but which do not directly engage in violent or otherwise illegal actions. Nevertheless, U.S. discussions of how to respond to anti-democratic proponents could be enriched by greater awareness of the militant democracy mindset that is accepted in some other democracies, one that considers it both legitimate and necessary for democracies to anticipate and respond to internal threats, rather than just trusting that the normal democratic procedures are robust enough to withstand internal challengers.

How much *should* citizens trust their political parties?

This returns us to the question posed above: how much should citizens trust their political parties (in aggregate)? The militant democracy mindset would argue that some skepticism towards parties is a healthy thing, especially when that skepticism is translated into institutional guardrails.[6] Moreover, and as has been seen above, while some respondents may express distrust of parties due to democratic disaffection, for others it may result from a preference for a specific party, or for consensual policy making. In other words, it is as likely to be a sign of democratic health as anything else.

If generalized trust in parties is an ambiguous metric for assessing the health of our political parties, are there better factors to consider? We could begin with militant democracy's conclusion that parties pose a health risk if they explicitly aim to subvert the democratic order. But beyond this, research in comparative politics offers little firm guidance. For instance, on the one hand research suggests that democratic stability is jeopardized in countries where parties and party systems are weakly institutionalized—meaning places where parties have poorly developed internal organizations and career ladders, have weak links to groups in society, and are unable to inspire voter loyalty (e.g., Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Rosenblatt 2018). But on the other hand, other research suggests that where parties show high levels of the preceding traits, countries can suffer from their parties being over-institutionalized. Such party systems have been dismissed as being "sclerotic" or "cartelized" and as producing the kind of popular disaffection that may lead to political instability and radical upheaval because dominant parties and party elites block less disruptive modes of entry for new actors and new ideas (Ignazi 2014; Katz and Mair 1995). These competing assessments imply that party-based democracy may be healthiest when it steers between these extremes (see Piñeiro Rodriguez and Rosenblatt 2020), but they offer little generalizable policy advice on how to reach and maintain such a state. In part that is because when writing policy prescriptions, as with medical prescriptions, it is most effective to start by diagnosing specific ailments rather than by guessing the causes of general malaise. This is a task pursued by other chapters in this volume.

6 Citrin and Stoker reached a similar conclusion about political trust in general, arguing that skepticism might be a rational starting point, lying somewhere between blind faith and total absence of trust (2018).

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PART II

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

CHAPTER 3

Understanding the Demographic Sources of America's Party Divisions

ZOLTAN HAJNAL, University of California, San Diego

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines demographic divisions in our partisan choices. It shows that race, more than anything else, divides us politically. Other demographic factors like religion, education, class, and gender are certainly relevant to our partisan affiliations. But race appears to be more central. Moreover, the data also reveal growing divisions by race over time. A number of different factors help to explain these patterns. Americans' partisan ties are in no small part due to economic anxieties, moral imperatives, and cultural concerns. But racial fears and racial views often predict our partisan choices as much or more than these other considerations.

Introduction

Two narratives tend to dominate our understanding of America's partisan divide. One is about class and the other is about race. The class-based story argues that economic decline in working class communities is the main factor shaping support for the two parties (Cramer 2016; Drutman 2016; Gest 2016; Hacker and Pierson 2011; McCarthy et al 2007;). The other narrative is focused squarely on race. In this version, Republicans have won over an increasingly large share of the white vote not because of their economic agenda but rather because of a racial agenda (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Klinkner and Smith 2002; Tesler 2016). From this perspective, many Whites feel that the growing racial and ethnic diversity of the nation's population is threatening their grasp on power and privilege and are searching for answers to that threat—answers that the Republican Party often provides. Along with these two narratives, scholars and observers have also highlighted the growing impact of education and the increasing centrality of cultural concerns on the partisan choices of individual Americans.

Which version of these different accounts best explains the reality of party divisions today? This chapter will tackle this question in a number of ways. First, it will focus on the demographics of the vote. That assessment will compare race to class and other demographic factors to assess their relative contributions to the party divide. It will also investigate how these patterns have changed over time and, more specifically, how the nation's political party system has transformed over the past half century. Last, the chapter focuses on the question of why this nation is divided along these different demographic lines. Are racial policies and racial attitudes at the core of the nation's partisan divide? Or are economic and cultural considerations the dominant factors? And what else plays a role in separating us into two opposing partisan teams?

The answers are in many ways worrying. The data reveal that race sharply divides us along partisan lines—often more than any other demographic factor. Religion, economic concerns, and factors like education, age, and gender also divide us politically, but the reality is that as America becomes more diverse, it is also becoming more racially divided in the electoral arena. The literature identifies many reasons

for these divisions and for changes in these divisions over time, but an account that focuses on race and in particular on racial fears and concerns often fits the data better than other alternative explanations.

What divides us?

To begin to understand demographic divisions in party politics, the initial focus is on the vote in the last two presidential elections. Figure 1 below shows the size of the gap in the vote for Donald Trump in each election by race, class, and other factors. Each bar represents the share of one group (e.g., Whites) that voted for Trump as compared to the share of a second group (e.g., Blacks) that voted for Trump. The larger the bar, the greater the gap.

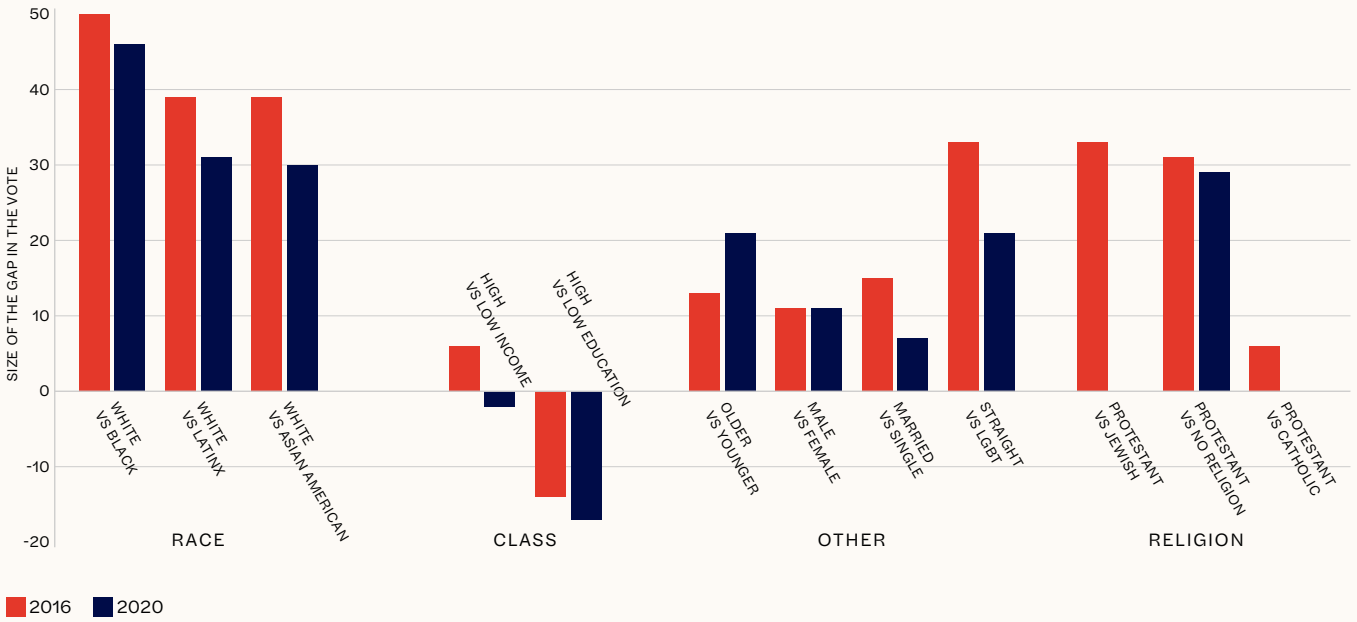
As Figure 1 shows, race played a more significant role in the outcome of both elections than did class.

Exit polls in both contests revealed large gaps between racial and ethnic minority voters on one side and White voters on the other. Trump won only 8 percent of the Black vote in 2016. By contrast he garnered 58 percent of the White. That 50-point difference, shown in the first bar in the graph, is closer to a racial chasm than a racial gap. There were also sizeable gaps between Whites and Latinos and Whites and Asian Americans (both at 39 points in 2016). Despite the movement of some Latino and Asian American voters toward Trump in 2020, racial and ethnic identity still played a dominant role for voters. Simply judging by the size of the bars, race and ethnicity stand out as the most important force in American electoral democracy.

Class played a role in voter decision making in both the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections but not nearly

FIGURE 1

GAPS IN SUPPORT FOR TRUMP: 2016 AND 2020



Source: Edison Research National Exit Poll, Latino Decision (for Latino vote), and Asian American Decisions (for Asian American vote)

Note: Each bar represents the share of one group (e.g., Whites) that voted for Trump as compared to the share of a second group (e.g., Blacks) that voted for Trump. The larger the bar, the greater the gap.

as much as race/ethnicity did. Contrary to much of the popular wisdom, in 2016 Trump did slightly better among higher income Americans than he did among lower income Americans. The same was true in 2020, when he garnered 44 percent of the vote among Americans with incomes over $250,000 compared with 40 percent of the vote among Americans with incomes less than $30,000. When considering voters' level of education, Trump did slightly worse as individuals' education levels increased.

Why then did class attract so much media attention when the data reveals that class played a less central role in the vote? Part of the answer lies with the narrow focus of many of the media reports. Many studies focused on the narrow segment of the electorate that switched support from one political camp to another, from Obama to Trump, for example. But the reality is that less than 5 percent of the electorate switched from Obama to Trump. Moreover, even when scholars look more closely at these switchers, they find that racial attitudes, much more than economic concerns, predicted who would switch from Obama to Trump (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018).

[T]he reality is that as America becomes more diverse, it is also becoming more racially divided in the electoral arena.

Age, Gender, Religion, and the Vote

Race and class are not, of course, the only narratives used to explain the outcome of recent elections. A lot of media attention focused on gender, age, religion, and other factors. With Hilary Clinton as the first female candidate from a major party running for president, gender was expected to be a major factor in the 2016 election. However, the final vote suggests it may not have been.[1] Female voters did favor Clinton, and male voters did prefer Trump but neither by an overwhelming margin. In fact, the majority of White women (52 percent) supported Trump. In the end, the gender gap in 2016, as Figure 1 illustrates, was only 11 points. Similarly, despite significant attention to voters' age, generation played a relatively little role in voter choice. Older voters (those over 65) were only 13 points more likely to favor Trump in 2016 than were younger Americans (those aged 18-24).

After race, the next biggest demographic influence on the vote was social morality and religion. Religion played a central role in shaping the 2016 and 2020 votes. Atheists, Agnostics, and Jews were especially likely to support the Democratic nominee, and Evangelicals, Catholics, and Protestants were particularly likely to support Trump. The increasingly central role of culture is also underlined by what appear to be increasingly large divisions by sexual preference. In 2016, LGBT voters overwhelmingly supported Clinton but straight voters were largely split between Clinton and Trump.

Other Elections

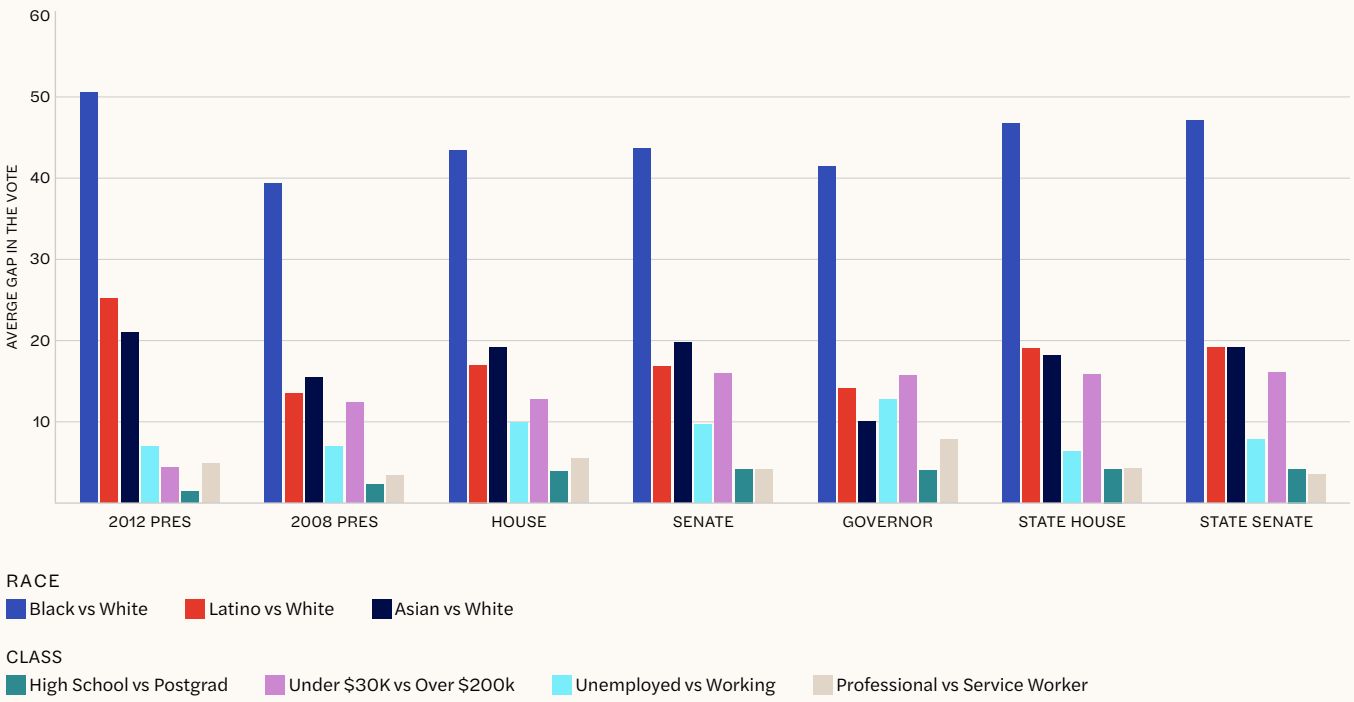
These two presidential elections are not aberrations. An examination of a much broader array of elections reveals much the same findings. In elections for both federal- and state-level offices from 2006-2024, racial gaps in the vote tend to dwarf class divides and most other demographic divisions, regardless of the type of contest.[2]

1 It is, of course possible that gender mattered in more subtle ways. Many believed that gender stereotypes shaped the coverage of the candidates and analysis of the vote itself finds that sexism among both men and women helped to shape the vote (Valentino et al 2018).

2 Analysis of the 2022 midterms (though not shown in the figures in this chapter) leads to roughly the same conclusion.

FIGURE 2

RACE AND CLASS IN AMERICAN ELECTIONS, 2006-2014



Source: Adapted from Hajnal (2020). Data are from the 2006-2014 Cooperative Congressional Election Study which includes over 200,000 self-reported votes across these contests.

Figure 2 illustrates the average gaps in the vote by race and class for each type of election between 2006 and 2014. It shows that the average black-white gap hovers between 40 and 50 points for almost all elections between 2006 and 2014. At each level, what Whites want is often not what Blacks want. But it is not only the black-white divide that stands out. The gap between white voters and Latino voters is typically a little less or a little more than 20 points across the different types of contests. Gaps between Asian Americans and whites are similar. In almost every type of office over this recent period, the majority of whites typically favor the candidate that the majority of Latinos, Asian Americans, and Blacks oppose.

Moreover, as Figure 2 illustrates, those racial divides generally dwarf divisions by class, indicated by level of education, annual income, type of work, and employment status. Americans with the highest levels of formal education—those with post-graduate degrees—only differ from those with the least formal education, defined as having less than a high-school degree, by an average of about 9 points in the typical contest. Income has a slightly larger but more variable impact on the vote. The preferences of Americans who earn less than $30,000 a year differ from the preferences of those who earn more than $200,000 a year by an average of anywhere from 4 to 16 points across the types of elections. Growing income inequality has received a tremendous amount of attention from scholars and the media, but race and ethnicity seem to have replaced class as the primary dividing line in American politics (Hajnal 2020; Tesler 2016).

Still, a range of other demographic factors have small but consistent effects across this wide variety of elections. The gap between younger (under 25) and older (over 65) Americans typically hovers around 10 points in these contests. The gender gap is roughly the same—about 12 points. Marital status plays a slightly larger role—typically, a little less than a 20-point gap between single and married Americans in how they voted for in this range of elections.

Although not featured in the figure, the main rival for race in dividing voters is once again religion. Americans who describe themselves as born again are about 25 points more likely to end up on the Republican side of electoral contests than are other Americans. Likewise, Americans who say that religion is very important to them are roughly 40 points more likely to favor Republican candidates for the House, the Senate, the Governor's office, and state legislative positions.

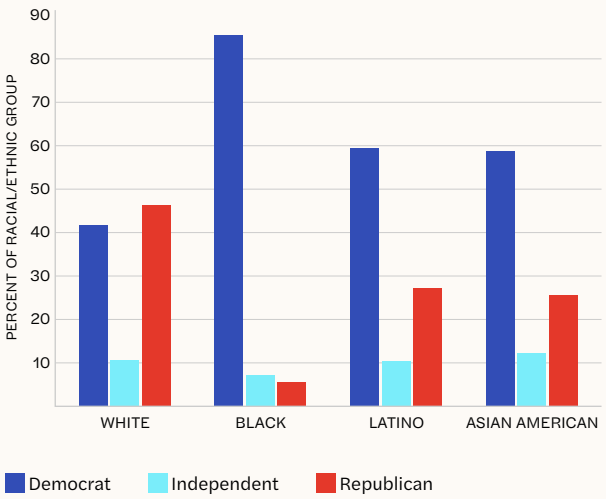
Party Identification

One can get an even deeper look at divisions in American politics by focusing directly on party identification—the extent to which individual members of the public *identify* with one or the other major political party. Party identification is critical because research often shows that it structures much of our political thinking (Bisgaard 2015; Campbell et al. 1960; Goren 2005).

Thus, it is concerning to find that, racial patterns in party identification have roughly mirrored racial patterns in the vote in recent decades (Hajnal 2020). The figure below, which shows the mix of partisan identities for each of the four major racial and ethnic groups over the last decade or so, reveals that racial and ethnic minorities largely identify with the Democratic Party (84 percent of African Americans,

FIGURE 3

RACE AND PARTY IDENTIFICATION



Source: 2006-2018 CCES

60 percent of Latinos, and 59 percent of Asian Americans) over the Republican Party (7 percent of African Americans, 27 percent of Latinos, and 26 percent of Asian Americans).[3] By contrast, Whites are slightly more likely to identify as Republican than Democrat (46 percent vs 42 percent).

Thus, both through the candidates who are elected and patterns of political-party identification, Whites tend to align opposite racial and ethnic minorities in American democracy.[4] The data are surprising, disturbing, and insistent.

Partisan Attachments Over Time: We are Becoming More Divided by Race

Race hasn't always been central to the American partisan divide. Indeed, over a little more than a half a century, the American party system has slowly transformed from one in which one's race didn't tell

3 In the figure, those who indicate that they "lean" towards one party are counted as partisans.

4 Again, it is worth noting that race better predicts partisanship than almost any other demographic factor. Divisions by class, age, and gender are very real but are much smaller than divisions by race. As with the vote, only religion rivals race in shaping partisan attachments. Moreover, race predicts both party identity and vote choice more than these other factors even when one controls for all of the different demographic factors in a single regression model. In other words, the effects of race do not diminish much even after controlling for class, gender, age, and the like.

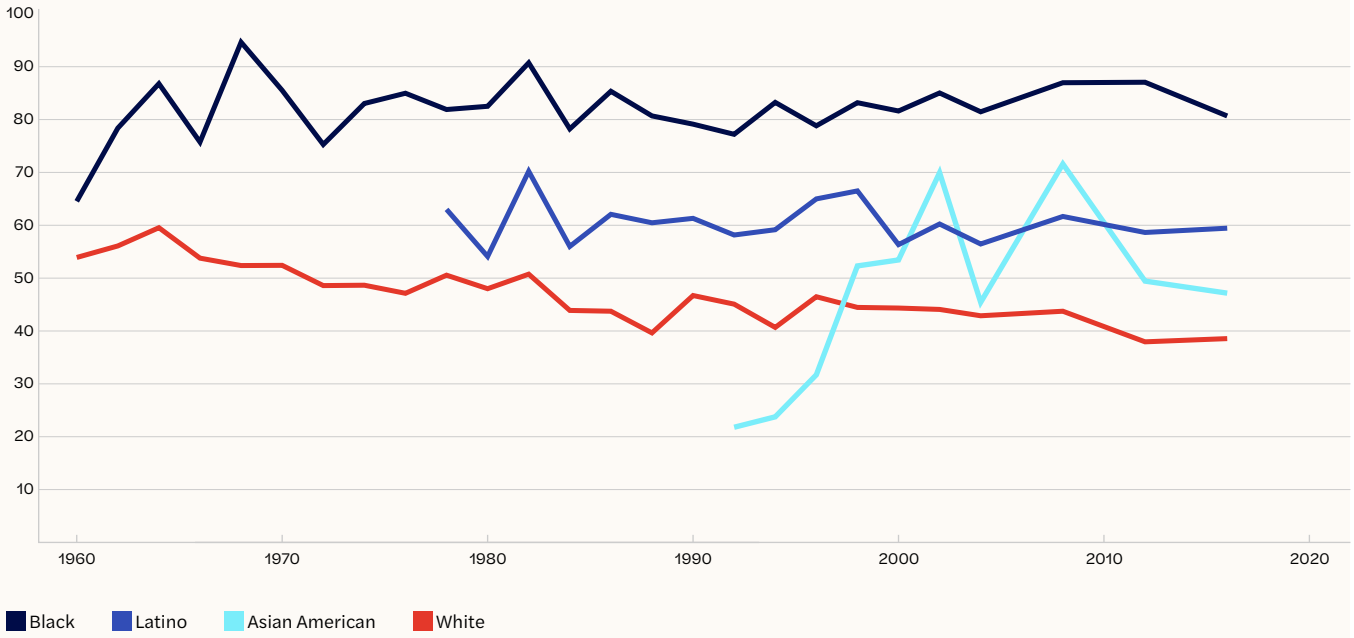
us much about which party a citizen would support to the present-day system, in which one's race, more than any other demographic factor, predicts who Americans support. Some of that transformation is illustrated in the next figures, which show the share of each racial and ethnic group identifying with the Democratic Party over time using data from the standard long-term sample of American electoral preferences—the American National Election Survey (ANES).

Beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present day, there has been a slow and uneven shift of racial and ethnic minorities to the Democratic Party. African Americans have gone from largely Democratic in 1960 (64 percent) to overwhelmingly Democratic in recent years (81 percent in 2016). There is less data on Asian-American partisan preferences in early parts of this period, but since 1990, this population swung dramatically toward the Democratic Party. By 2010, Democratic identifiers outnumbered Republican identifiers among Asian Americans by almost three to one. Latinos are the only minority group to see no major movement in partisanship. For all of the years for which we have reliable data, very roughly 60 percent of Latinos have identified with or leaned Democratic. Overall, as more and more racial and ethnic minorities have entered the country and become engaged in the political arena, they have spoken with an increasingly clear partisan voice.

The past decades have also witnessed a substantial shift in White partisanship—with more and more Whites moving toward the Republican Party. White America has gone from largely Democratic (54 percent Democratic) in 1960 to just under 40 percent today. White Republicans now outnumber White Democrats by 48 percent to 39 percent.

FIGURE 4

DEMOCRATIC IDENTIFIERS BY RACE, 1960-2016



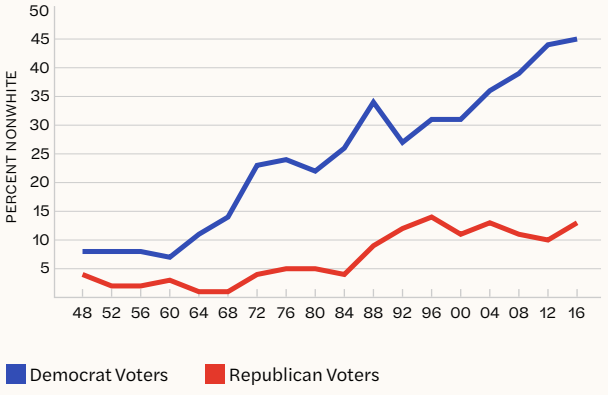
Source: American National Election Study Cumulative File

The net impact of these increased racial divisions is two parties with very different supporters. Figure 5, which shows the share of each party's presidential vote that comes from non-White voters over time, illustrates this growing racial divide. Almost all the votes that Republican candidates have received in recent years have come from White voters. About 90 percent of the vote that McCain won in 2008, that Romney won in 2012, and that Trump garnered in 2016 came from White Americans. There was a slight shift in 2020, but 82 percent of Trump's support still came from White America. The Republican Party is for almost all intents and purposes a White party (Hajnal 2020; Tesler 2016). By contrast, the share of Democratic Party votes coming from Whites has declined sharply since the 1960s. Today, almost half of all Democratic voters are non-White. Politics in America is by no means perfectly correlated with race, but it seems to be deeply and increasingly intertwined with race.

By contrast, there has been no clear increase in the importance of class in American politics over time (Hajnal 2020). However, two important and likely related changes have occurred in recent decades within the White population. On the income side, the party preferences of the very rich have evolved from slightly Republican to slightly Democratic, while the less well-off have shifted from sharply Democratic to more mixed partisan preferences. The effect of education on the vote and on partisanship among White Americans has also shifted with the well-educated increasingly moving to the Democratic Party (Drutman 2016; Piketty 2018).

FIGURE 5

NON-WHITE SHARE OF THE PRESIDENTIAL VOTE BY PARTY, 1948-2016



Sources: ANES Cumulative File

Why have the parties aligned around race?

How did we get here? How and why do Americans choose political parties in the first place? And how is it that of all the potential divisions in American society, our politics have largely converged on race?

Understanding Party Attachments

Scholars tend to think of partisan identities as deep-seated psychological attachments that we learn early in life—often through parental socialization (Campbell et al 1960). According to this traditional view—a view most academic researchers continue to adhere to—Americans often choose to align with a party as young adults and often without a lot of information. However, once attached our partisan identities become perceptual screens that not only shape what we learn about politics but also determine most of our political decisions from whether to vote to who to vote for (Campbell et al 1960; Green et al 2002). Just how this largely 'inherited' party identification has led to our current era of intense affective partisanship and to ever greater racial divisions in the vote is, however, not entirely clear.

An alternate view is that party identification is more thoughtful and is instead the result of the rational outcome of repeated evaluations of the issue platforms of the parties, the actions and sentiments of their elites, and the overall performance of the incumbent party (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015;

Downs 1957; Erikson, Mackuen, and Stimson 2002; Fiorina 1981; Mackuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1989). Of course, if party identification is the result of rational updating, then the next question is obviously what is it exactly that individual Americans are updating on.

Racial Realignment Since the Civil Rights Movement

One obvious potential explanation for the patterns of partisanship illustrated above is that racial concerns have been the central factor driving the growing partisan divide. For most proponents of this racial realignment view, the primary driver of this racial transformation has been the decision of leaders of the two major political parties to offer increasingly divergent positions on matters of race and immigration (see, e.g., Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Edsall and Edsall 1991).[5]

Seeing an opportunity to secure a national majority by giving Blacks access to the vote and therefore securing those new votes, elites in the Democratic Party began to publicly embrace the basic goals of the Civil Rights Movement. Then, having moved firmly to the left on race, the Democrats stayed there.

By contrast, elites within the Republican Party saw an opportunity to use race to appeal to Whites in the South, who were at that point overwhelmingly aligned with the Democratic Party but who were also deeply concerned about Black demands for racial equality. Employing what came to be known as the Southern Strategy, Republican politicians such as presidential candidates Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon ran campaigns that disparaged violence in the minority community and highlighted minority use of welfare and other public resources. Typically the message was subtle. But within a decade, the Republican Party had abandoned over a hundred years of racial progressivism.

According to this racial realignment view, the increasingly divergent platforms of the Democratic and Republican Parties on matters of race had their intended effects. First, as more and more Blacks felt that the Democratic Party was the most likely one to advance Black interests, Blacks shifted in ever larger numbers to the Democratic Party (Dawson 1994). Likewise, White Americans who opposed policies designed to help Blacks achieve greater equality abandoned the Democratic Party in ever larger numbers (Hajnal 2020; Kinder and Sander 1996; Zingher 2018).

The other reason it's hard to decipher the relative impact... is that race has now become closely intertwined with a range of ostensibly non-racial issues.

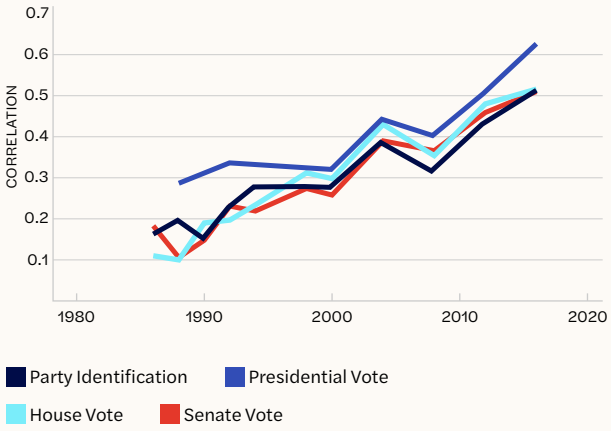
By 1980, attitudes on race were closely correlated with party affiliation (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Valentino and Sears 2005). And that link has only grown stronger over time. The effects of racial concerns heightened with the arrival and election of Barack Obama as the first Black President (Highton 2011; Hutchings 2009; Kam and Kinder 2012; Kinder and Dale-Riddle 2011; Lewis-Beck, Tien, and Nadeau 2010; Parker and Barreto 2013; Schaffner 2011; Tesler and Sears 2010). And their impact has persisted in more recent elections from Presidential to local (Griffin and Teixera 2017; Schaffner et al. 2018; Sides 2017; Tesler 2016). Perhaps most convincing of all are studies showing that how one thinks about race at any one point in time strongly predicts future defections between the parties (Kuziemko and Washington 2015; McVeigh et al. 2014).

5 Lee (2002) and Schickler (2016) do, however, correctly note that the public and in particular the civil rights movement played a major role in driving the issue of race to the forefront of political discussions.

FIGURE 6

GROWING TIES BETWEEN RACIAL RESENTMENT AND THE VOTE, 1986-2016

The figure shows how the correlations between racial attitudes and vote choice and party identification have grown over time.



Source: American National Election Studies

The increasingly strong effects of race on the political choices of Americans are reflected in Figure 6, which shows the correlation between how Americans think about African Americans—as measured by their score on a racial resentment scale[6]—and their party identity and votes over time. The figure shows that the connection between attitudes about race, the vote, and party affiliation has not only grown dramatically over time but has continued to do so in the Obama and Trump eras. Much of this growing relationship is driven by attitudes toward Blacks, but research has also revealed increasing ties between attitudes toward immigrants and partisan choice (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Gimpel 2017; Griffin and Teixera 2017; Mutz 2018; Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2018; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2017; Tesler 2016).

Alternate Accounts of Party Realignment

At the same time, it is clear that much of the movement of Whites to the Republican Party—as well as some of the movement of racial and ethnic minorities to the Democratic Party—is not driven by race. Scholars have provided a range of other explanations for the current party divide that highlight ideological conflicts about the role of government, cultural concerns, economic considerations, and a range of other factors. Each of these factors has merits in explaining both partisan politics today and the growing racial divide over time.

For many, a debate about the proper role and size of government has always been and continues to be the core factor shaping our party system (Abramowitz 1994). Indeed, there is little doubt that liberals and conservatives have increasingly sorted themselves into two opposing parties (De Abreu Maia 2022). Others maintain that cultural clashes over things like abortion, gays rights, and sexual identity have become more central in recent decades (Adams 1997, Carsey and Layman 2006). It is clear that over time, leaders of the Republican and Democratic Parties have put forward increasingly divergent solutions to these cultural questions. It is also clear that as a result Americans' views on moral and cultural issues increasingly help to predict their partisan affiliations. As many media and scholarly accounts have also highlighted, America's growing income inequality has had substantial political repercussions. Anxiety over wages, jobs, and long-term economic prospects is clearly a powerful political force (Abramowitz 1994; Shafer and Johnson 2006). Research offers strong empirical support for the influence of each of these factors in dividing Americans.

6 Items in the scale ask about things like whether Blacks deserve special favors, whether Blacks have gotten more than they deserve, and whether Blacks are trying hard enough.

What is the relative impact of racial considerations?

The ultimate question is not whether racial views, economic considerations or cultural concerns affect the vote and partisan support but rather how much racial considerations matter relative to the other factors just mentioned. That is difficult, if not impossible, to answer. Part of the problem is complexity. Individuals are driven by a range of motivations and ultimately make their political decisions through uniquely complex pathways. One person's motivations might even shift depending on the context, or a person might be weighing multiple considerations in one political instant.

The other reason it's hard to decipher the relative impact of race and other factors on voter decision making and party affiliation is that race has now become closely intertwined with a range of ostensibly non-racial issues. For example, we now know that how individual Americans think about diverse policy issues—from welfare, health, and education to crime, taxes, and social security—are closely connected to how they think about race and immigration.[7] Such research suggests the difficulty of disentangling attitudes about racial and ethnic groups from positions on other issues.

At the end of day it is clear that a range of different demographic and religious factors shape which Americans end up on which side of the party system. But it is also readily apparent that race divides us politically more than any other demographic factor. That was true before Donald Trump arrived on the scene and it is still true today. These divisions are also clearly getting worse. The reality is that as America becomes more diverse, it is also becoming more racially divided. Determining exactly what is driving those divisions is, however, a more difficult question. Racial considerations undoubtedly play a role but so too do divisions about the size and role of government, cultural and moral concerns, and economic considerations.

7 On the tie between race and welfare see Gilens (2001). On race and social security see Winter (2006). On race and gun policy see Filindra and Kaplan (2016). On race and healthcare see Tesler (2012). Going a step further, Americans' attitudes about Latinos shape a number of policies related to immigration, education, and taxation (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015).

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CHAPTER 3—COVER PHOTOS

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CHAPTER 4

Permeable Parties: Groups and the Organization of the American Party System[1]

[1]This chapter has benefited substantially from feedback from David Lublin, Lily Mason, Frances Lee, and anonymous academic and practitioner readers. The author retains responsibility for any remaining errors.

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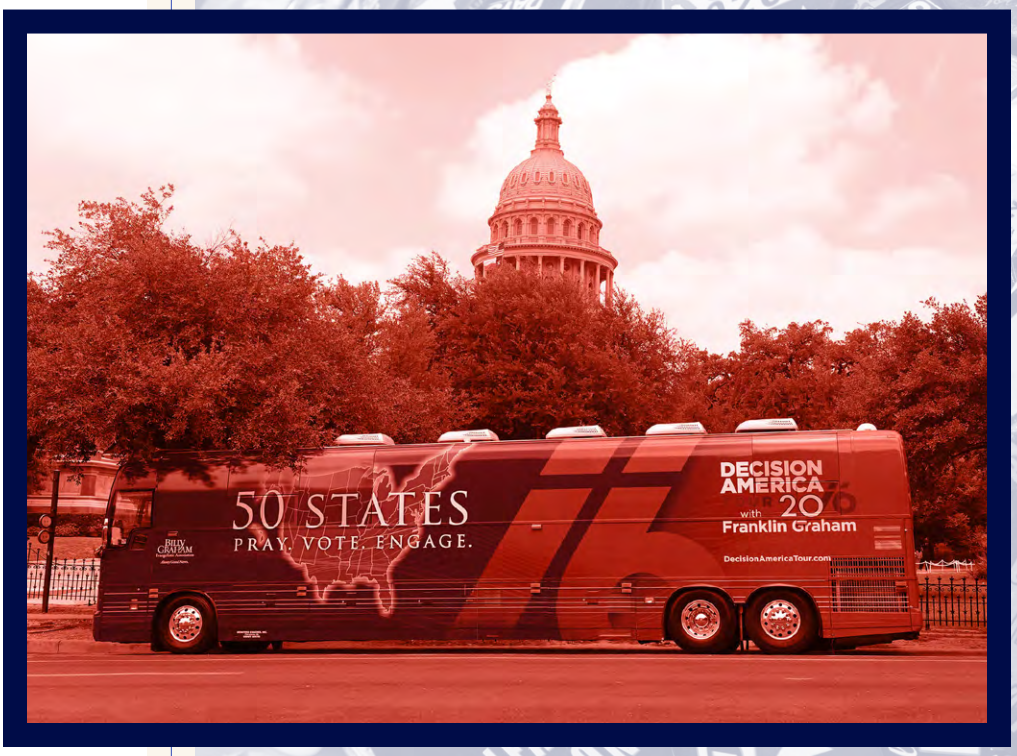

ABSTRACT

Groups and factions are central to any understanding of American political parties as organizations and as an organizing force in American politics. Historically, political parties managed and reflected key group cleavages, sustaining democracy by providing a means for the political expression of group interests, encouraging compromise in the building of electoral majorities, and offering voters meaningful representational choice, as responsible party theory requires. Recent developments in party nomination processes, media, and campaign finance have further opened already permeable parties, providing the opportunity for extreme and antidemocratic voices a more powerful role in party nominations and policy position-taking.

Introduction

Groups and factions are central to how political scientists have understood American political parties as organizations and as an organizing force in American politics. In a two-party system, winning seats and votes requires that parties build and manage broad coalitions. Satisfying and expanding the coalition often compels parties to take sides in both long-standing and emerging group conflicts. Party coalitions are thus continually made and remade in response to economic developments, social disruptions, and political transformations.
In the relentless search for electoral support, parties are strikingly permeable, seeking out, accommodating, and open to alliances with formal and informal groups.

The grounding of American parties in group conflict is in many ways a benefit to democracy: providing voters with clear choices on pressing issues is a key requirement for *responsible* political parties, and the logic of competition provides an inherent incentive for parties to do just that (Bernhardt, Duggan, and Squintani 2009; Downs 1957; Sundquist 2011). Moreover, by providing an arena for the management and resolution of group conflicts, as coalition-building requires, political parties are a source of stability and order for the American political system. By representing diverse group interests, political parties offer a means for the legitimate and nonviolent resolution of conflicts through political processes.

American parties have always been remarkably permeable, providing opportunities for groups to shape parties and incentives for parties to reach out to groups. But that permeability also opens parties to a range of actors and interests who may seek antidemocratic ends, a possibility that has perhaps become more likely, even pressing, as key developments have weakened parties as organizations and encouraged antidemocratic attitudes and goals (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018). This chapter reviews the dominant ways in which political scientists have conceived of the relationship between parties and groups, and suggests some ways in which recent developments have made the parties' characteristic openness to group conflict in American politics potentially democracy-threatening, rather than democracy-sustaining.

Groups as Foundational to American Political Parties

Political scientists continue to contest the meaning and nature of political parties in American politics, but there is no theory of political parties in which groups do not play a central role. For the earliest theorists, and for many today, political parties exist to contest democratic elections and secure political offices and their attendant powers (Downs 1957; Schattschneider 1942). In his classic tripartite definition of political parties, Key (1964) identified the components of parties as the party-in-government, the party organization, and the party-in-the-electorate. Parties as organizations, the subject of this chapter, are constituted for the purposes of contesting elections, and the voters, who may or may not express some psychological identification with one or the other party, are the choosers among them (Schattschneider [1942] 2004; Schlesinger 1984).

The party-in-government organizes policy-making, but the purpose of party organization is winning the votes and seats that put them there. In a two-party system (Duverger 1963; Riker 1982), mass parties must appeal to broad coalitions in order to win elections. This reality has long been thought to contribute to the stability and success of a democratic system. In order to achieve their goals, parties must appeal to a range of voters, encourage compromise among diverse groups, and moderate their policy positions (Brown 1995; Key 1964; Monroe 1983; Petrocik 1981).

In his influential account of American party emergence and development, Aldrich (2011) views parties as teams of ambitious politicians who coordinate with other politicians to ensure stable policy outcomes and manage the tasks of electoral mobilization. These ambitious politicians maintain and expand long coalitions by mobilizing groups with policy promises and appeals to group identity. In Downsian (1957) terms, the party (ambitious politicians) offers group-associated bundles of goods (policy promises) on the electoral market, stressing brand loyalty and customer identity in order to win elections and make policy. The groups themselves may not be the deciders, but ambitious politicians must attend to their interests and incorporate them into the party writ large in order to achieve their goals.

In contrast, for the "UCLA school" (Bawn et al. 2012; Cohen et al. 2008) the groups themselves are the key actors in parties, coordinating amongst themselves to nominate party candidates who will advance the coalition's policy interests. The need to offer a bundle of policies to voters is less important to parties in this telling, since few voters have the knowledge or interest to judge parties by their policy promises. Rather, well-informed policy-demanders work amongst themselves to ensure the nomination of candidates who will serve as advocates for the groups' interests once in office. Mass partisanship and voter inattention solve the electoral problem once groups coordinate around a nominee.

While theoretical differences are real and substantial, both perspectives—as well as just about every other major or minor treatment of the American parties—view parties as fundamentally defined by the coalitions of groups they manage and represent. The ability of parties to accommodate new groups and conflicts is key to their longevity and stability. Most notably, V.O. Key's (1955; 1959) classic theory of party change—critical realignment—understands American electoral history in terms of the parties' shifting coalitions and alignments. The most famous of these is the Democrat's New Deal coalition (workers/unions, poor farmers, Catholics, Jews, Blacks, Southern whites) which dominated American politics in the middle of the previous century, and stood in contrast to the Republican's minority coalition of business,

upper-class, and Protestant whites (Andersen 1979; Burnham 1970; Gamm 1989; Salisbury and MacKuen 1981; Sundquist 1973).

The theory of realignment traces electoral and partisan change to groups of activists who raise new issues that cut across the current cleavage. In the classic understanding, such conflicts disrupt the stability of the parties' coalitions, and established parties initially struggle to accommodate these new (or newly-salient) issues, leading to periods of intense disruption and eventually, to new partisan coalitions (Burnham 1970). In the period before the American Civil War, for example, the "second party system" (1828-1852) was defined by a Democratic coalition of those less privileged, populists, Western farmers, and immigrants, and a Whig coalition of the upper classes, Eastern business interests, and prohibitionists. Both parties took great pains to sidestep the issues of race, slavery, and abolition in order to maintain their coalitions. As conflict over slavery became increasingly prominent and violent, the established major parties struggled to accommodate the issue without alienating key parts of their coalitions, eventually leading to the collapse of the Whigs, the reorganization of the Democrats, and the creation of the anti-slavery Republican party (Sundquist 1973).

One consequence of the parties' grounding in groups is the tendency for social and economic groups in the electorate to identify with a specific party and support its candidates (Campbell et al. 1960). For a time (1970s-1990s) in the late 20th century, however, it seemed that mass partisanship itself was in decline and parties no longer provided an anchor between groups and politics; rather, we had entered into a period of partisan dealignment characterized by widespread declines in party identification, candidate-centered elections, and divided group loyalties. Increases in educational attainment, direct candidate appeals (as facilitated by television, for example), and the declining relevance of the New Deal realignment all weakened voters' reliance on parties as mediators and cue-givers (Dalton 2013; Dalton, Wattenberg, and Press 2002; Ladd 1981; Wattenberg 1991; 2009).

Such an era was short-lived, however. Since at least the early 1990s, the major American parties have been increasingly defined by their relationships to salient groups in society. While the collapse of the New Deal coalition initially unmoored groups from parties, the ideological sorting of the parties accomplished by Southern realignment (in which conservative white Southern Democrats became Republicans) and other changes ultimately resulted in the current historically high association of groups with parties (Mason 2018; Pew Research Center 2020). As citizens' various identities increasingly align with and reinforce their party identity, we have observed a strengthening of mass partisanship, rising affective partisanship, and partisan polarization (Abramowitz and Webster 2018). Voters now strongly associate specific groups (e.g., environmentalists with Democrats, evangelical Protestants with Republicans) with each party (Goggin, Henderson, and Theodoridis 2020; Henderson et al. 2022). Citizens in fact grossly overestimate the presence of such groups in the parties' coalitions (Ahler and Sood 2018; Smith and Kreitzer n.d.); while sorting is at an all-time high, cross-cutting cleavages (in which individuals'

Antidemocratic efforts are not always successful; national party leaders were able to hold the line against... a number of early 20th century media-friendly authoritarian figures...

identities point in conflicting partisan directions) do still exist. This overestimation, however, signals the extent to which citizens now view the parties as fundamentally defined by their group bases.

Parties as Arenas for Group Conflict

Scholars continue to trace the parties' shifting coalitions around the most pressing issues of our time, including race, class, religion, and immigration (Beck 1982; Jeong et al. 2011; Miller and Schofield 2003; Rosenfeld 2017; Schofield, Miller, and Martin 2003).[1] Rather than search for critical elections and mass realignments, scholars have shown how contemporary parties have slowly and steadily evolved their issue positions in response to group demands and changing group power. The realignment of the American parties around race—from Democrats as segregationist (with an appeasing Northern wing) to Democrats as the party of civil rights—is the definitive and most consequential case. The impact on the parties' coalitions was enormous, with Democrats solidifying their advantage with Black Americans while losing (and Republicans gaining) Southern whites, and directly contributed to our current period of close partisan competition (Black and Black 2002; Carmines and Stimson 1989; Feinstein and Schickler 2008; Schickler 2016). Similar shifts on such issues as women's rights and abortion, LGBTQ issues, immigration, guns, and the environment have transformed the parties' coalitions in important ways as well (Karol 2009; 2019; Karol and Thurston 2020; Layman 2001; Wolbrecht 2000).

In their search for electoral advantage, parties also have incentives to reach out to groups in society that may not yet have developed conceptions of shared interest or political goals. Republicans, for example, purposively mobilized religious conservatives in the 1970s in an effort to weaken Democratic majorities (Layman 2001). The addition of new groups to the parties' coalitions does not only mean new policy demands but may also shape the policy preferences of other coalition members. As religious conservatives became an increasingly important component of the GOP, stalwart Republican economic conservatives became increasingly conservative on cultural issues as well, while new members of the Republican coalition who opposed abortion, gay rights, and religious pluralism also found themselves increasingly opposed to big government and high taxes (Layman et al. 2010; Layman and Carsey 2002). In doing so, the GOP solidified their coalition and advanced party polarization.

Not all internal group dynamics are settled quite so amicably, however. Big tent parties mean that the groups brought together to form winning coalitions likely disagree over at least issue priorities, and often issue positions as well. In the wake of President Obama's election in 2008, for example, Tea Party Republicans sought to move the Republican party toward its preferred stringently conservative positions on race, immigration, and health care. Unlike "consociational factions" which are welcomed into the party as allies with little conflict, "insurgent factions" like the Tea Party seek to take over the party from within, openly attacking party leaders, contesting party nominations, and prioritizing ideological purity over electability. Funded by powerful external groups, the Tea Party was able to reorient the GOP towards a more reactionary conservatism (Blum 2020; Karpowitz et al. 2011). As discussed below, other changes to the political context may assist such factions in their efforts. Yet, groups are not always successful in their efforts to join party coalitions and shift party positions and priorities; the antiwar movement in the 1960s and 1970s, for example, fought for influence within the

1 Others criticized the realignment framework as insufficiently coherent, testable, or predictive and not well suited to politics post-1932 (Mayhew 2002; Shafer 1991).

Democratic party but was ultimately unsuccessful in shifting that party entirely toward its goals (Schlozman 2015). Moreover, the inclusion of any one group into a party coalition is not necessarily decisive; contestation between different party groups over candidates and policy positions is the very nature of party politics.

The Permeability of Parties in an Increasingly Competitive Context

The considerable porousness of American political parties allows them to be tools for ambitious politicians and/or policy-seeking groups, targets for social movements, and arenas for group contestation. This permeability, driven by the logic of electoral competition, has always contained the potential for antidemocratic actors and groups to enter party coalitions and push the parties in antidemocratic directions. Southern state parties (and as a result, the national Democratic party) were dominated by antidemocratic Southern white supremacists from Reconstruction through the middle of the 20th century (Carmines and Stimson 1989; Schickler 2016). In Southern one-party states, the result was authoritarian political systems; the slow advance of the GOP and competitive politics in the South (Black and Black 2002; Glaser 1998) contributed to democratization in the region (Lublin 2007; Mickey 2015). Antidemocratic efforts are not always successful; national party leaders were able to hold the line against (and deny nominations to) a number of early 20th century media-friendly authoritarian figures, such as Charles Lindburgh and Henry Ford (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018).

In a number of key ways, the American parties have become more open to group influence in recent years. Some of these developments are long-standing. The selection of party nominees—the defining function of political parties—has been accomplished via primaries for House and Senate candidates since the early 20th century. For presidential candidates, however, primaries were not in wide use until the 1970s, when the Democrats' McGovern-Fraser commission reforms—intended to open and diversify power in the party—pushed both parties to increasingly employ presidential primaries, a trend that has accelerated in recent years (DeSilver 2016). Unlike most party systems which put the choice of nominees in the hands of party elites, party primaries theoretically permit any candidate or group to rally mass support and secure the valuable party label on the ballot. Primaries do not necessarily reward extremism, but they do take power away from party elites and hamper their ability to manage their coalition and rebuff antidemocratic candidates (see Chapter 6). For many years, party elites managed to direct the presidential nomination process and outcome by coordinating around preferred candidates, access to resources, and elite signals, but their ability to do so has been sorely tested in recent years (Cohen et al. 2016; Friedersdorf 2016; Noel 2018).

The accelerated sorting of groups into parties creates reinforcing identities that hamper citizens' abilities to find connections across the partisan aisle.

Competition from other actors has weakened the ability of parties to resist the influence of groups they may find counterproductive or dangerous. The rise of partisan media can aid parties but also competes with formal party organizations to set the party's agenda, advance particular candidates, and mobilize supporters (Arceneaux et al. 2016; 2020; Heersink 2023). In pursuit of viewers or at the direction of owners and media personalities, partisan media thus offers a separate means by which specific groups can

shape, even determine, party outcomes. Given the high costs of entry and access, as well as the incentives for attention-grabbing and uncomplicated content, we might expect that partisan news offers advantages to some interests over others.

Social media also can interfere with parties' long-dominant role in shaping citizens' views of candidates, groups, and issues (Hawthorne and Warner 2015). In addition, social media can dramatically reduce the costs of organizing, allowing previously-un-crystalized interests to identify allies and plan political action and established groups to mobilize more effectively (Gray-Hawkins 2018; Heaney 2020; Tufekci 2014). This new media environment undermines the ability of parties to "decide" through signals like endorsements and can facilitate the success of groups and individuals who may advocate for undemocratic processes and outcomes (Kim 2009; Wagner and Gruszczynski 2018).

Changes in campaign finance law have also empowered groups and weakened the ability of the parties themselves to decide their nominees and direct the agenda. In the last decades of the 20th century, the soft money loophole permitted organized parties to raise and then strategically allocate unlimited funds, enhancing each party's power to select and control their candidates. The Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002 closed that loophole, while *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010) gave donor groups the ability to spend unlimited amounts of money to support preferred candidates, further undermining the parties' influence over the nomination and election process. Empowered wealthy groups and individuals can advance specific candidates and agendas, including those who seek antidemocratic ends, to a degree previously impossible (Fishkin and Gerken 2015; Oklobdzija 2023; Kenkel 2019). At the same time, the ability of celebrity candidates in particular to attract "earned media" (free media coverage as opposed to purchased ad buys) can divorce candidate viability from traditional sources of party funding support (Magleby 2019). Donald Trump—who raised less money than many of his competitors in the 2016 GOP primary but benefited from unprecedented levels of media coverage—is a prime example (Confessore and Yourish 2016).

These developments come at a time, and indeed are related to, the accelerated presence of antidemocratic forces in American politics. While beyond the scope of this chapter, threats of terrorism, rising economic inequality, and a diversifying population have all fueled the growth of an extreme right that disdains liberal democratic ideals, embraces authoritarianism, and advocates white supremacy (Ballard-Rosa, Jensen, and Scheve 2022; Hetherington and Suhay 2011; Main 2018). The accelerated sorting of groups into parties creates reinforcing identities that hamper citizens' abilities to find connections across the partisan aisle. The resultant out-group animosity fuels affective partisanship (viewing out-partisans as not just opponents, but an existential threat), moral disengagement, and perhaps even political violence (Abramowitz and Webster 2018; Hetherington and Weiler 2009; Kalmoe and Mason 2022). Close competition between the parties discourages cross-party cooperation and frames each election as an all-or-nothing battle over fundamental values (Lee 2016). These forces and dynamics have always been present in American politics, but the combination of more permeable parties and growing authoritarianism may make the parties' porousness more dangerous to democracy than in the past.

Responsible Political Parties and American Democracy

For a democracy, the permeability of American political parties has many appealing characteristics. New issues and new groups are integrated into existing parties,

allowing parties to be both the objects and instruments of necessary political change in response to changing realities. Parties can be agents of representation, a key means by which groups in society can make their voices heard in elections and policy-making. As new groups emerge and the political landscape changes, this porousness allows parties to incorporate and manage new group conflict within established structures of American politics.

That party organization can contribute to political system stability and representation does not, however, mean that it always will. Parties are now as permeable as they have ever been while other developments (new media, campaign finance, celebrity) offer up new tools of influence to other actors. Aldrich's (2011) ambitious politicians (even the authoritarian-minded ones) have more resources with which to use the party for their own purposes while the UCLA School's (Bawn et al. 2012) policy-demanding groups (including those with antidemocratic goals) have new strategies for gaining supporters and shaping party outcomes.

Responsible party theory requires political parties offer substantive choices to voters by putting forth distinct policy platforms and then acting on those promises when in office (Adams 2001). Importantly, that theory gives voters the central role of choosing between the options parties offer. Over the past twenty some years, this has been viewed as another potential source of democratic weakness. At the same time that parties' ability to manage their coalitions, and specifically to keep out antidemocratic forces, has weakened, mass partisanship has strengthened, with overwhelming majorities of identifiers supporting their chosen party's candidates at the ballot box. As political scientist Julia Azari (2016; 2019) has written, we are in a period of "weak parties and strong partisanship." The result is that even a candidate with antidemocratic leanings can count on substantial electoral support if she secures a major party nomination.

Yet even in a time of heightened partisanship, voters may still act as bulwarks for democracy. In the recent 2022 midterm elections, former President Trump endorsed a range of candidates, most of whom supported his false claim that the 2020 presidential election was stolen and/or opposed the certification of the 2020 presidential election results (Moore and Chu 2022). In the general election, Trump-endorsed candidates in competitive districts underperformed expectations by an average of 5 points, contributing to the GOP's overall poorer-than-expected showing in the midterm elections (Cohn 2022; Wallach 2022). The permeability of the American political parties may offer the rising tide of antidemocratic groups and actors access to the parties labels and resources, but, in a responsible party system, it is the voters who have the final say.

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CHAPTER 5

Women and Minorities in American Political Parties

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Introduction: Empowerment Over Time

This chapter examines the status of women and minorities in U.S. political parties. The inclusion of women and minorities has long represented an important democratic test for political parties in the U.S. The 1950 APSA task force report on political parties condemned the use of voter disenfranchising devices (e.g., poll-tax requirements, White primaries, and other intentionally limiting devices) but did not elaborate on how women and minorities were kept out of political offices by parties (APSA Committee on Political Parties 1950, 77). Jo Freeman writes there were campaigns to increase women's representation in the leadership structure of the political parties starting in 1920. A special rule mandating that women represent 50 percent of the state committees was not universally adopted, but still helped women win appointments to state party committees (Freeman 2000; 2008). State parties in turn controlled the selection of delegates to the national convention. In 1952, women were about 10-12 percent of the state party delegates at the national conventions (Freeman 2000; 2008). In the years that followed, there were attempts to diversify delegations in other ways as well. The all-White delegation from Mississippi was challenged by the biracial Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in 1964 at the national convention. Martin Shefter (1994) calls this a period of "New Politics" as Black protest in the South and dissatisfaction with northern, machine-led governments, the women's movement, and youth opposition to the Vietnam War led to new party rules where states were enjoined to select delegates in relationship to their population in the state, and through primaries and open caucus elections.

ABSTRACT

The inclusion of minorities and women in political parties and as elected officials represents one of the most important developments of the twentieth/twenty-first century. The 1965 Voting Rights Act and political movements brought about this new diversity. The stronger clout and visibility of female and minority politicians on the left has also intensified the racial politics of the political right. States have adopted new restrictive voting laws. Republicans have used redistricting to win seats. Federal law was necessary to stop states from discriminating against minorities in 1965; it may be necessary today.

The new rules helped diversify the conventions, but there was the perception that parties still discriminated against women and minority candidates in other ways. Blacks raised the issue of their underrepresentation in government during the 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson, a Black civil rights activist. In response, the Democratic Party selected Ronald H. Brown, a Washington lawyer, as its first Black national party chairman in 1989. Redistricting under the 1982-amended Voting Rights Act led to a record number of Blacks elected to Congress and in the South in 1992 (Lublin 1997; Tate 2020). Black activism within the Democratic Party was critical in explaining civil rights enforcement (Valelly 2004).

The literature on women finds some evidence that women candidates are not equally recruited by political parties, as women-candidate types report lower levels of contact by parties than male-candidate types (Lawless and Fox 2001). Special efforts by women's groups have helped the candidacies of women from both major parties. Emily's List, a political action group founded in 1985, gives money to Democratic female candidates. In 2018, Elise Stefanik, a House Republican, created a political action committee to increase the number of women Republicans in Congress. Stefanik received some pushback from the party when she created this political action committee. Republicans generally reject identity politics strategies, including campaigning to increase diversity within its ranks (Wineinger 2022). Republican women made up 16 percent of all Republicans in the 117th House, while Democratic women were 40 percent of their caucus. Traditional gender norms and prejudice may also discourage women from running as Republicans, though some research finds that the impact is complex (Fulton and Dhima 2021; King and Matland 2003; Lawless 2015). Thomsen (2015) contends that party polarization has discouraged moderate Republican women from running.

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF MINORITIES ELECTED TO 107–117th CONGRESSES

CONGRESS	BLACK	LATINX	ASIAN	NATIVE AMER.
107	36	19	7	1
108	37	22	6	2
109	41	25	7	1
110	41	26	8	1
111	39	26	7	1
112	42	29	10	1
113	42	31	11	2
114	46	32	11	2
115	50	39	15	2
116	56	43	17	4
117	59	46	17	6

Source: Schaeffer 2021.
Note: Members who are more than one race are counted in each category.

Since the 1980s and 1990s, the parties have become more diverse. The Center for American Women in Politics (CAWP) reports that women were once 5 percent of the U.S. Congress in the late 1980s, but now represent 27 percent (Dittmar 2022). Blacks and minorities have also increased their numbers in Congress; the 117th Congress was the most racially and ethnically diverse to date (see Table 1). LGBTQ politicians have become more visible. Their growth came about because of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and social movements that turned into electoral ones. Blacks notably have centered their politics around the Democratic Party (White and Laird 2020). Women out-participate men today in elections (Wolbrecht and Corder 2020), and minority voting has increased significantly over time (Fraga 2018).

[W]omen were once 5 percent of the U.S. Congress in the late 1980s, but now represent 27 percent.

The new diversity of political parties is an important change. Government has increased its hearings on civil rights and social welfare because of its growing diversity (Minta and Sinclair-Chapman 2013). Similarly, the research on women legislators finds that women are more likely to sponsor women's interests and feminist bills than men (Burrell 1996; Dodson 2006;

Swers 2002; Thomas 1994). Black Democratic candidates once found it difficult to win elections in the 1980s and 1990s, but less so today as racially conservative Whites have left the Democratic Party (Stout 2020). Even the Republican Party, disproportionately White and male (see Chapter 3 of this report), is diversifying some.

Backlash to Incorporation: Challenges to the Democratic Process

The stronger clout and visibility of female and minority politicians on the left has also intensified the racial politics of the political right. While President Donald Trump ran a distinctive social issues campaign as opposed to an economic one in 2016, Republicans broadly have embraced Trump's brand of social conservatism. The popularity of Trumpism is in part a backlash to the growth of minority politics in the U.S. today. Ashley Jardina finds that Whites who feel threatened by racial change and who identify with Whites are more supportive of Donald Trump when controlling for other factors, including racial bigotry (2019). Since record numbers of women and minorities are contesting for elective office today, polarized group politics is expected to remain high in the U.S. Barbara F. Walter in *How Civil Wars Start* even imagines that a U.S. race war breaks out under a Black female presidential administration (2022). That descriptive representation empowers minorities is one established research area, and that it can trigger political backlashes is recent thinking.

Since record numbers of women and minorities are contesting for elective office today, polarized group politics is expected to remain high in the U.S.

As examples of that backlash, critics point to the Republican Party's attempts to redistrict their way into seats and impose tough voting laws. Republicans controlled the redistricting process in 19 states compared to 7 for the Democrats in 2020 (Grofman 2022). The federal courts with new conservative majorities have turned away from strict enforcement of the Voting Rights Act, which would have constrained the potential negative effects of redistricting for minorities. The Supreme Court had nullified the VRA's preclearance provision in 2013. Thus, the federal government can no longer object to and block racially gerrymandered plans proposed by local or state governments. Minorities can challenge plans based on Section 2 complaints, but thus far, no Section 2 claim has been sustained in the 2020 round of redistricting (Warshaw, McGhee, and Migurski 2022).

The 2022 districts have favored the Republicans but have not preserved the majority-minority districts that previously expanded representation for racial minorities. Blacks and Latinxs remain underrepresented by congressional maps (Warshaw, McGhee, and Migurski 2022). One analysis from Bloomberg news found that gerrymandering and other forces had the potential to reduce the number of Black majority Congressional districts from 22 to nine (Korte 2022). Jim Clyburn (D-SC), who was first elected to Congress in 1992 in a majority-Black district, reports now his district is no longer majority-Black. The percentage of Blacks in his district dropped from 53 to 47 percent. A civilian redistricting board in Michigan eliminated two majority-Black districts. They are now 45 and 44 percent Black. The plan was challenged as discriminatory, but the Michigan state court dismissed the suit. The Supreme Court in June 2022 let Louisiana create only one majority Black district when it was possible to create two. Black representation in Congress may fall because of

redistricting. Seven Black House Democrats did not seek reelection in 2022, and some retired because of redistricting. However, increasing numbers of Blacks are running in majority-White districts and winning.

Some also find restrictive voting laws to be a response to minority empowerment and changes in the Republican electoral coalition (Bentele and O'Brien 2013; Hicks et al. 2015). The Republican Party sought to adopt more restrictive voter laws in the aftermath of a record turnout of voters in the 2020 presidential election, which was about 7 percent higher than voter turnout in 2016. Republicans had previously adopted voter identification laws, which the Supreme Court had ruled were constitutional. Bernard Fraga (2018) contends that these laws have not directly hurt minority voter participation, and others find their effects to be small (Grimmer and Yoder 2022; Grimmer et al. 2018; Highton 2017; but see Hajnal, Lajevardi, and Nielson 2017). Instead, the new laws are aimed at making it more difficult to vote by mail, which states expanded because of the pandemic in 2020. States like Virginia passed laws to end no-excuse vote-by-mail provisions. Other states are considering new voter identification requirements on mail-in-ballots, such as social security and driver's license numbers. Arizona, Washington, and Virginia also have bills requiring proof of citizenship for voting. Arizona made it a law in March 2022. Voters now have to present a passport or birth certificate to vote. Proof of citizenship requirements would severely curtail access to the ballot, and the U.S. Justice Department is suing Arizona over it.

Reactions to minority empowerment may extend beyond voting access to impact election administration and oversight at the state level, though the research here is still developing and more is needed. Surveys reveal a significant number of Republicans believe the "Big Lie" (Cuthbert and Theodoridis 2022), and baseless claims of election fraud have increased the risk of democratic breakdown in some Republican-controlled states (Grofman 2022; Mickey 2022). Several states like Georgia have enacted laws to permit more partisan control over election procedures. Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky and Oklahoma have passed election interference laws that challenge how elections are run and results are determined (Brennan Center for Justice 2022). The Republican Party in several states also nominated election deniers for state offices in the 2022 election cycle.

But parties continue to be the central actors in controlling state legislation governing our democratic process. If and how parties incorporate racial minorities still matters.

There were some signs of democratic resilience in 2022. Most election deniers lost in the midterm elections. In December, Congress also passed a law that clarifies how the Electoral College votes are to be counted, specifying that the vice president's role is purely ceremonial. But state laws will make it easier for the party in power to contest state election results in the future. Citizens in some states would be able to initiate election audits and politicize the process.

Federal law was necessary to stop states from discriminating against minorities in 1965. Those protections may still be needed, given trends at the state level. States would be prevented from new forms of discrimination under the For the People Act and under the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, which passed the House in the 117th Congress. While Whites are no longer showing extreme prejudice against minority candidates, the voting power of disadvantaged

communities should not be diluted. The For the People Act would require states to have early voting and vote-by-mail provisions. It would require states to automatically register voters when they provide information to government agencies, like the DMV. Yet the practical long-term effects are uncertain. Both bills, if enacted, would likely be challenged by states in the courts. The federal courts have become more conservative, and thus the future of federal control over state election practices is unclear.

Conclusion: Party Incentives and the Future

The analysis above supports an institutionalist approach to understanding U.S. party politics. Party officials are actors in their own right and enact policies outside of public opinion. In this case, Republicans have been motivated by their desire to win elections. We expect that from any political party. But the parties' uneven history of incorporating women and minorities gives us reason to pause.

In the past, southern states had changed their constitutions to weaponize the state in favor of the White race. The contemporary period has seen many changes. But parties continue to be the central actors in controlling state legislation governing our democratic process. If and how parties incorporate racial minorities still matters. Political science gives us worrying context for the partisan incentives produced by minority empowerment and backlash. This, combined with false claims of election fraud, the courts' role in permitting racial gerrymandering, and restrictive election laws makes the next set of elections concerning.

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CHAPTER 6

Primaries, Polarization, and Party Control

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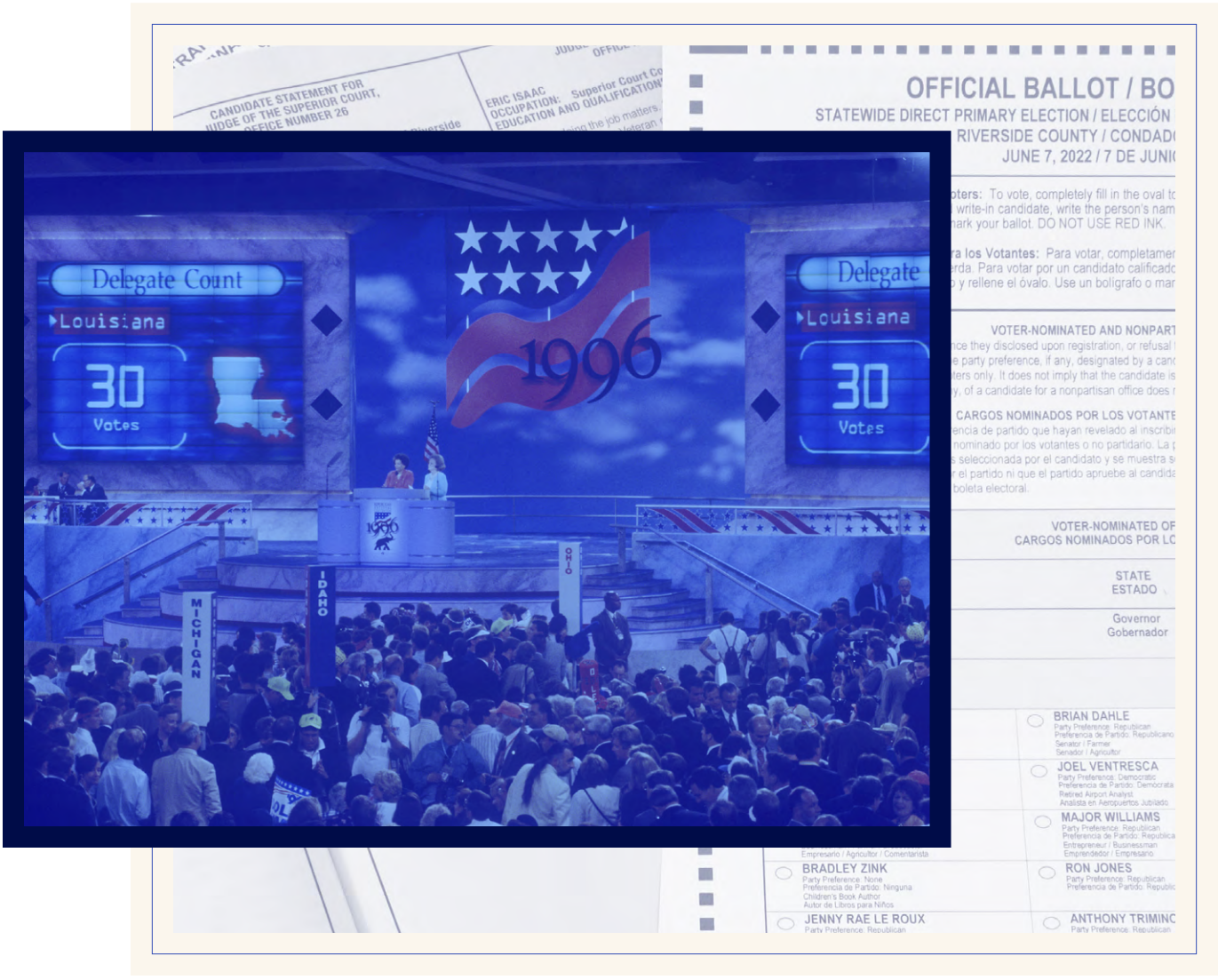


ABSTRACT

We examine the existing evidence on party primaries and political polarization in American politics and find that the existence or openness of primary elections is not strongly related to polarization. Rather, primaries have led to other potentially more serious problems in American politics—a loss of control of parties by their leaders, the increased nomination of inexperienced politicians uninterested in policymaking, and the potential for significant democratic erosion. We conclude with some discussion about ways to re-empower parties to select capable nominees.

Primaries and Polarization

In June of 2022, Colorado saw competitive Republican primary elections in three key statewide races: Governor, U.S. Senator, and Secretary of State. In each of those races, a fairly conventional Republican candidate faced off against a more conservative, Trump-embracing, election-denying alternative who was favored by hardcore activists. Yet on election day, all three conventional candidates won, leaving their party in a better position to take on Democratic incumbents in the fall election.[1]

This story is not consistent with the conventional wisdom on primary elections, which generally hold that primaries are responsible for the ongoing polarization of the parties. As we discuss in this essay, neither the existence of primaries nor their rules play a particularly large role in the parties' ideological polarization. However, primaries do present some very real and growing challenges to party leadership, making it more difficult for leaders to manage parties in responsible ways and make decisions that benefit both them and the country at large. Party nominations, we argue, are in need of significant reform—not so much to advantage the nomination of moderate candidates, but to advantage the nomination of candidates who will protect and advocate for democracy.

The idea that primaries are largely responsible for polarization has a long history. The usual described mechanism is that the people who participate in primaries are more ideologically extreme than the people who participate in the general election. None other than V.O. Key (1956) raised this concern as early as 1956, suggesting that "in states with a modicum of interparty competition primary participants are often by no means representative of the party." Ranney (1968) however, found little evidence that primary and general electorates were meaningfully different. More recently, Sides et alia (2020) used primary election administrative records and multi-year surveys to examine demographic and policy differences between primary electorates and general electorates. Essentially, they found no differences; Republicans and Democrats who participate in primaries look very much like the Republicans and Democrats participate in general elections. This is consistent with findings by Hirano et alia (2010) that neither the existence of nor the level of turnout in primary elections appear to be related to polarization.

1 These efforts would nonetheless prove unsuccessful, with Democrats winning all three races.

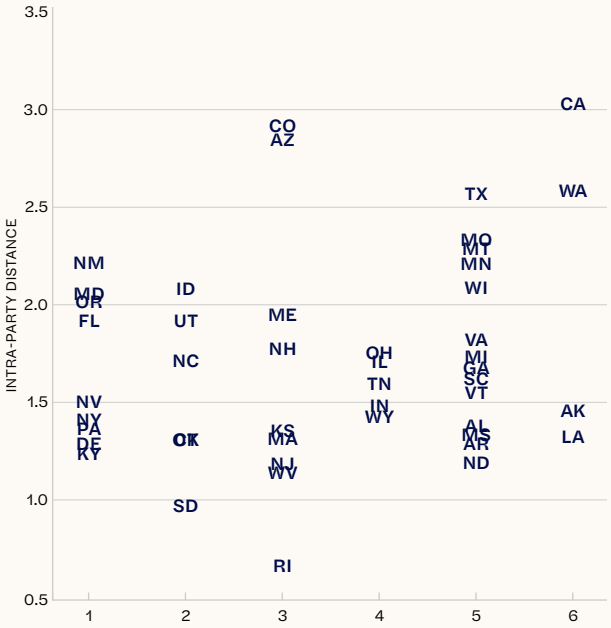
To be sure, there are notable differences in primary and general electorates, and, unlike in primaries, there is some incentive for general election candidates to reach out to unaffiliated voters and even some more moderate voters in the other party. As Mann (2007) argues, there may be an important interaction between primary elections and gerrymandering that induces polarization even if neither on their own is much of a contributor, but there is little reason to think that the primary electorate is any more ideologically extreme than any other group that might select a party's nominees, including convention delegates, caucus goers, or party bosses.

Moreover, any differences between primary and general electorates do not seem to vary by how open or closed the primary system is. McGhee et alia (2014) examined this systematically using roll call vote-based ideal points of legislators across all 99 state legislatures and finding that the rules governing primary participation are unrelated to legislator extremism. This finding was echoed in Sides et alia (2020).

For a somewhat simplified look at this, Figure 1 charts all fifty states in terms of the openness of their primary system (National Conference of State Legislatures 2021). These data are from 2018, the most recent available. We have ordered the states from most restrictive (closed primary) to the least restrictive (the top-two runoff systems in California, Louisiana, and Washington). The vertical axis is a measure of legislative polarization—the difference between the mean Republican legislator ideal point (their left-right ideological position as revealed by their voting behavior on roll call votes) and the mean Democratic legislator ideal point in each state (Shor 2020). In theory, if more closed primaries restrict participation to the most ideologically extreme voters, we should see the more polarized chambers toward the left side of the figure. In fact, there is little relationship at all, and actually trends somewhat in the opposite direction.

FIGURE 1

LEGISLATIVE POLARIZATION BY PRIMARY OPENNESS, 2018



Note: Figure shows the average ideological distance between Republicans and Democrats in the state legislature in each state, grouped by how open or closed their primary elections are. The pattern suggests that in the more open contests—those in which voters unaffiliated with the party can most easily participate in its primaries—legislators are, on average, the most polarized.

Why this is the case is not immediately obvious. One possibility is that, as Norrander and Wendland (2016) find, prospective primary voters behave strategically and react to changes in party registration rules. That is, if a party primary closes its doors to independent voters, independents who lean toward that party may change their registration so that they can participate, whereas such leaners may remain independent in other states where rules permit them to vote in the primary. It may also be that party elites are capable of steering primary election results toward their preferred candidates regardless of the composition of the primary electorate.

We can also think of this issue in a relatively broad historical sense. According to studies of congressional roll call voting, one of the most polarized periods in the history of the U.S. Congress (prior to today) was

the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Voteview 2016). This occurred prior to the introduction of primary elections; the bulk of congressional nominations at that time were made by party leaders and conventions. Most states adopted primaries for their congressional nominations in the first few decades of the 20th century. Yet one of the least polarized periods in congressional history was in the 1950s and 60s, when primaries were widely in effect. This hardly directly disproves the influence of primaries, but it certainly doesn't suggest much of a polarizing role for them.

The Loss of Party Control

Primary elections may not be responsible for polarization, but that hardly lets them off the hook for other problems with democracy. They create other significant challenges for a democracy—specifically, the loss of control of the party by its leaders.

In one sense, it seems odd that the party bosses of the early 20th century would cede control of nominations to rank-and-file party members. How did those powerful party leaders lose that fight? Alan Ware (2002) helps solve this mystery by noting that party politics of that era was becoming more challenging for party leaders. The rise in the number of candidates and occasional factional splits within local parties sometimes meant that more than one candidate would claim to be the party's legitimate nominee. Creating primary elections, run and regulated by state governments, added the state's imprimatur to a party nominee, preventing dangerous party splits in general elections. Party leaders at that time assumed that they would still be able to control nominations even though primary voters were technically in charge. After all, party voters still did not know very much about the candidates and were dependent upon party leaders to help them distinguish between the loyal partisan candidates and the pretenders.

In a multi-party democracy, politicians, activists, and voters can leave a party if they are dissatisfied with it and join or even create another... This is close to impossible in the United States

This theory would be further put to the test in the 1970s, when primaries were suddenly applied in large numbers to the presidential nomination process. Prior to that decade, presidential nominees were selected by party leaders at party conventions, often huddled in smoke-filled rooms and sometimes drawing on information learned in high-profile primary elections.[2] The 1968 Democratic nomination cycle, however, was a mess. It saw the assassination of the popular Robert Kennedy, who had been dominating primary contests, a divisive and bloody summer party convention in Chicago, and that convention's nomination of Humphrey, despite his having participated in no primaries. His narrow loss in the general election to Richard Nixon, a candidate many Democrats had seen as beatable, left Democrats in a nomination crisis. Many longstanding Democrats feared the party could not pick winning candidates anymore, and newer party activists and voters had come to believe that convention delegates no longer reflected their wishes. The party's McGovern-Fraser Commission would embrace primaries as just one way to make convention delegations more representative of lay party members, but it ended up radically transforming presidential nominations.

2 The West Virginia Democratic primary of 1960 didn't really assign many delegates one way or another, but it was a chance for the Catholic John Kennedy to demonstrate his electioneering skills and his multi-sectarian appeal to a highly Protestant state while defeating popular party figure Hubert Humphrey.

Following the party's reforms between 1969 and 1972, state primaries suddenly became highly consequential for presidential nominations. As entrepreneurial candidates like George McGovern and Jimmy Carter deduced, it was possible to win the nomination by doing well in early contests like the Iowa Caucuses and the New Hampshire Primary, even if party leaders were not very fond of them (Polsby 1983). As Cohen et alia (2008) describe, however, party leaders managed to reassert their control over the presidential nomination process starting in 1980. They did so largely through the endorsement process. By coordinating behind a candidate publicly, they could signal to party voters just who the proper nominee should be, and, importantly, party voters tended to ratify their choices for the next few decades.

Yet this system began to fray in the new century. Howard Dean had a surprisingly strong showing in 2004 despite many party leaders disliking him, and Barack Obama won his party's nomination four years later even though the bulk of endorsers prior to the Iowa Caucuses were leaning toward Hillary Clinton. But if those were cracks in the party's armor, the 2016 Republican nomination process was a complete shattering of it. Party leaders in that cycle overwhelmingly signaled a strong distaste for Donald Trump yet failed to converge behind an alternative candidate, and Trump managed to dominate the primaries and caucuses by parlaying his money and fame. By contrast, Democratic leaders in 2016 quickly and strongly converged on Hillary Clinton, who won the nomination, but only after a surprisingly strong and lengthy rivalry with Bernie Sanders despite his lack of party backing. The 2020 Democratic cycle offered reasonable evidence of a Democratic Party that had made a choice—if somewhat late in the process—and got voters to go along with it (Masket 2020), but populist movements and factionalism continue to undermine the choices of party leaders.

We should note here that primaries are a defining aspect of America's party system. While a number of other democracies use primaries, especially in Latin America and increasingly in a few European states, none have played such a long and influential role in party governance as they have in the United States. In part, this is related to the U.S.'s persistent two-party system, as Taylor et alia (2014) articulate. In a multi-party democracy, politicians, activists, and voters can leave a party if they are dissatisfied with it and join or even create another that is still reasonably close to their policy goals. This is close to impossible in the United States, where the diametrically opposed party is the only option. Instead, the way to participate meaningfully if one is dissatisfied with their party is to change it, which can be done by championing new candidates in the primary or running oneself. The relative porousness of American political parties and primary elections make this possible whereas changing a party from an entry level is far more daunting in most other democracies.

The Consequences of Primary Control

Party trends in the twenty-first century suggest that leaders of both parties struggle with nominations. Parties are increasingly nominating candidates with little experience in politics (Porter and Treul 2020), undermining the functionality of government and prioritizing posturing over legislating. This trend has been sharper among Republicans (La Raja and Rauch 2020), but both parties have found the experience necessary for governing and coalition-building to be in shorter supply in recent years. One-term U.S. Rep. Madison Cawthorn's (R-NC) claim that "I have built my staff around comms rather than legislation" could apply to quite a few members of his class (Vesoulis 2021).

Trump's nomination in 2016 demonstrated a particular weakness of the Republican Party. Not only did he win the nomination contest despite the loud

objections of many party leaders, most of those same party leaders fell in line behind him as soon as he had the nomination. Prominent public officials like Sen. Lindsey Graham, House Speaker Paul Ryan, Sen. Ted Cruz, and others who had publicly warned about the dangers Trump posed to both the party and the country very rapidly changed their tune and defended Trump through a range of his norm violations and even impeachable acts (Lewis 2019). What this demonstrated was a party that could be transformed by a single person, even if an unusual one.

It also suggests a real weakness for American democracy. As Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) describe, parties play a vital role in limiting the access of would-be authoritarians to power. Indeed, early 20th century figures like Charles Lindbergh, Huey Long, and Henry Ford considered seeking national office but were essentially rebuffed by party leaders who were concerned about their dictatorial potential.[3] In an age of primaries, however, parties are far more likely to nominate such leaders.

The path from primaries to authoritarianism is hardly a direct one, much less an iron law of politics. Yet Polsby warned that the rise of presidential primaries would lead to an increase in factional presidential candidacies. That is, while party organizations were "coalition-forcing" entities, in primary elections "the politics of factional rivalry prevails," in which it is each candidate's best strategy to eke out just a few more votes than the next most popular candidate in a crowded field (Polsby 1983, 66). This encourages more populist-style electioneering, in which candidates seek to build a personal brand and maximize media attention, sometimes at the expense of commitments to the party or to democratic norms.

This trend was held at bay for decades, at the presidential level and in other nominations, with the help of elite coordination (Cohen et al. 2008; Hassell 2017). But many of Polsby's concerns appear to be present in the 21st century. Trump's own anti-democratic tendencies, of course, were on full display in 2016, but his party could not prevent his nomination. And the fact that he led an actual, violent, and well-documented attempt to overthrow a presidential election and yet remains a leading candidate for his party's 2024 nomination suggests a real weakness and danger of the primary system.

Both major American parties, that is, have signaled that they are open to changes to the status quo in order to preserve their long term viability and protect American democracy.

Is there a way out of this problem? The outcomes of the 2022 midterm elections offer a few positive suggestions. First, congressional and gubernatorial candidates advocating overtly authoritarian stances under-performed in those elections (Wallach 2022). Second, this outcome contributed to what is arguably three consecutive Republican under-performances in national elections. Third, a surprising number of modern Senate and gubernatorial races, along with presidential races, have become highly competitive between the parties. These three factors give the parties incentive not only to nominate more broadly acceptable candidates but to turn to party leaders to enable that pivot. These incentives don't secure an actual party change, of course, but they would seem a necessary condition.

3 For more on the role of party leaders in screening out authoritarians, see Lesher 1994, Lowry 1923, Ceaser 1982.

The advent of primary elections came with the promise that they were making parties more "democratic" even though the concept of an internally democratic party is extremely elusive upon reflection. Several potential reform options would in that sense make parties less democratic. That is, it is unlikely that party voters are about to give up their nominal control over party nominations and their voice in primaries. Yet party leadership can assume greater control of the nomination process.

It is possible, as Kamarck (2017) suggests, for parties to assert a level of "peer review" to the nomination process, requiring party officials to approve of candidates before those candidates can run. Parties could raise thresholds for participation in debates or even for voting in primaries. Somewhat surprisingly, state parties often raise or lower primary voting participation thresholds without producing massive legitimacy crises (Jewitt and Masket 2019); perhaps they could do more in this direction.

As 2022 drew to a close, the Republican National Committee announced an internal review commission to examine a disappointing midterm election and proposed new paths forward for the party (Isenstadt 2022). Meanwhile, the Democratic National Commission prepared to overhaul its approach to presidential nominations, dethroning the first-in-the-nation Iowa caucuses in favor of the South Carolina primary (Sullivan and Cohen 2022). Both major American parties, that is, have signaled that they are open to changes to the status quo in order to preserve their long term viability and protect American democracy. This is an encouraging sign, and suggests that some of these reforms may indeed be considered.

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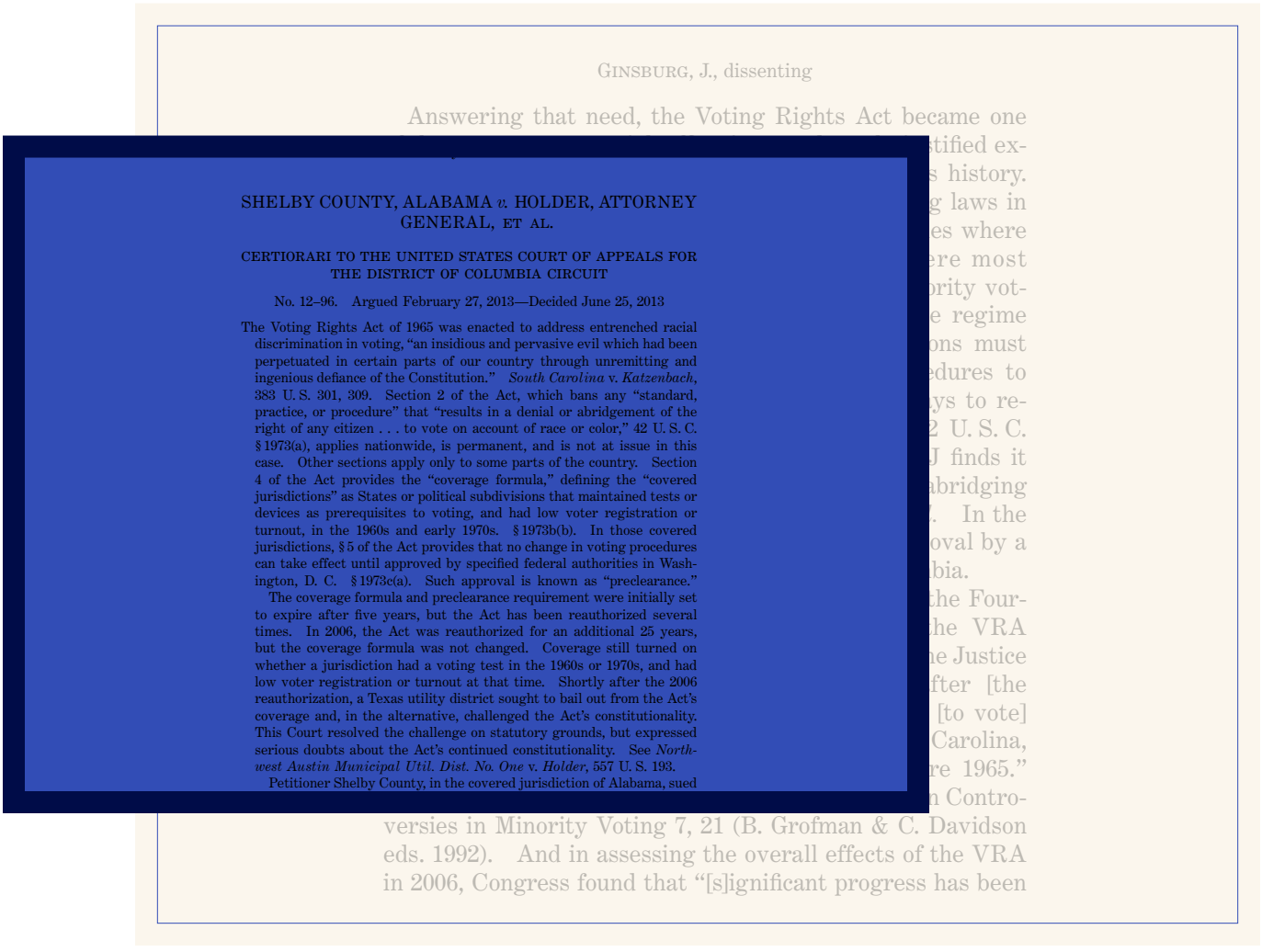
CHAPTER 7

Protecting Democracy from State Level Threats in the Age of National Parties

JAKE GRUMBACH, University of Washington



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SHELBY COUNTY, ALABAMA *v.* HOLDER, ATTORNEY GENERAL, ET AL.

CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CIRCUIT

No. 12–96. Argued February 27, 2013—Decided June 25, 2013

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was enacted to address entrenched racial discrimination in voting, "an insidious and pervasive evil which had been perpetuated in certain parts of our country through unremitting and ingenious defiance of the Constitution." *South Carolina* v. *Katzenbach*, 383 U. S. 301, 309. Section 2 of the Act, which bans any "standard, practice, or procedure" that "results in a denial or abridgement of the right of any citizen . . . to vote on account of race or color," 42 U. S. C. §1973(a), applies nationwide, is permanent, and is not at issue in this case. Other sections apply only to some parts of the country. Section 4 of the Act provides the "coverage formula," defining the "covered jurisdictions" as States or political subdivisions that maintained tests or devices as prerequisites to voting, and had low voter registration or turnout, in the 1960s and early 1970s. §1973b(b). In those covered jurisdictions, §5 of the Act provides that no change in voting procedures can take effect until approved by specified federal authorities in Washington, D. C. §1973c(a). Such approval is known as "preclearance."

The coverage formula and preclearance requirement were initially set to expire after five years, but the Act has been reauthorized several times. In 2006, the Act was reauthorized for an additional 25 years, but the coverage formula was not changed. Coverage still turned on whether a jurisdiction had a voting test in the 1960s or 1970s, and had low voter registration or turnout at that time. Shortly after the 2006 reauthorization, a Texas utility district sought to bail out from the Act's coverage and, in the alternative, challenged the Act's constitutionality. This Court resolved the challenge on statutory grounds, but expressed serious doubts about the Act's continued constitutionality. See *Northwest Austin Municipal Util. Dist. No. One* v. *Holder*, 557 U. S. 193.

Petitioner Shelby County, in the covered jurisdiction of Alabama, sued

ABSTRACT

Over the past generation, the Democratic and Republican parties have become coordinated *national* teams, but democracy in the U.S. is mostly run at the *state level*. This collision of nationalized parties and subnational institutions has led the parties to pursue their national ambitions through the state level, weakening democracy in the process. Through gerrymandering, voting restrictions, restrictions on civil liberties, and threats of election subversion, state governments have attempted to tilt the playing field of American democracy in favor of their national party. The collision of nationalized parties and state governance calls for new national policy to protect and expand democratic institutions across all states.

U.S. democracy is under strain. Partisan gerrymandering has reduced the quality of representation for millions of Americans. Restrictive voting laws have made electoral participation more difficult in many areas of the country. The possibility of election subversion in the upcoming 2024 presidential election continues to surface. In part due to the nationalization of political conflict in the U.S. (Hopkins 2018), and in part due to the attempted coup at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, many researchers and observers have become keenly attentive to conflict over democracy among national politicians in Washington, D.C. Yet while the threats to American democracy are part of a *national* conflict over the direction of the country, the threats are not originating in Washington D.C.—they are mostly coming from the states.

Historically, when conflict over democracy arises in the U.S., it is most evident at the state level. The American system of *federalism* bakes this in. Federalism is a system of government in which (at least) two levels of government share authority; in the U.S., it's the national government in Washington, D.C. and the 50 state governments composed of state legislatures, governors, and state courts. The U.S. and about 24 other countries have federalism, which is distinct from countries with "unitary" systems of government (including New Zealand, Sweden, Japan, and over 100 others) that place all of their constitutional authority at the national level.

But even compared to other federal systems, the United States' system of federalism grants an outsized amount of authority to the lower level of government, the state level. Although some federal systems grant wide authority to the lower level in some policy areas, such as Canada with language and immigration policy, the United States redistributes fewer economic resources across regions and has greater differences in public goods provision from state to state. Although national policy in the mid-20th century generated economic convergence across regions of the U.S., state level policy has become much more important in recent years. As national policymaking stalled in the face of gridlock in Washington, D.C., state governments have implemented increasingly distinct policies in areas like health care, taxation, and welfare. Compared to a generation ago, a person's quality of life today is more tied to their state of residence (Grumbach 2018).

However, not only is the United States' system an outlier when it comes to the economic aspects of federalism—it also gives states control over key *democratic institutions*. Districting, election administration, vote counting and certification, and police powers are all under the purview of state governments, with wide-ranging consequences for democracy. State legislatures and commissions can draw gerrymandered district maps, state officials can refuse to certify election results, and state laws can make it harder to participate in elections.

These types of strategies are only viable because there is not much done at the national level when it comes to electoral institutions. This is increasingly true as a result of recent Supreme Court cases that limit enforcement of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, such as *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) and *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee* (2021). Every election in the U.S., from the smallest local public office to the U.S. president, is administered and certified by state authorities. At the national level, despite being called the Federal Elections Commission, the FEC regulates money in politics, not voting or districting.

By contrast, other federal systems have much more centralized electoral institutions. In Canada, a non-partisan and independent federal agency called the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada (or alternatively, Elections Canada) oversees and administers all aspects of elections. Election results are validated by local election officers, but they are appointed and work under the supervision of the Chief Electoral Officer. Finally, independent commissions have been in charge of redistricting in Canada since 1964, and the redistricting process includes input from Elections Canada (The Electoral System of Canada 2015). Few U.S. states use non-partisan independent commissions for redistricting, and judicial enforcement is generally permissive of partisan gerrymandering as long as there is not clearly racist intent.

The conventional wisdom is that this state level authority over elections and districting is helpful for American democracy. Since the election of President Donald Trump in 2016, scholars and pundits alike have argued that federalism acts as a safeguard against authoritarianism, preventing a would-be autocrat in the highest office from usurping absolute power. This argument can be found in James Madison's idea of "double security" in the *Federalist Papers*. In *Federalist 51*, Madison (1788) describes a federal system that is vertically divided into separate levels of government and horizontally subdivided into separate departments, thus ensuring that "a double security arises to the rights of the people." He contends that "the different governments will control each other, at the same time that each will be controlled by itself." This "double security" argument has a lot of merit. State governments have the potential to stand against an attempt to consolidate power over democratic institutions during times of political crisis (Landau, H. Wiseman, and S. Wiseman 2019). Many would argue that state governments were effective in opposing threats to democracy stemming from the Trump administration.

In the age of hyper-polarization, however, we now have decentralized institutions but centralized parties–a disconnect that creates new threats.

But while the "double security" argument is important, there is another side to the coin. When authority over the rules of democracy are decentralized across the states, some states might weaken democratic institutions in

ways that leave the entire U.S. political system at greater risk. Decentralized election administration and districting mean that voter suppression or gerrymandering in a single state affects the balance of power at all levels of government, national, state, and local. And decentralized election certification means (depending on Supreme Court interpretation) that a single swing state could imperil a presidential election by trying to give its Electoral College votes to a candidate who did not win the vote in their state. Political coalitions can also critically weaken their political enemies with state level policy. Labor unions, a key organizational ally of multiracial democracy (Frymer and Grumbach 2021), have been decimated by state policy over the past two decades, with major political ramifications (Feigenbaum, Hertel-Fernandez, and Williamson 2018). My argument here is not that there are no benefits to state level authority, but rather that we face a difficult tradeoff between centralization and decentralization that is too often ignored.

Both centralized and decentralized institutions can, in principle, support a healthy democracy. In the age of hyper-polarization, however, we now have *decentralized* institutions but *centralized* parties—a disconnect that creates new threats. A generation ago, Democrats and Republicans at the state level were often disconnected from their national parties, and had more state-specific goals and conflicts. But since the 1990s, activists, donors, and interest groups with national ambitions have made major political investments at the state level. Groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council and Americans for Prosperity on the right, and climate and reproductive rights groups on the left, are integrating state level politicians into a national tug of war over the direction of the country. This gives state level officials, who have authority over democratic institutions, new incentives to tilt the rules in ways that favor not only their state level colleagues, but all members of their party across the country who seek power at any level.

My recent book, *Laboratories Against Democracy: How National Parties Transformed State Politics* (2022a), uses quantitative analysis to track the health of democracy in the states over the past few decades. I find that, in some states, democracy has dramatically weakened since 2000, and especially since 2010. The government of North Carolina, a state that had been expanding democracy since the end of Jim Crow, drew a heavily gerrymandered map that allowed the Republican Party to win a majority of North Carolina's seats in Congress (77 percent) with only a minority of votes (49.3 percent) in 2018. Gerrymandering in this and other states also insulated state legislators from voters, allowing them to make unpopular policy changes without worrying about accountability from the electorate (Rogers 2017). With the Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* now permitting states to ban abortion, gerrymandering is enabling some state legislatures to pass unpopular abortion bans without punishment from voters. In states with gerrymandered districts, an anti-abortion minority of voters could determine the majority of a state legislature (Grumbach 2022b). Many state legislatures seem to already have factored this into their calculus. Despite the fact that the majority of their constituents support abortion rights (Grumbach and Warshaw 2022), states like Georgia, Wisconsin, Ohio, and Texas have already instated either near-total bans or six-week bans on abortion (Knight et al. 2022). More analysis must be done, but early estimates suggest that the recent 2020 redistricting cycle was more balanced, with some gerrymandering in both red (e.g., Ohio) and blue (e.g., Nevada) states and more partisan balance nationally—but with some state legislative and U.S. House maps, such as that of Wisconsin, remaining heavily pro-Republican.

Gerrymandering has clear implications for political parties' incentives to be responsive to voters.

State legislatures further restricted democracy by passing voter suppression laws that made it more complicated and time consuming to vote for some residents, such as limiting polling place hours, reducing ballot dropbox locations, making it harder to register to vote, and creating new voter ID requirements. Some pundits have argued that these voter suppression laws aren't such a big deal because some of the policies do not appear to reduce voter turnout on average. But these policies are undemocratic because they unduly raise the cost of voting for potential voters (or subsets of potential voters) without increasing election integrity or security; voters and activists work hard to ensure that voter suppression laws do not reduce turnout (Zhang forthcoming). Furthermore, voter suppression laws often target groups that already face significant barriers to voting—like young people, low-income individuals, racial minorities, and people who have been incarcerated—making it even less likely that current non-voters will participate in future elections. Such effects do little to change parties' incentives to alter the patterns of partisan mobilization described in Chapter 3.

Perhaps most critically, state parties in control of some state legislatures have laid groundwork that could be used to subvert the 2024 presidential election. Strategies include fielding candidates for key state-level positions (like attorney general or secretary of state) that would be willing to block election certification, attempting to assemble alternate slates of presidential electors that would be poised to cast Electoral College votes contrary to the popular vote in their state, and delegating even more power over election administration to state legislatures. 2022 saw many election deniers running for state-level office lose pivotal races (Gardner, Thebault, and Klemko 2022) and Congress pass a reform of the Electoral Count Act. However, legal scholars argue that several avenues for election subversion from state level actors remain viable. Laws penalizing election subversion remain unclear and weak, and voting machines in some states still lack paper trails that could be used in the event of a disputed election (Hasen 2022).

Ultimately, the nationalization of party networks may enable antidemocratic coalitions that gain power at the state level to subsequently propel themselves to national power...

Finally, state level control has made another key institutional function undemocratic: policing and criminal justice. Whereas other countries' police forces are often national, the U.S. Constitution gives states police powers, making governors, and, at the local level, mayors, the commanders in chief of nearly all police agencies, prisons, and jails. At the same time, the U.S. is a global outlier when it comes to authoritarian policing and mass incarceration. Conventional wisdom suggests that aggressive criminal justice policy in the U.S. reflects the preferences of tough-on-crime voters, but Sances (2021) shows that district attorneys are less responsive to the attitudes of their constituents than are other political officeholders. More tellingly, Sances's (2021) analysis shows that both district attorneys and state legislators are less responsive to constituent attitudes than their national co-partisan representatives in the U.S. House (see also Rogers 2017).

It's important to say that the problems of state level democracy are nowhere near as large as those of the Jim Crow era, much less the time of slavery. But they are major. And unlike previous eras, today's

political parties have unified *national* ambitions. In recent decades, national political organizations and interest group activists have shifted resources to the state level, in response to gridlock at the national level. As a result, state legislatures have polarized and become sites of national political conflict. This trend toward nationalization is reinforced by a media ecosystem that is highly partisan and hyper-focused on national issues. Additionally, the organizational networks that state governments rely on to inform policymaking increasingly reside within national partisan silos, meaning that state legislatures are more likely to adopt legislation that closely resembles the policies of co-partisan states. When a particular policy is antidemocratic in nature, this type of partisan policy diffusion across states allows for widespread democratic backsliding. Ultimately, the nationalization of party networks may enable antidemocratic coalitions that gain power at the state level to subsequently propel themselves to national power by exploiting the institutional levers that federalism puts in the hands of the states (Grumbach 2022a).

Things might seem dire, but there is plenty that can be done to curb democratic backsliding in the states. Historically, when state governments threaten democracy (often enabled by the Supreme Court), Congress can decide whether to step in and establish baseline national rules (Grumbach and Schickler 2021). A fortified democracy depends on strong informal rules or norms, not just formal laws and regulations, but politicians' norms related to democracy have been weakening in recent years (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018). When the system is working, political actors in a democracy tacitly agree not to use norm-violating strategies to defeat their political opponents, even if it would be legal to do so (an example would be to not use partisan gerrymandering to advantage your side, even though you're technically allowed to). Politicians on all sides know to adhere to norms because they understand that when power shifts, the other side could retaliate by using the same tactics, making everyone worse off. But with norms already violated to such a degree, it is clear that the U.S. needs new *formal rules* to prohibit further norm erosion. Congress, if it wishes, could force states to draw district maps that do not favor either party and establish procedures to block a state legislature from giving its Electoral College vote to a candidate who didn't win the election in its state, for example. However, this is easier said than done, given polarization in Congress and filibuster requirements in the Senate (Mann and Ornstein 2013). Pieces of federal legislation that aim to protect voting rights, eliminate gerrymandering, update election systems, and ensure police accountability have been introduced in recent congresses, but have so far failed to pass both chambers.

It is, of course, extremely difficult to change institutions. However, there are two strategies to protect democracy that political elites, especially in the Democratic Party, have underutilized over recent decades. The first is to more effectively punish opponents' antidemocratic norm violations, even when doing so entails norm erosion (what legal scholars have called "constitutional hardball as anti-hardball"). For example, when a Democratic legislature appeared poised to gerrymander New York's map in its favor, Republican elites suddenly became more supportive of a gerrymandering ban against all parties. However, this support dried up when the New York Court of Appeals threw out the Democratically gerrymandering map for a more balanced one. In short, *asymmetric* norm erosion by one party might be worse than *symmetric* norm erosion by both parties, because the latter can generate incentives for both parties to agree to play fair.

A second underutilized strategy is to rebuild the labor movement (Collier and Grumbach 2022). Not only do labor unions support democracy through disseminating political information and mobilizing voters, they also have another important pro-democracy function. Today's labor unions reduce culture war resentment politics and foster racial solidarity among their members (Frymer and Grumbach 2021). This undercuts the ability of antidemocratic factions to stoke racial resentment in order to justify and drum up support for antidemocratic measures. Recognizing this, antidemocratic coalitions have sought to weaken the labor movement by passing anti-labor legislation, like right-to-work laws, at the state level. Right-to-work laws, which permit workers at unionized workplaces to opt out of paying dues for union representation, have reduced union density and diminished the organizational capacity of unions (Feigenbaum, Hertel-Fernandez, and Williamson 2018). Although it will be difficult, establishing a broad-based and interracial pro-democracy coalition that includes empowered labor unions will be key to counteracting the antidemocratic forces in American politics and preventing further democratic backsliding.

In many states, it's easier than ever to vote, and the districting process is fairer than ever. In other states, it's harder to vote, and depending on your district, your vote counts less than it would have 20 years ago. Federalism means that the latter group of states can erode democracy for the whole. As Rocco (2021, 6) writes, "[w]hile uneven subnational democracy is preferable to a situation in which territorial governments are evenly undemocratic, the existence of undemocratic outliers nevertheless helps to undermine democracy as a whole." In a federal system where the lower level controls election administration, you can't just look at the average. You have to look at the variance, too. That's why national voting rights policy matters. In a previous era of democratic divergence in the states, Congress played a pivotal role in defending democracy by passing the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act of the 1960s (Mickey 2015). Today, neutralizing new threats to democracy that are arising from the states will very likely also require updated federal legislation that guarantees baseline civil and voting rights across the entire country.

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PART III

SOURCES OF CHANGE

CHAPTER 8

Mass Political Behavior and Party Incentives

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ABSTRACT

Party reform is constrained to some degree by the behavior and attitudes of voters. Many political observers assume that voters behave consistently in their own economic self-interest. Most research on human behavior, however, undermines this assumption. This chapter lays out a description of the current political motivations driving voters, the biases they bring with them into the voting booth, and how the two parties are playing to different audiences using different tactics. It ends by offering some suggestions for change based in mass psychology and political identity.

Party leaders often respond to pressures from their most-ardent supporters, especially the most wealthy and reactionary (Blum 2020; Dalton 2013; Hacker and Pierson 2020; Parker and Barreto 2013).[1] But party supporters are not always looking out for the best interests of American democracy, the best interests of the American people, or even the material well-being of their own fellow partisans (Metzl 2018). Partisan voters are not motivated by simple economic self-interest or rational consideration of party platforms. Most partisans are driven by a desire for group status and victory over the enemy—even when that enemy is a fellow American (Achen and Bartels 2016; Mason 2018a). Any effort to reform the parties will need to understand that voters are not always thinking of the greater good—they are often thinking mainly of victory.

The current social divide between the parties has upended the traditional understanding of American political behavior and encouraged identity-based grievance politics to proliferate (Achen and Bartels 2016; Mason 2018a). It has also allowed "plutocratic priorities" to drive the majority of the Republican Party platform (Hacker and Pierson 2015; 2020). A more reasonable political future will rely on a realistic evaluation of partisan motivations, along with a forceful commitment to democracy from partisans across the spectrum of policy beliefs.

Importantly, partisan motives are not symmetrical across the two parties. The psychological motivations toward victory are universally applicable across all humans but are not currently being used to the same degree by Democratic and Republican leaders, as I describe below.

This chapter examines the current state of partisan sentiment among voters, explains the determinants and outcomes of voter behavior, and offers theoretically plausible paths toward deescalating an increasingly energized (and often extreme) electorate.

Identity-Based Polarization

The current priority of American partisans is partisan victory rather than government success (Hetherington 2015). When group identities become the central drivers of political decision-making, group status can influence political decisions to an outsized degree (Achen and Bartels 2016). In this case, partisans prefer group victory (in elections or legislation) over the greater good of the nation or even the quality of life of

1 Though there is also abundant evidence that political elites have substantial power to influence the opinions of their supporters (Lenz 2012; Barber and Pope 2019) and that they are most responsive to the interests of the wealthy (Bartels 2016; Gilens 2012).

their fellow partisans. The psychological motivations toward victory are well-documented in social psychology and tend to be involved whenever identities are made salient (Billig and Tajfel 1973; Tajfel et al. 1971; Tajfel 1981).

Identity-based, (or "affective") polarization has been increasing in the United States over the last few decades. While feelings toward people's own party have remained relatively steady, the warmth of feelings toward the out-party has dropped consistently (Abramowitz and Webster 2016). Part of the explanation can be found in the changing relationship between multiple social identities in American politics. As Hajnal explains in Chapter 3 of this report, the Democratic and Republican parties have grown more consistently divided along the lines of powerful social identities such as race, religion, ideological identity, and rural consciousness (Cramer 2016; Mason 2018a). This "social sorting" means that election outcomes are linked to the status of other identities, like race and religion, not just the status of the parties. The stakes of such elections feel more dire to partisans. The social divide also means that partisans see less of their opponents in their everyday life. This lack of social contact with partisan opponents allows the other side to seem more extreme and provides less common ground for good-faith compromise (Mason 2018b; Ryan 2017). In this scenario, partisanship can become a driver of political action, intolerance, ethnic resentment, and even violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2022; Mason 2015).

The racial-partisan divide in particular has allowed American partisans to structure their partisan conflicts along pre-established lines of highly-charged conflict between white and Black Americans (Hajnal and Horowitz 2014; Hetherington, Long, and Rudolph 2016; Outten et al. 2012; Parker and Barreto 2013; Parker and Towler 2019; Schickler 2016; Tesler and Sears 2010; Valentino and Sears 2005; Westwood and Peterson 2020). The process of social sorting allowed the Republican Party to represent the interests of "traditional" white, Christian America while the Democratic Party was increasingly representing those who were still struggling to overturn centuries of social inequality. This type of divide is not easily corrected—Democrats and Republicans have opposing visions of who should hold power in American society and how much progress has already been made (Horowitz, Brown, and Cox 2019; Schaffner, Macwilliams, and Nteta 2018).

Any effort to reform the parties will need to understand that voters are not always thinking of the greater good—they are often thinking mainly of victory.

Party Asymmetry

Although all people are similarly influenced by the need for group victory, this impulse is particularly important for Republican politicians to harness. The Republican Party position on many important polices (abortion, gun control, corporate taxes, healthcare, industry regulation, Medicaid, infrastructure investments, etc.) run contrary to the majority of public preferences (Hacker and Pierson 2020; Leonhardt 2022; Page, Seawright, and Lacombe 2018). Partly because of the success of conservative and corporate lobbyists (Hertel-Fernandez 2019; Skocpol and Hertel-Fernandez 2016), partly due to the Trump administration's focus on unpopular policy (Sides, Tausanovitch, and Vavreck 2022), partly due to Republican elected officials' misperceptions of the desires of their constituents (Broockman and Skovron 2018), and partly because of the over-representation of rural Republican voters (Rodden 2019), Republican politics often prioritize policies that do not reflect the majority opinions of Americans.

It is therefore in the interest of the GOP to take advantage of identity-centric rhetoric—which can motivate voters without offering them economic or practical benefits. As Hacker and Pierson (2020, 5) describe, "to deliver to the plutocrats yet still win elections, Republicans reached ever deeper into parts of the nation and segments of the electorate where conservative economic policies failed to stir voters' passions but divisive appeals to identity did." By leaning on threats to group status and grievance narratives, the Republican Party is uniquely positioned to benefit from partisan animosity and conflict. A straight governance debate does not benefit their candidates.

One caveat, however, is that a substantial portion of Americans are embarrassed to admit that they even hold partisan identities and have turned away from politics due to the nastiness and animosity on display in public political conflicts (Klar and Krupnikov 2016). These Americans, though they are generally committed to one party, tend to be less involved in politics and also hold policy preferences that differ from those of the more active partisans (Krupnikov and Ryan 2022). A less divisive political atmosphere might allow them back into the fold. The next two sections explore possible avenues toward a less contentious politics.

Realignment Around Democracy

In Chapter 3 of this report, Zoltan Hajnal lays out a clear story of the realignment of the social groups that make up the two parties. In particular, Hajnal identifies the realignment of racial identities and attitudes along partisan lines as a response to the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. Effectively, the civil rights legislation of 1964 and 1965 broke the Democratic Party—repelling its previously loyal bloc of White Southern Democrats. This led to decades of gradual partisan shifting—an era of weak and changing party loyalty. During this period, partisans were less committed to their parties, and somewhat more persuadable by party (and candidate) performance (Fiorina 1981).

In today's era of extremely powerful party loyalty, something like a new realignment focused on the importance of democracy may offer one avenue toward the marginalization of anti-democracy forces.

Partisanship is typically a very durable identity (Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015), so realignments tend to be rare. They can also be opportunistic. When one party does not offer sufficient benefits[2] to a group of its core constituents, the opposing party may (as the Republican Party did to white Southern Democrats after the 1960s) reach out to attract those wavering voters.

Today, the Republican Party is united at the elite level in support of former President Trump's "Make America Great Again" agenda. Trump's most fervent supporters are driven by animosity toward marginalized groups in the US (Mason, Wronski, and Kane 2021), conspiratorial thinking, and anti-democratic inclinations (Lange 2022; Parker and Blum 2021) (among other things). New research from the University of California, Davis Violence Prevention Research Program has identified "MAGA Republicans" as a distinct group of Republicans (defined as Republicans who voted for Trump in 2020 and agreed that the 2020 election had been stolen from Trump). In comparison with other Republicans who do not hold these views but nevertheless identify as Republicans, the MAGA Republicans are significantly more likely to agree that "having a strong leader is more important than having a democracy" (31% vs. 17%), and that "armed citizens should patrol polling places at election time" (19% vs. 5%). About a third of MAGA Republicans agreed that there will be a civil war in the US in the next few years, while only 7 percent

2 These benefits are not only material, nor is the perception of benefits entirely rational. A party can satisfy its base while neglecting their material well-being if they focus on and fight for that group's relative social status (Metzl 2018).

of strongly-identified Republicans and 10 percent of weakly-identified non-MAGA Republicans believed the same. MAGA Republicans were also significantly and substantially more likely to agree that whites were being discriminated against (72%) and replaced (51%), to agree with the main tenets of the QAnon conspiracy theories (27-38% depending on the myth), and to believe that violence is justified in pursuing political goals—specifically goals supporting Donald Trump—with the goal of preserving "an American way of life based on Western European traditions" (Wintemute, Robinson, and Tomsich 2022).

Partisans also believe that their opponents hold much more extreme policy attitudes than they do in reality.

These "MAGA Republicans" are empirically different from "traditional" Republicans and may present an opportunity for a realignment around pro- versus anti-democracy values. They represent only one third of Republicans and 15 percent of the American population (Wintemute, Robinson, and Tomsich 2022). However, they control much of the leadership of the Republican Party, and therefore have outsized power in a two-party system (Drutman 2020).

One opportunity for realignment would be for Democrats to reach out to pro-democracy Republicans in order to marginalize this MAGA faction of Americans. This would involve collaboration on democracy-related legislation and messaging. However, it would also entail difficult conversations about the other priorities of the government, and likely lead to voters rejecting these Republicans.

Another challenge is that demographic change is also occurring in the United States, and this process is pushing White Americans increasingly into the Republican Party (Hajnal and Rivera 2014). Popular right-wing media are using the false narrative of the "Great Replacement Theory" to escalate white status threat (Yourish et al. 2022). Any pro-democracy coalition-building will face the challenge of racial and ethnic status threat in demanding attention from voters.

Given that the US is politically divided along racial and religious lines, institutional reform will be difficult. Furthermore, the less-partisan eras of this country's history did not reflect societal peace or anything like racial justice—they were times when both parties embraced (or, at best, ignored) white supremacy. Going back to such an era would not be easy, or wise. Considering this, it could be instructive to turn to more individual-level psychological theories on reducing intergroup conflict in general.

Reducing Animosity Among Voters

While political leaders (especially on the right) appear to be committed to increasing animosity in the public, other forces could potentially slow or counteract these elite cues. It is important to note that these methods are generally useful for increasing tolerance across groups. Increasing tolerance of intolerance is not the intended use of these methods.

Motivated Reasoning

Partisan motivated reasoning can make it difficult to change partisan minds. Partisans seek out information that is beneficial to their party, and ignore or counter-argue information that harms their party (Leeper and Slothuus 2014; Taber and Lodge 2006). Unfortunately, these effects are most common among those who are the *most* informed about politics and numerically literate (Kahan et al. 2012; Lewandowsky and Oberauer 2016). Even evaluations of objective economic conditions can be biased by partisan reasoning (Enns and McAvoy 2012; Rogers 2016).

However, it is possible to counteract these motivations. By prompting partisans to think about civic duty or accuracy over partisanship, some partisans can overcome some of these biases (Bolsen, Druckman, and Cook 2014; Bullock 2009; Groenendyk 2013). Removing a discussion from the political sphere and encouraging open-mindedness can also reduce motivated reasoning (Groenendyk and Krupnikov 2021).

False Polarization

Americans tend to be wrong about the extremity of the other party. People overestimate the number of partisans who are members of stereotypically-partisan groups (Ahler and Sood 2018). When people are told the correct numbers, however, they see members of the other party as less extreme and feel less socially distant from them. Partisans also believe their opponents hold much more extreme policy attitudes than they do in reality. That belief increases the policy extremity of those who believe it (Ahler 2014; Levendusky and Malhotra 2015). Partisans also overestimate the violence of their opposing party. When these misperceptions are corrected, they approve less of political violence (Mernyk et al. 2022).

Extreme and incorrect portraits of partisan opponents tend to make partisan conflict worse. Changing voters' assumptions about their opposing party (while difficult) could therefore reduce conflict. This could be aimed at partisan media, social media, and even interpersonal communications. Elected leaders could reinforce messages of similarity rather than exaggerating difference.

Superordinate Identity

A classic approach to reducing intergroup conflict is to emphasize a superordinate group identity (Sherif and Sherif 1953). Increasing attention to a shared superordinate identity can increase communication across groups (Greenaway et al. 2014), and has been shown to reduce affective polarization in the US between Democrats and Republicans (Levendusky 2017).

However, a threat to a superordinate identity cannot always improve intergroup relations—at times it can worsen conflict. In particular, when there is little trust between groups, and contempt or fear between them, group members can respond to a common threat by scapegoating and blaming the outgroup rather than cooperating (Brewer 1999). For example, any national rallying effect from the COVID pandemic was blunted by partisanship in the US, where interparty tensions were already high and the pandemic response was politicized (Gadarian, Goodman, and Pepinsky 2022; Shino and Binder 2020).

Cross-Pressures

Social identities can reduce the biasing effects of partisanship if they are "cross-cutting" or act as "cross-pressures" (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1962; Campbell et al. 1960; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944; Lipset 1981). This happens when people from opposing parties are also members of the same social group. When partisans are exposed to cross-cutting social networks, they tend to grow more politically tolerant (Mutz and Mondak 2006; Mutz 2002), engage in less partisan-motivated reasoning (Klar 2014), engage in higher quality political thinking (Erisen and Erisen 2012), consume less partisan media (Scacco and Peacock 2013), and think of themselves in more non-partisan terms (Lupton, Singh, and Thornton 2015). They also, unfortunately, tend to participate less in politics (Brader, Tucker, and Therriault 2014; Nir 2005; 2011).

Contact Theory

Social contact across opposing groups can reduce prejudice between them (Allport 1954). In fact, contact can also reduce prejudice "vicariously," simply by exposure via friends-of-friends or even

media exposure (Pettigrew et al. 2011). But caution should be used, as contact can backfire in the case of intractable conflicts. Cross-cutting political discussions can also reduce partisan animosity (Amsalem, Merkley, and Loewen 2021). Unfortunately, contact between Democrats and Republicans in the US has become increasingly rare, as partisans have grown geographically segregated (Brown and Enos 2021; Cramer 2016; Jacobs and Munis 2018).

Elite Rhetoric

Partisans in the public respond to elite polarization with partisan animosity (Banda and Cluverius 2018) and stronger reliance on partisan cues to form opinions about policy (Lenz 2012; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013). Elite incivility can generate anger in the mass public (Gervais 2016) and a more combative form of partisanship (Gervais 2019). Political leaders even have the power to reduce approval of political violence among partisans (Kalmoe and Mason 2022). By observing leaders, partisans learn which norms and values are most important to the party. The public enforcement (or lack thereof) of those norms can shape the behavior of loyal partisans.

Social Norms

Social norms are the rules that group members follow and enforce. Generally, norm enforcement happens via social sanctions (Fehr and Fischbacher 2004). Conformity with group norms attracts peer approval and feelings of pride while deviance from group norms leads to disapproval and feelings of shame (Suhay 2014). If party leaders enforce norms of tolerance and cooperation, animosity can be reduced. However, the opposite is also true—norms of extremism and intolerance will inspire political conflict. Reform can happen when new social norms ("what should be") work together with party loyalty to gather support for new approaches (Smith, Thomas, and McGarty 2015). Leader rhetoric can shape whether citizens see politics as a realm of conflict or one of cooperation.

Conclusion

Although realignment seems unlikely and individual approaches are hard to scale, the hope is that a creative remedy can be gleaned from these findings. This scholarship can provide some insights into potential opportunities (and difficulties) in pursuing a better pattern of behavior from both leaders and regular citizens. From a structural level, a new partisan coalition between Democrats and pro-democracy Republicans could weaken blind partisan loyalty among at least some segment of the electorate. This approach would likely need to take advantage of an emerging rift within the Republican Party. On an individual level, research on intergroup conflict has identified multiple mechanisms by which group-level animosity can be reduced. If party leaders are not acting responsibly, it may be possible (though unlikely) to encourage voters to require better behavior of them via alternative leaders. Whatever the case, any plans for democratic reforms would do well to consider the deep-seated motivations of partisans in the electorate.

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CHAPTER 8—COVER PHOTO

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CHAPTER 9

Social Movements and U.S. Political Parties: Evolutionary and Revolutionary Change

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ABSTRACT

Social movements are asking how organized and mobilized masses address power and power holders. Parties are among these power holders, but more widespread concerns about fascism have led to questions about the viability and responsibilities of parties. Therefore, we aim to understand the relationship between these two entities. We begin by differentiating between social movements seeking evolutionary and revolutionary change. Evolutionary change includes movements working within and towards maintaining fundamental governing and organizing structures (e.g., Christian Conservatism and the Tea Party). Revolutionary change describes movements working to fundamentally change power structures and underlying power distribution (e.g., Black Lives Matter and White Nationalism). Others still cross these boundaries in complex ways (Civil, Women's, and LGBTQ+ Rights). And as for parties, we point back to the initial questions—who is holding power in parties and how might it be democratically distributed and resistant to fascism and authoritarianism? We highlight critical scholarship, that which has long addressed white supremacy, patriarchy, ableism, trans- and homophobia, as key to advancing these conversations and the causes of marginalized communities. Change is less about new ideas and more about new considerations of communities with longstanding investments in the work of liberation.

Social movements are often defined either by their functioning—as mobilized dissent or strategic coalitions and compromise—or through differentiation from other coordinated action in groups, factions, lobbyists, and parties. For this reason, we begin with a baseline definition of the actual term. Touraine (1985, 751) says, "social movements should be conceived as a special type of social conflict." What makes these social conflicts special are their seeking change in political, social, and cultural distributions of power. And as for functioning and differentiation, social movements are when these special social conflicts coincide with organized groups establishing political coalitions with the masses.

The challenge in defining social movements is that they span multiple political contradictions. Later in the piece, for example, we discuss both Trumpism and the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL)—aligning only in each qualifying as social movements. Even the scholarship is somewhat siloed, with social movements driving questions that political science answers in varied yet distinct ways. How many people are required for a mass coalition? Who does the counting? What criteria qualifies groups as organized? When are they being measured? And on relationships between political and social movements, these "special conflicts," where is power held and why are we compelled to redistribute?

It is through this final question that we find the best way to explain social movements and their relationships to U.S. political parties. Our attempt to best clarify scholarly debates within, across, and beyond disciplines, is from dividing social movements into

two categories—evolutionary and revolutionary. These categories represent different scholarly paradigms even when the reality of social movements supersedes their distinctions.

Again, we ask where is power held and why redistribute? We use "evolutionary" to describe social movements and scholarship that work within and generally towards maintaining the fundamental structures of U.S. government, politics, and parties. And then we use "revolutionary" to describe social movements and scholarship that work towards fundamentally changing the structures and power distribution. The subsequent section on evolutionary social movements discusses Christian Conservatism and the Tea Party—each answering questions of power with favorable redistribution within the current structure of U.S. government and politics. The revolutionary section then discusses the M4BL, Anti-War, and Trumpism/White Nationalist movements.

Additionally, the foundational call of our collective chapters happens to be the very same as social movements—to investigate responsibility and norms, refraining and undermining, respect and tolerance in U.S. government, politics, and specifically, parties. To this, we acknowledge that social movements are not neatly distributed on dichotomous variables, but like parties they contain a breadth of political ideals under one shared banner. Therefore, we also discuss social movements that span both evolutionary and revolutionary categorizations—Women's Rights, Gay (LGBTQIA+) Rights, and Civil Rights Movements (CRM).

Lastly, this wider document is commissioned in response to the political science discipline as much as the call to examine parties. We considered as much in creating the categorizations of evolutionary and revolutionary social movements. Within our discussions, we interweave challenging scholarly debates around the fundamental call of the academy and the implications for research aligning with newer disciplines of Black Studies, Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, and Disability Studies, among others. Thus, we are primarily describing the contours of social movements and their relationships with U.S. parties without putting forward an argument. In this choice, we make room for acknowledging how distributions of power are affecting politics and political science, as well.

Our dispassionate assessments contribute to a larger understanding of social movements and parties over the 20th and 21st century, particularly as they relate to complicated affinities for democracy, rejections of authoritarianism, and the longstanding limitations of political respect and tolerance. And to the discipline, we continue to acknowledge the call of this document. Given this specific chapter engages social movements, we return to the same question pushing our analysis: where is power being held and why are we compelled to redistribute? We answer this question and more in the remainder of the piece.

Social Movement Modeling: Foundational Theories

The relationship between social movements and political parties may not be immediately visible. In fact, the literature that describes the interaction of the two is filled with references to its own paucity. In short, scholars of social movements—who are sociologists, historians, and humanities scholars far more often than they are political scientists—write that there is an important relationship between what happens in social movements and how parties eventually respond to the members of the movement as political participants. But before getting to these relationships, we must begin by describing foundational theories in social movement scholarship.

From a research perspective, major theoretical strands of social movement work include classical, resource mobilization, and political process models (McAdam [1982] 1999; Tarrow 1989; Tilly 1978). These models are often arranged among contentious politics models, which are broader than social movements (i.e., lobbying, groups, parties, etc.) and theorize various sites of struggle. We briefly describe each of these models below and reference them throughout subsequent discussions.

Classical theories highlight the limitations of a given society, whether from finite resources, formal and informal oppressions, or a general failing of political will. In response to these boundaries, classical theories highlight social movements as one of any number of possibilities—a resulting psychological urgency and acting out less because of individual agency and more because of structural pressures on the psyche. The idea here is that these experiences are inevitable and thus allows scholars to anticipate future social dilemmas that include the likely emergence of social movements (see Weber 2004, Durkheim [1897] 2005, Marx 2004).

Contentious politics models differ from classical theories in recognizing agency as a driving factor behind social movements. In such models, disruptive dissent is a means of deliberately conveying a political agenda of some sort. These are protests and acts of civil disobedience which, through a lens of power, become politicized through complex means.[1] Other theories are less focused on inevitability or disruption, instead focusing on the capacities of coalition and compromise as explanations for the emergence or success of movements (Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Dahl [1961] 2005; Schlozman 2015). These include resource mobilization theories, which emphasize efforts of people with shared grievances committing to action to gather resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Political process or opportunity theories argue that movement gains require seizing upon vulnerabilities in political structures and groups (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 1996).

In sum, these foundational ideas have established a baseline for social movement scholarship. Where these models have received supplementary scholarly attention is around internal structuring and power relationships. The next section details these political considerations, particularly considering scholarship on social movements and their relationship to U.S. political parties.

Social Movements and Political Parties: Evolution and Revolution

Social movements are aligned with groups, factions, and even parties in this context. Each is seeking change in political, social, and/or cultural distributions of power. Said differently, each has a political agenda (See Chapter 4). But what makes social movements different is that these arrangements of people are the product of organizers' mobilization and forming coalitions with the masses (Han 2014). And by differentiating the purpose of these mobilizations between evolutionary or revolutionary political change, we now address a different set of scholarly research models beginning with those most common to political science: evolutionary change.[2]

Political Science: Evolutionary Social Movements and Parties

Social movements may develop because people lack access to formal political power or otherwise feel unable to change their world in a timely fashion.

1 See Piven (2006) on disruptive dissensus, Scott (1990) on infrapolitics, and Lukes (2021) on the three-dimensional view of power.

2 Evolution and revolution are descriptive terms for the types of scholarship and organizing around social movements as they relate to American political development. Of course, these are not mutually exclusive or definitive categories. However, these are important differences that explain both the state of the discipline and the intentions behind select movements discussed below.

When social movements are seeking evolutionary change, these changes are aiming to favorably shift politics and agendas while maintaining the fundamental structure of U.S. government, politics, and parties. Although much of the work in sociology assumes that individuals who participate in social movements work from outside the political establishment to create change, political scientists observe that social movements have the potential to shape political parties from the inside as well. This is why political scientists contend that parties should have an interest in understanding social movements, as they shift political agendas and outcomes (see Gause 2022; Gillion 2020; Tate 1994; Weldon 2012).

These attempts to operate as or to become insiders are what we are describing as evolutionary social movements (Blum 2020; Schlozman 2015). As actions influence agenda setting, their priorities show up in policy agendas and campaigns for elected office. Below we acknowledge the following evolutionary social movements: Christian Conservatism and the Tea Party. We also address the evolutionary side of LGBTQ+, Women's, and Civil Rights movements, while acknowledging that each also contains revolutionary components to be discussed later.

Christian Conservatism

There is a close relationship between the groups that comprise Christian conservatism and the Republican Party (Cohen 1999; Oldfield 1996; Wilcox 2018). Liebman (1983) is especially helpful on the beginnings of this movement, describing how four groups worked to politically engage evangelical Christians specifically. At least the some of the movement's shared goals have been successfully met (e.g., broken windows policing and denying resources during the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s/90s, appealing the Supreme Court Roe v. Wade decision, expanding tax exemptions, and making political donations more accessible) (Butler 2021; Cohen 1999; Goode and Ben-Yehuda 2010; Lewis 2017.)

More than perhaps any of the others, the Christian Conservative Movement is a bipartisan project exemplifying the combined efforts of social movement and the two-party system. Scholarship has contributed movement analyses, for example how groups within the movement differ from each other (e.g., Black and White Churches) and using survey data to describe opinions within multi-denominational Christian communities (Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2003; Oldfield 1996 , Wilcox and Robinson 2011).

The Tea Party

The Tea Party Movement emerged in 2009 in response to the economic stimulus plan of the time (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009) and the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States (Pullum 2014). Unlike Christian Conservatism, this movement was composed of mostly white males opposing tax increases and was not bipartisan—lacking support from the Democratic Party (Arceneaux and Nicholson 2012).

Scholars have addressed whether or how the movement influenced elections and political outcomes (Karpowitz et al. 2011; Bailey, Mummolo, and Noel 2012) and the role of race in the movement (Tope, Pickett, and Chiricos 2015). Some scholars point to future developments in the Republican Party, arguing that the Tea Party Movement was a precursor for the developments in the Republican Party that led to the embrace of Trumpism (Abramowitz 2012; Gervais & Morris 2018). Overall, the movement has established an anchor within the Republican Party, negotiating between both contention and coalition building as they transform the party and wider government priorities.

Women's Rights: Part 1

Women have been fighting for their rights to participate in politics for more than a century through various organizations. The role of the major U.S. political parties in these struggles has evolved over time, as Wolbrecht explains thoroughly in *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change* (2010). When inclusion-based, Women's Rights reflect evolutionary social movements spanning racial, social, and economic groups (Brown and Lemi 2021; Brown 2014 ; 2015). In the subsequent section on revolutionary social movements, we address the transformative side of Women's Rights Movements in alignment with Black and Queer movements, which includes the M4BL.

LGBTQ+ Movement: Part 1

Gay Rights Movements are seeking freedom to live as they choose while also seeking legal protection on a range of issues from how they create and sustain families to how they are treated at work and in their communities. Recently, there are also concerns about individual's ability to have the state recognize their gender in ways that feel true to the individual and their respective communities. In this regard, the movement is evolutionary—aiming for greater inclusion rather than changing political structures.

Scholarship in this area considers LGBTQ+ organizations' strategic legal efforts and further question how organizations fit within theories of social movements. *Private Lives, Public Conflicts: Battles over Gay Rights in American Communities* (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997), an edited volume, covers Gay Rights movement through both those lenses. Rimmerman's (2002) *From Identity to Politics: The Lesbian and Gay Movements in the United States*, includes a more straightforward discussion of the actions of LGBT+ organizations as part of a social movement, in terms that scholars use to discuss social movements.

While much of this work is focused on what is happening on the political left, some work considers the impact of the Christian Right and conservative organizations within the movement, for example the Log Cabin Republicans (Howard 2020). Work from Cathy Cohen (1999; 2004) also pushes us to consider that inclusion is evolutionary and can be transformed from radicalism towards conservatism through what she calls categorical marginalization and integrative marginalization. These are particularly evident in the final movement discussed—Civil Rights.

The Civil Rights Movement: Part 1

The Civil Rights Movement of the mid-20th century is subject to extensive social movement scholarship. Scholarly debates include the appropriate period of study (Hall 2007; Hall 2007), the overly narrow political scope of the movement (Felber 2019; Theoharis 2018), and narrow political framings of key figures as well (King 2015; Marable 2011; McGuire 2011). In this section we focus on the evolutionary aspects of the movement towards integration.

Among the most well-known of the writings from a social movement perspective is McAdam's ([1982] 1999) *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970*. Political scientists have written a great deal about how the Civil Rights Movement shaped political parties as well (Dawson 1994; Murakawa 2014; Rosenberg 2008). Scholars consider when and how the movement changed issue positions for both parties and voters (Carmines & Stimson, 1990; Grant, 2020; Schickler, 2016).

Political Science and Beyond: Revolutionary Social Movements and Parties

As stated above, social movements can develop when people lack access to formal political power. How they choose to address that power, including the purposes for which they intend to gain power, distinguishes their

approaches and the methods of scholarly analysis. The language of revolutionaries can be misleading for readers, but our intention is only to convey the scholarly framing as it appears. And in the case of revolutionary politics, the academy itself has been forced by social movements—specifically, the Black Power Movement—to consider intellectual alternatives.

In some ways, this movement succeeded by creating avenues for scholarship that exceed strict objectivity into the type of work we are commissioned to conduct in this volume. Specifically, this means using the scientific method towards critical analysis—questioning political responsibility and norms, accounting for political respect and tolerance, acknowledging democracy being undermined, and highlighting politicians using their power to facilitate. In other ways, movement successes are segregated—having failed to integrate these critical intellectual practices across disciplines, including but not limited to political science.

Evolutionary social movements specifically would need to push parties to integrate structural accountability practices.

The current work maintains a non-biased and dispassionate commitment to the scientific method. Our discussion of revolutionary social movement accounts for the extensive critical scholarship connecting political science to Black Studies, Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies, Disability Studies, Critical Legal and Race Studies, and others. For some, the mere presence of these fields and theories violates scholarly norms or simply have no bearing on their scholarly pursuits. To these views, we return to the foundational question of this report and offer it to our skeptical colleagues: where is power held and why redistribute? When answering, in the spirit of social movements and parties, we encourage you to consider those with whom you find yourselves building coalitions.

Trumpism and White Nationalism

Trumpism and white nationalism are directly aligned with the Tea Party movement (Kincaid 2017). Scholars find that Congressional Representatives' policy agendas have been influenced by the preferences of far-right groups (Weiner and Zellman 2022). But what differentiates this movement from the Tea Party is their escalation towards revolutionary change.

Unlike the Tea Party, Trumpism and white nationalist social movements are aiming to fundamentally change the structure of government itself. This includes the January 6th insurrection attempting to shift the peaceful transfer of power in the presidency (Bond and Neville-Shephard 2021). And unlike several of the latter examples, this movement has both intended to and successfully integrated into politics via the Republican Party (Lowndes 2017).

Anti-War Movements[3]

Some individuals in anti-war movements oppose war altogether, while others oppose individual wars that are occurring at the time. It is often the case that individuals in these movements are on the left of the political spectrum and identify with the Democratic Party or third parties when they identify with any party at all. Literature in this area describes the relationship of activists and others involved in the movement with the political parties. Heaney and Rojas have written about participants in the social movement as partisans (2007) and about the interaction between the Democratic Party and

3 This should not be confused for Anti-Colonial and Anti-Imperial organizing, which has yet to constitute a social movement in the U.S. due to lack of mass support.

anti-war organizations (2015). In the case of the Iraq war, they find that the Democratic Party failed to meet the expectations of activists who believed that the party was inherently anti-war. But scholars also acknowledge that the anti-war movement was very subdued post-9/11 (Mitchell, Harcourt, and Taussig 2013). Thus, they have intended to but not successfully integrated into the Democratic Party.

Women's Rights (Aligning with Black, Gay, and Labor Movements): Part 2

The revolutionary wing of Women and Gay Rights have been largely motivated by questions of race (Hardy-Fanta, Lien, Pinderhughes 2016; Jordan-Zachery and Alexander-Floyd 2018). Contributions from Black women specifically are centered in significant research highlighting their revolutionary efforts in infiltrating labor movements (Higginbotham 1994), racial justice and Civil Rights Movements (Ransby 2003), and gay rights movements (Shepard and Hayduk 2002). Black lesbian socialists in the Combahee River Collective are even responsible for coining the term "identity politics"—not for advancing individualism but rather as a fundamental shift in politics centering the marginalized to the benefit of themselves and the mainstream (CRC 1977).

As for parties, these groups seek selective inclusion while similarly pushing for a revolutionary shift in social movement organizing away from the non-profit industrial complex (INCITE! 2017). This movement has largely chosen not to engage partisan politics and instead focuses on expanding grassroots political coalitions (Guy-Sheftall 1995).

The Civil Rights Movement: Part 2

This movement is best known for evolutionary politics, extending housing, education, and voting rights gains and culminating in the election of President Barack Obama (Gillespie 2009; Harris 2012; Marable 2016). Less well known is the revolutionary legacy, most aptly expressed by the oft misquoted figurehead Martin Luther King who advocated against the three evils of militarism, capitalism, and racism (King 2015).

Throughout the Civil Rights movement, multiple wings coordinated towards social change in ways that include the use of violence and alternative cultural politics (Kelley 1996). As for parties, this work was largely silenced by the integrative (evolutionary) wing of the movement which seized momentum and pushed towards a pathway of descriptive representation and limiting results for Black political power (Bell 1980; 2005; Haider-Markel 2007; Widner 2023; also see Trouillot 1995).

The Movement for Black Lives

The Movement for Black Lives is permanently seared into the American consciousness because of the protests that followed the murder of George Floyd in the summer of 2020. However, it is possible to connect the uprisings of 2020 back through American history (Francis and Wright-Rigueur 2021).

Writings about this movement have several aims. Some seek to document the movement's history, its role in shaping our democracy, and the ways that the democratic system and some of its elites have worked to push back (Brown, Block, Stout 2020; Bunyasi and Smith 2019; Lebron 2017; Thompson 2017; Woodley 2021). Others are explaining the etymology of this movement as connected to and through Women's, Gay, and Black Power Movements (Board 2022; Ransby 2018; Taylor 2016) Others still are explaining role of social media in organizing the movement, central because some of the first organizing occurred under the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter (Scott 2020; Tillery 2019).

The early years of the movement saw a significant foregoing of partisan politics, aligning with the

abolitionist message echoed throughout the history of racial justice movements and Black freedom struggles (See Du Bois 1956 essay "Why I Won't Vote"). However, after the 2016 election of Donald Trump to the White House, these dynamics have shifted towards public acknowledgment and even endorsement of Democratic Party candidates. Forthcoming scholarship from Marcus Board, Margaret Brower, Jordie Davies, and others explore these relationships.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored various social movements, political parties, and their complicated histories. Using a basic differentiation between evolutionary (i.e., working with the system) and revolutionary (i.e., working to change the system) categories, we have highlighted the various successes and failures of social movements in U.S. politics. What is left unexplained in this predominately descriptive chapter are the relationships between social movements, parties, and democracy.

Political science scholarship—from Deva Woodly (2021), Bonnie Honig (2009), Marcus Board (2022), LaGina Gause (2022), Iris Young (2014), Michael Dawson (2001), Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), Bartels (2016)—and many more beyond the discipline (Collins 2002; Du Bois [1935] 2014 [1935]; Fanon [1952] 2008; [1961] 2021; Guinier and Torres 2003; Hamilton and Ture 1992; hooks [1984] 2000; 2022; Piketty 2017; 20201; Robinson [1983] 2000; Rodney [1972] 2018), all pointing to the political failure to resolve systemic oppressions as the core flaw of liberal democracies. What, then, can parties do to change things? How might social movements impact this change? And where can political science be helpful in these debates?

Considering Duverger's Law as serious (1959), we will have two parties. And per social movement foundational theories, parties will face coalition and contention; anchoring and undermining attempts; resource requests and opportunity seizing. Evolutionary social movements specifically would need to push parties to integrate structural accountability practices. This means moving away from disempowering the masses and instead building a capacity to represent, protect, and deliver resources to constituents who articulate grievances or who have longstanding experiences with racial, gender, class, or other forms of oppression (see Board 2022).

Further scholarship is needed to extend the range of the discipline. In the context of this chapter, the limiting role of the discipline in addressing these matters speaks to a rejection of the Black Power Movement mandate and embrace of existing disciplinary power structures. Revolutionary social movements, however, speak to questions of both parties and the discipline by asking a different question altogether. That is, can and should these systems be saved; or are their limitations a reflection of continued commitments to inequitable power distributions and the inescapability of systemically oppressive flaws? We may soon find out these answers.

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CHAPTER 10

Factions, Moderation, and Democratic Responsibility

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ABSTRACT

In addressing how factions and organizational issues within and across the parties influence whether parties and leaders behave responsibly, this chapter assesses party and actor incentives. It explains the incentives parties have to engage in democratic backsliding, what drives the size and strength of anti-democratic factions within parties, and effective strategies for countering anti-democratic party actors and practices. Moderating influences on party behavior are shaped by the incentives of the institutional landscape.

Introduction

This chapter addresses the question of how factions and organizational issues within and across the parties influence how and whether parties and leaders behave responsibly.

The first point is that "behaving responsibly" is defined here as acting in accordance with maintaining a pluralist democracy, enacting and practicing the rules of the democratic game in law and in spirit. Normative and formal institutional adherence to sustaining democratic practice are both necessary components to behaving responsibly. That is, political parties and their leaders have to play by the shared rules of the game that keep democracy "the only game in town." In doing so, they have to find ways for the party to moderate extremist personalities or factions that violate that democratic spirit and practice.

The second point is that incentives and constraints for parties and party leaders behaving responsibly is the flip side of the coin of parties engaged in democratic backsliding. The chapter addresses the incentives parties have to engage in democratic backsliding, what drives the size and strength of anti-democratic factions within parties, and what are effective strategies for countering anti-democratic party actors and practices.

In connection to the insights across this report, a key conclusion is that in order for moderating influences of inclusion to function effectively *within* parties, and to incentivize democratic behavior, the surrounding landscape of rules and institutions (primaries, district apportionment, media regulation, campaign finance) must provide a permissive landscape and shape *incentives* for the representative and moderating functions of centripetal party competition.

Behaving Responsibly as Democratic Practice

Political parties and political leaders within (or beyond) parties have been experimenting across the world over the last decade—using democratic institutions, such as courts, legislatures, electoral commissions, and other formal levers to seek partisan (or personal) advantage while overseeing democratic backsliding (Bermeo 2016; Diamond 2020 ; Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019; Lührmann and Lindberg 2019). In the United States, for example, national parties—and recently the Republican Party disproportionately—implement gerrymandering, voter suppression, and use state level governmental authorities to erode the foundations of democracy (Grumbach 2022). Free and fair

elections, the recognition of a legitimate opposition, the rule of law, institutional checks and balances, and the integrity of rights have declined in the U.S. in the decades since the enacting of the Voting Rights Act, as measured by comparative democracy indices (Lieberman, Mettler, and Roberts 2022; Mettler and Lieberman 2020; Mickey 2015).[1] Across the world, and in the U.S. in particular, this era of autocratization is marked by gradual democratic restrictions and rollbacks under a legal façade.

Political parties—and factions within them—may act as champions and guardians of democratic practice (Gamboa 2022), or they may be instigating irresponsible, anti-democratic practices. How can parties and party actors be incentivized and constrained to behave responsibly, that is, democratically? And when and why are they likely to engage in democratic backsliding?

Institutional forbearance is therefore a key component of behaving responsibly, encompassing both normative and formal institutional adherence to the democratic rules of the game.

The first step in answering this question is to define behaving responsibly as preserving democratic structures and observing democratic norms. This builds upon, but goes beyond Ranney's (1951) definition of responsibility as "responsiveness." Responsiveness to the best interests and preferences of the citizens at large (or to the constituencies that elected the leadership) is one component of a broader commitment and superseding responsibility to upholding the norms and rules of the regime itself. Democracy requires representatives to engage in collective and cooperative decision-making (Schmitter and Karl 1991). Governing democratically requires sustaining democracy while simultaneously representing one's constituents—rather than seeking partisan or interest group gains at the expense of the democratic regime itself.

Behaving responsibly as democratic practice requires constraints on the government's use of political power, through vertical accountability (mechanisms for citizens to hold their elected representatives to task, such as elections) and horizontal accountability (checks and balances across the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as other state institutions) (O'Donnell 1994). Behaving irresponsibly would be to try to evade, dismantle, or weaponize such institutional checks for partisan advantage, such as playing constitutional hardball to use the Senate's power to block presidential court nominees and cabinet appointments (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019). In the United States, federalism may also be considered a mechanism of horizontal accountability through which the state and federal governments constrain each other's power. In the current era, we can also add diagonal accountability (the role of the media and civil society to check government and increase transparency of its actions) (Lührmann, Marquardt, and Mechkova 2020). Parties that engage in democratic backsliding often seek to weaken these constraints, by co-opting and controlling the institutions through which accountability is meant to function. This may mean, for example, passing legislation that criminalizes media or civil society whistleblowing; orchestrating judicial appointments to partisan ends to lessen horizontal accountability;

1 See the indices compiled by the Varieties of Democracy Project (https://v-dem.net/), Freedom House (https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores), the Democratic Erosion Consortium (https://www.democratic-erosion.com/event-dataset/, and Bright Line Watch (http://brightlinewatch.org).

and/or limiting the equal electoral power of each voter to hold their representatives accountable vertically through dark money campaign financing (Page and Gilens 2020). These are examples of the "winners dilemma" (Roberts forthcoming) or "increasing returns" to power (Przeworksi 1991), where those parties or factions that control a particular lever try to turn the transitory institutional leverage of incumbency into a source of permanent competitive advantage (Singer 2018).

Institutional forbearance is therefore a key component of behaving responsibly, encompassing both normative and formal institutional adherence to the democratic rules of the game (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019). Forbearance means "patient self-control; restraint and tolerance," or "the action of restraining from exercising a legal right." "Institutional forbearance can be thought of as avoiding actions that, while respecting the letter of the law, obviously violate its spirit. Where norms of forbearance are strong, politicians do not use their institutional prerogatives to the hilt, even if it is technically legal to do so, for such action could imperil the existing system" (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019, chapter 5).

One key challenge to this formulation is that parties (and factions or ideological streams within parties) will disagree on what protecting democracy is, or the extent of its necessity. This report takes pluralistic democracy as the normative goal. But across a diverse political landscape, people with different political orientations also hold conflicting views of what the opposite to democracy would be in terms of both its conception and its outcomes (Slater 2013). That is, there may be factions that deny the democratic legitimacy of political opponents and manipulate democratic institutions to exclude them or weaken them to the extent of becoming unequal players.

For democratic institutionalists (in the U.S. context, these are generally mainstream liberals and conservatives), the opposition to democracy is authoritarianism. They are concerned with the breakdown of democratic rules and practices, and the crux of concern is around fair elections and the civil rights and political freedoms that undergird the system.

But for the much of the right, democracy's opposite may be communism or socialism (Blondel 1997). Therefore, the core concern may be around protecting economic rights and individual freedoms. Or, much of the new right defines democracy's opposite as including minority social groups that are not deemed to be full members of "the people," and thus should be excluded or relegated to secondary status in the democratic order. In this concern, protecting democracy is about limiting who participates. And for those on the left, the concern may be elite control and the replacement of the equal weight of citizens' voices with the concentrated power of oligarchy.

These different conceptions of democratic fundamentals and opposites puts factions and parties at odds in addressing: *who* participates, *what* liberties should be protected to nourish and preserve democracy, and *which* competitive guardrails (formal and informal institutions) must be maintained versus relaxed to guarantee 'democratic' outcomes.

To be sure, political parties largely serve as a mechanism for channeling competition, participation, and aggregating of interests as democratic practice. This chapter takes up the rise of factions within parties that challenge democratic practice: when and why do such factions arise and how can they be contained to act responsibly, in order to protect pluralist, institutional democracy?

Incentives and Constraints for Parties Behaving Responsibly: The Size and Strength of Anti-Democratic Factions Within and Across Parties

There may be many reasons why anti-democratic factions rise and fall within parties, and across the party system landscape. In the contemporary United States (and global) context, I highlight two key reasons. First, changes in the social, economic, media, and fundraising environment have *decoupled* parties from their voter bases in ways that weaken them as vertically accountable (to the electorate) institutions. Second, the extent to which anti-democratic actors align toward the "responsible democratic behavior" center of each party is shaped by overall regime uncertainty, party rules (such as primaries—see Chapter 6), electoral institutions, and popular support for candidates outside of the "democratic institutionalist center." The two factors are ultimately related: inclusive moderation is limited in the current electoral institutional, and socio-economic/media/party funding context.

Changing Socio-Economic and Technological Landscapes

Parties have long been seen as a key institution to channel the rising demands of changing, mobilizing societies (Huntington 1968). But today's decentralized, deregulated global media and information environment decenters messaging and allows for more direct communication between political leaders and specific, targeted audiences (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). The consequence of television and internet decentralization, and internet candidate funding campaigns, means more candidate-centered elections, weakening parties, strengthening factions or individual candidates, and reducing the party's intermediary role to provide coherent and consistent messages (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). We see a general decline in the ability of parties to control processes of political communication and socialization, with voters being exposed to a wide range of alternative media sources that select for polarizing messaging, spread fake news and conspiracy theories, and sort voters into tribalized silos with extremely different interpretations of the political reality, including what is fact or fiction. Media and communication studies have documented the global trend connecting extremist ideological and organizational growth and the internet (Ouellette and Banet-Weiser 2018; Caiani and Parenti 2016). Media deregulation and decentralization provide new pathways to personalist candidates or party factions that are not constrained by the party's assumed institutional preference for democratic longevity and stability.

In addition, a broad set of neoliberal reforms have generated extreme inequalities, decimating workers' organization and de-institutionalizing parties around the globe (Roberts 2014). There is a lack of programmatic differentiation on the key axis of economic policy, as elite center-left and center-right political party leaders converge on economic systems that continue to allow and even increase inequality.[2] This means that many societal interests are excluded from effective representation in this key domain of policymaking—which enhances the appeal of populist outsiders (Berman and Snegovaya 2019; Lupu 2016; Roberts 2014). As a result, parties increasingly face difficulty in anchoring themselves

2 As Democrats moved to the center on economic issues since the early 1990's, reflecting a pro-market policy orientation, where economic ideological polarization has occurred, it has largely been asymmetrical, with Republicans moving much more dramatically to the right in a unilateral radicalization (Grossman and Hopkins 2016). The structural asymmetry of the parties in their social bases drives their different practices toward institutional hardball: today's Republican Party is more socially homogeneous, predominantly white and Christian, and it has become a more ideologically grounded on specific social policies over time (Jardina 2019). This facilitates Republican party mobilization around targeted policy arenas, with concentrated costs and benefits, and "more likely than Democrats to eschew compromise and negotiation, and treating politics as mortal combat" (Lieberman, Mettler, and Roberts 2022, 30). In contrast, the Democratic Party's greater heterogeneity on multiple dimensions (race, ethnicity, religion, and religiosity) makes for a party with internally crosscutting interests, pushing them to prioritize democratic pluralism, participation and inclusive policies (Mason and Kalmoe 2022; Lieberman, Mettler, and Roberts 2022). Yet, while the Republicans are more homogeneous on targeted social dimensions, they are largely disparate on class and income distribution. This leads to a party anomalous in the world: the plutocratic populists (Hacker and Pierson 2020).

and aligning the electorate around programmatically differentiated policy preferences, thus weakening the very foundations of democratic representation (Roberts 2014).[3] The cumulative effect is a vicious cycle: outsiders may challenge established parties from within as a strong factional wing, or emerge as new insurgents from outside the established parties.

The changes in the economic and media environment mean that working-class parties no longer directly integrate workers into the political system and provide fundamental sources of identity (Chalmers 1964). Similarly, identity affinity parties can no longer rely heavily on voter integration through deep participation in party organizations at the local level (Kalyvas 2000). In sum, candidates have less need to rely on well-developed political party organizations because they can express themselves directly to voters through a variety of funding and media strategies (Gunther and Diamond 2003, 187; Sartori 1989), as a consequence of Supreme Court decisions allowing for independent spending, dark money and corporate "personhood," as well as candidates' ability to raise money through small donations on the internet (Gerken 2013). The changing economic and media environment provides party faction with direct access to voters, and lessens parties' ability to serve as the adaptable, institutionalized organizations that channel diverse demands into representative government.

That is, anti-democratic practices, championed by a faction, may be accepted as a way to advance a party's interest and maintain partisan cohesion...

As an essential element of the democratic equation (Huntington 1968, Schattschneider [1942] 2004), political parties' deinstitutionalization and weakness in the United States threatens democratic resilience.[4] While partisan attachments are strong in the U.S., "institutional parties [currently] play a weak and unclear role in American political life. Party organizations face competition for volunteers and donors from issue-based and candidate-centered groups, and members of the public generally do not trust the two major parties" (Azari 2019). As Pierson and Shickler note, America's "meso-institutions"—including political parties, interest groups, and news media—"have ceased to operate as countervailing mechanisms that constrain polarization, and have either weakened or turned into engines of polarization. As a result, partisan public officials increasingly run roughshod over checks and balances, seek to delegitimize and incapacitate the political opposition, and aim to rig the system to cement their dominance" (2022, 25).[5]

Further, healthy democratic programmatic differentiation may become dysfunctional and polarizing when party internal cohesion is pulled to the extreme by organizational self-interest. Generally factions are constrained to the center positions by partisan teamsmanship, which generates centripetal party cohesion around a modal position (Lee 2009). But with extreme factions pulling a party to enact institutional hardball in their organizational favor,

3 A broader argument can also connect rising inequality to democratic backsliding through the weakening of key institutions of horizontal accountability, such as the Courts (Huq 2023).

4 A key contemporary component of deinstitutionalization of political parties in the U.S. context is the increasing "movementization" of the parties at the grass roots level, enabled by prior campaign finance changes and primary reforms, handing decision making power to the voters and eliminating party vetting of candidates. Such changes, as embodied by the Tea Party's social base for Trump's populist agenda, or the confluence of the Occupy Movement and support for Bernie Sanders, drive anti-establishment factions within parties. The movementization is made possible by these underlying socio-economic, media, and online funding changes in the broader political landscape.

5 These meso-institutional processes that fuel contemporary polarization and anti-democratic institutional hardball, are more intense on the right and provide continuing incentives for Republicans, more than Democrats, to pursue polarizing political strategies (Pierson and Schickler 2022).

such centripetal forces may give way to the self-interest of ensuring party cohesion and strategic, electoral partisan gain. That is, anti-democratic practices, championed by a faction, may be accepted as a way to advance a party's interest and maintain partisan cohesion, and to block effective horizontal accountability (by using partisan control over judicial, legislative, executive, or state administrative domains to advance the party's electoral position and concentrate power). As polarization intensifies, party moderates stay in the fold and go along with the extremists when the latter control important grass-roots social bases, because the depth of polarized partisanship between the two parties makes it strategically impossible to break the mold and align with moderates on the other side of the partisan divide.

What are the antidotes to this context? How can *more responsible, institutionalized* parties and party systems be built anew and rebuilt from existing (but weak and fragmented) organizations? The comparative literature suggests *strong roots in society* are necessary, and that *political actors accord legitimacy to parties* (Mainwaring 1999, 22-39). Though political actors accord parties legitimacy, parties cannot be subordinated to the interests of ambitious leaders; parties must acquire and maintain an independent status and value of their own (Huntington 1968, 12-24; Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). Stable patterns of inter-party competition (Prezworski 1975) and moderate inter- and intra- party volatility (Powell and Tuckerl 2014) help maintain deeply institutionalized party systems, and thus allow for deeper societal connections and legitimacy. Moreover, pro-democracy actors must organize above and beyond party lines to coordinate around democratic institutions and peaceful, issue-based popular mobilization against democratic erosion (Gamboa 2022; Somer, McCoy and Luke 2021). This focuses on institutional reform to lessen the winner-take-all stakes of elections in a highly polarized environment.

The Inclusion-Moderation Hypothesis

Second, the size and strength of anti-democratic factions within and across parties may be shaped by the degree and form of inclusive participation the competitive system allows. The inclusion-moderation hypothesis suggests that inclusion in electoral competition incentives more extremist and anti-democratic actors to moderate toward the electorally competitive center (Brocker and Kunkler 2013; Schwedler 2013). When extremist actors who are ideologically opposed to democracy (whether populist, anti-institutionalist, religious extremist, or otherwise) participate in the electoral realm and/or as governing partners, this inclusion should *moderate* extremist positions within the party and make them more accepting of the rules of the game (Brocker and Künkler 2013; Kalyvas 2000).

But in many instances of democratic erosion across the world today, and in particular in the U.S., this hypothesis is failing. The classic Downsian logic of moderation works when the bulk of the electorate is concentrated around the median voter in the center. The logic breaks down when the electorate is divided into thirds around left, center, and right, and the tails of the electoral distribution have direct media and funding access to support extremist individuals and factions within the party.

Further, when the erosion of democracy itself is in question in electoral competition, it generates a lack of consensus among potential opposition elites, civil society, and voters about optimal strategic behavior, intentions, and balance of power with the opposition (Clearly and Ozturk 2022; Lupu and Riedl 2013; Schedler 2001). Factions within parties may internally contest whether to prioritize institutional democratic stability and maintain the shared rules of the game, *or* to press domains of partisan advantage to shift the playing field in their electoral favor. That is, should party control over the judiciary, state electoral officials, or other electoral

agencies be used in service of partisan gain, to their electoral and ideological benefit? More extreme factions of the party generally push for this route over moderation. Or should institutional forbearance be primary, to prioritize the long-term stability of democratic party competition? Less extreme factions of the party may prioritize this route because they anticipate electoral success over the long term.

Regime uncertainty entails recognition that some democratic erosion has occurred, but uncertainty over the extent of it and how much competition has shifted away from a level playing field. Contrary to the inclusion-moderation hypothesis, regime uncertainty suggests different strategies for party behavior (Lupu and Riedl 2013) and different incentives for moderation (Schedler 2001). If the context is perceived as a fairly democratic electoral competition, parties may be able to induce moderation of the extremes within them, prioritizing the political contest to gain the most popular support in general elections. But if parties face fundamental challenges to electoral integrity and rule of law, the incentives for moderation are severely diminished (Somer, McCoy, and Tuncel 2022).

Therefore, in the United States context, the current perception of democratic erosion—and questions about the extent of it (i.e., regime uncertainty)—*limit the amount of moderation through electoral pressure*. Inclusion is high, and extremist factions and candidates can enter the mainstream parties. And, arguably, the primary system and gerrymandering make it easier for mobilized grass-roots currents on the ideological extremes to control the party's position. And moderation pressures are low due to regime uncertainty. Parties can use autocratic strategies of zero-sum institutional hardball for manipulating outcomes instead of moderating to gain electoral advantage (Bateman 2022). These strategies, like voter repression (from restricted voter registration procedures, limiting voting access for registered voters, voter intimidation) and gerrymandering, move away from the democratic principle of citizens' "preferences weighed equally in the conduct of the government" (Dahl 1971).

They must often address the societal grievances and aspirations that fed the popularity of elected autocratizers in the first place.

Second, moderation is not happening because political parties initiating democratic erosion may be electorally popular.[6] They can be electorally popular because polarization and partisan interest trump democratic safeguarding (Somer, McCoy and Luke 2021; Svolik 2020). Voters confront a choice between two valid but potentially competing concerns: democratic principles and partisan interests. Anti-democrats can be electorally successful when they succeed in transforming a country's socio-economic tensions into axes of acute political conflict and then present supporters with a narrative for leadership to address those issues (Svolik 2020). And in contexts of regime uncertainty, anti-liberal democrats argue that they *are* preserving democracy, with polarization over the nature of majoritarian versus liberal democracy itself and who poses the real threat to it (Slater 2022; Somer, McCoy, and Tuncel 2022).

6 In theory democracy provides built-in institutional safeguards against polarization and extremism through vertical accountability: parties and candidates who are too extreme are meant to lose elections when the bulk of the electorate is located in the "democratically responsible" center. But if the extremes become more numerous than the center, such vertical accountability breaks down, and there is no moderating power to electoral competition.

How to return to the promises of moderation?

Technical reforms to electoral democratic institutions to counter democratic backsliding and increase confidence in shared rules of the game, to guarantee greater voter confidence in the impact of the vote, and more equal weighting of votes in practice of governance, can increase electoral incentives to moderate and thus reduce zero-sum, polarizing, and autocratizing competition. Institutional, procedural, and behavioral concentration on voter rights, an equal playing field, and inclusive participation can (re)incentivize party moderation, decrease the size and strength of extremist factions, and limit anti-democratic strategies to concentrate power (Bernaerts, Blanckaert, and Caluwaerts 2023; Drutman 2020; McCoy and Press 2022) .

And from within parties, pro-democracy elites and activists cannot simply organize around protecting democracy as a set of rules, procedures, and values of participation and competition for their own sake. Pro-democracy elites struggle to articulate a coordinated, coherent message, but they must do more than to offer a restorative path to status quo ex ante of democratic practice. They must often *address the societal grievances and aspirations* that fed the popularity of elected autocratizers in the first place (Allen 2023; McCoy and Somer 2021; Somer, McCoy and Tuncel, 2022).

Pro-democracy opposition coalitions face coordination and communication challenges, and understanding these challenges and addressing them is a key step in creating the incentives and strategies for stemming democratic erosion. Research has argued that "moderate" responses to democratic erosion at critical initial stages of autocratization offer the best chances of stopping such erosion while radical responses tend to make things worse (Cleary and Ozturk 2022, 218; Gamboa 2017; Gamboa 2022). The ultimate goal is to mobilize broad resistance to democratic erosion, build support around safeguarding and deepening democratic accountability and institutions, and such struggle can fortify democracy rather than limit it (Mettler and Lieberman 2020; Schedler 2019).

Pro-democracy parties have two routes to stymie democratic subversion. One is extra-institutional: mobilizing repertoires like coups, protests, boycotts or strikes (Gamboa 2022). These strategies message a rejection of the established institutional mechanisms for reform and create a zero-sum game (McAdam 1999: 57-58). These strategies also minimize the costs of the incumbent to repress and limit opposition. They may limit democratic erosion but increase the potential of breaking democracy in other ways, and further polarize society, and potentially delegitimize the opposition itself (Gamboa 2022).

The other route is more gradual but institutionalized, to increase the costs of repressing opposition, by using and bolstering existing institutions such as electoral commissions, elections, legislation, courts, and the bureaucracy to safeguard against democratic erosion. By relying on the rules of the game and "proper" channels of conflict resolution, democracy is reinforced and elites are less threatened (Gamboa 2022). Parties alone cannot be expected to be defenders of democracy without electoral, strategic incentives and constraints. Such strategies can go so far as to try to remove the incumbent from current office, or remove threatening politicians from the ability to compete in future elections. Although these are potentially more disruptive and threatening reforms, they can remain in the realm of institutionalized channels and protect the legitimacy of the system of rules as channeled contestation. But the U.S. case shows how difficult it can be to wield democratic levers to check would-be autocrats when the latter are protected by a major party, often through 'teamsmanship' and institutional hardball to weaponize oversight and accountability mechanisms in partisan interest.

In the balance between extra-institutional and gradual institutional levers, many social mobilization groups and pro-democracy opposition actors themselves advocate radical responses, and they do so in ways that respond to the fundamental electoral popularity of a more socio-economic transformative agenda. To address the electoral appeal of the autocratizing incumbent, pro-democracy activists must recognize what threats are perceived as the opposite of democracy, and work to address those in their narratives and policies to build a more robust pro-democracy coalition (Somer, McCoy and Tuncel 2022).

In order to reverse the pernicious polarization and strength of extremist factions that drive the willingness to vote for democracy-eroding incumbents, opposition actors have different tools at different stages. In the early stages, pro-democracy opposition coalitions can still use institutional levers (Somer, McCoy and Luke 2021). These include the full range of "horizontal accountability mechanisms—judiciaries, legislatures, bureaucracies, as well as vertical and societal mobilization capacity from organized political and civil societies" (Somer, McCoy and Luke 2021). But in the later stages, these tools become more limited, because the institutions themselves become captured by autocratizing incumbents. Particularly in the U.S., a key institutional mechanism of horizontal accountability and deconcentration of power—federalism—has simultaneously been a means of sustaining unequal authoritarian enclaves (Mickey 2015). Recent comparative research on polarization and democratic erosion suggests that in later stages of more advanced and prolonged democratic erosion or enclaves, pro-democracy actors should "consider long-term ideological and programmatic goals, repolarizing and depolarizing strategies, and the instruments with which to implement them," with particular attention to a transformative repolarization strategy that rebundles and redefines cleavages and politics along a new axis of polarization based on a pro-democratic program (Somer, McCoy and Luke 2021). The construction of a transpartisan "regime" cleavage would provide a pact to safeguard democracy across pro-democratic actors on both sides of the partisan divide (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). A new democratic axis based on a pro-democratic program would offer social, economic, *and* political inclusion, to depolarize at the citizen level and offer more cross-cutting identity groups a channel to participate.

Conclusion: Inter-Party Dynamics and Elite Compacts

Political elites may have personal, strategic interests to defect from democracy and/or may be ideologically opposed to institutionalized democracy (and suggest rule by the people as a populist anti-institutional alternative to institutionalized horizontal and vertical accountability) (Slater 2013).[7] Yet, across the world, abiding by the democratic rules of the game can often be in leaders' best interest when elite pacts allow leaders from across the ideological and identity spectrum to have access to power, maximize personal security, and retain the right to compete in future rounds of competition (Riedl 2022; Friedman and Wong 2008). Political elites have incentives to maintain party organization and the specific rules of democratic electoral competition that brought them to power in the first instance, and to channel a continued elite status quo through participatory, inclusive institutional selection mechanisms that can sustain their (presumed) preference for high levels of political and economic inequality while maximizing order and stability within a democratic bargain.

7 Democratic careening or stepwise democratic subversion can both be described as political instability sparked by intense conflict between partisan actors deploying competing visions of democratic accountability. Careening often occurs when actors who argue that democracy requires substantial inclusivity of the entire populace (vertical accountability) clash with rivals who defend democracy for its constraints against excessive concentrations of unaccountable power, particularly in the political executive (horizontal accountability) (Slater 2013).

Yet internal party divisions and factions—whether over identity or ideology—can disrupt this elite pact undergirding democratic regime stability (Tudor and Roy forthcoming). Political entrepreneurs seek to build their own personalist following, defect from within the party, and build an anti-system democracy "for the people" rather than through institutionalized mechanisms of horizontal accountability (checks and balances) or vertical accountability (free and fair elections that represent the will of the electorate). They do this either through transforming their existing party (as Orban and Erdogan have done in Hungary and Turkey), by capturing a party as an insurgent from outside (Donald Trump in the U.S.), or by creating a new movement party, particularly when mainstream parties have been discredited (Chavez, Correa, and Bolsonaro in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Brazil).

Democratic subversion can occur when party leaders and their supporting factions have both the interest and capacity to pursue an anti-democratic program (Svolik 2020). In many instances, powerful executives may not have a specifically anti-democratic agenda, but may well be willing to bring democracy down or let it fail, in simple pursuit of self-interest (Bermeo 2003; Linz 1978; Schedler 2019). Party organizations and accountability may act as constraints to limit such capacity. The constraints parties employ can depend in part upon their time horizons to maximize the long-term interests of the party over the short term interests of the party leader/ executive (Alesina and Spear 1987).

Parties can be stronger, more able to moderate their extreme wings, and more connected to their citizen representation function when institutional constraints reaffirm a level playing field (and thus reduce regime uncertainty), electoral practices tie ambitious personalist leaders to party priorities and time horizons (see Chapter 6 on primaries), and an inclusive, participatory, and pluralist approach to citizen participation channels diverse interests into party organizations. Building on institutional and strategic incentives to keep anti-democratic extremists out of power often relies on ideologically proximate actors (moderates within the same party) to distance such extremists from the levers of party control and political nominations. But high degrees of partisan polarization, such as the U.S. is currently experiencing, folds all social cleavages into one partisan dividing line, hardens loyalties, and prevents such distancing of the extreme factions from the levers of party power (McCoy, Rahman, and Somer 2018; Svolik 2020; Ziblatt 2017).

"If men were angels, no government would be necessary" (Madison 1788), much less political parties and moderating logics of competition. Because they are not, institutions, incentives, and norms must respond to the conditions of the moment. Institutions, regulations, and party procedures can shape political party moderation, reducing the extent of extremist factions, and increasing the pluralistic inclusion of a just democracy (Allen 2023).[8] Social mobilization and normative support for democratic resilience can incentivize parties toward pro-democracy coalitions (Putnam and Garrett 2021; Tarrow 2021). Institutional and electoral considerations matter a great deal for the possibility of constraining party strategies and party leaders to remain in the democratic pact, restraining autocratic factions by providing tools, leverage, and partisan strategies to protect democracy, and channels for social mobilization to push parties toward democratic renewal.

8 The need to change procedures of representation are particularly strong in the United States, with scholars calling for innovative reforms such as fusion ballots (Drutman 2022), deliberative dialogues (Fishkin 1991), democracy by citizen jury (Landemore 2020), and citizen assemblies to give input to elected party representatives (Fournier et al 2011).

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CHAPTER 11

Encouraging Cooperation and Responsibility

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ABSTRACT

The American party system has developed in a distinctive institutional context which traditionally includes partisan primaries, categorical ballots and plurality winners chosen in single-round elections. Reforms in California, Washington State, Maine, and most recently Alaska offer new options—including 'top-two' or 'top-four' open primaries, ranked-choice ballots and other kinds of majority thresholds—all which are likely to impact inter- and intra-party cooperation and responsible party politics. While some such as Alaska's "Final Four" system appear promising and are likely to have important impacts on political parties, they are also in their infancy as experimental institutional designs.

The Problem with Parties

While the U.S. has had two dominant parties since 1860—the Democrats and the Republicans—their cohesion into distinct and polarized entities is relatively new. Historically, Democrats and Republicans were "big tent" ideologically diverse parties that brought together a grab-bag of interests (Bensel 1984; Reichley [1992] 2000; Sundquist [2011] 1983). Until the 1990s, Democrats included a prominent southern-based conservative and moderate wing as well as a larger mainstream liberal wing while Republicans had a sizable northern-based liberal and moderate wing along with a larger conservative wing (Gimpel and Schuknecht [2003] 2009; Phillips [1969] 2014; Rae 1989; Speel [1998] 2010; Reiter and Stonecash 2011).

As a result, both parties had many members who overlapped ideologically and in congressional voting, with some Democrats voting more conservatively than Republicans, and vice-versa (Jacobson and Carson 2019; Lewis et al. 2022). These overlaps facilitated the function of the legislative process despite the increasing commonality of divided government, where one party controls the presidency and the other holds one or both houses of Congress. Even during unified government, this ideological diversity greased the legislative and policy process.

Today, this is no longer the case. American political parties are now far more distinct and homogenous, with substantial ideological space between the most liberal Republican and the most conservative Democrat (Lewis et al. 2022). Increasingly, they resemble the more disciplined parliamentary parties found in Canada, Germany and the U.K. This does not pose a problem for governance in countries where a Prime Minister can command the support of the House, but it does not work under American institutional arrangements. The combination of party polarization and party discipline severely impedes the compromise required to pass legislation under America's separation of powers constitutional setup (Anderson, Butler, and Harbridge-Yong 2020; Drutman 2020).

Electoral and institutional rules played a central role in creating this situation. Primary elections have assumed outsized importance as they are the only significant contest in the great majority of

congressional elections where one party is heavily favored (Drutman 2021; Wasserman 2021). In a feedback loop spurred on by geographic and demographic sorting along with partisan redistricting (Hill and Tausanovitch 2015; Lublin 2007), primary electorates have become less ideologically diverse and more extreme (Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2005; Jacobson 2012). Most primary challenges to incumbents come from the Left for Democrats and the Right for Republicans, creating incentives for incumbents to shift toward ideological extremes to preempt primary challenges (Anderson, Butler, and Harbridge-Yong 2020; Harbridge and Malhotra 2011; Mann 2007).

However, while there is a high degree of consensus that primary electorates today are more polarized and extreme than in the past, scholars dispute whether primary voters are more extreme than the party as a group. Some research contends that low turnout primary contests attract more extreme voters (Fiorina and Abrams 2011; Mann 2007; Pew 2014; Polsby 1983), but others find that primary voters closely resemble the party rank-and-file.[1]

The ideological sorting of the electorate tends to sideline more moderate voices in the electorate at large and gives priority to a motivated and often ideologically-extreme "selectorate", regardless of whether primaries result in more extreme nominees than other nomination methods. Given that electoral and institutional rules, especially primaries, played a central role in promoting ideological sorting, there is little reason to expect the system to change when maintaining the same set of electoral incentives. Bluntly put, combined with demographic sorting, electoral reform making primaries the method of choosing most party nominees got the U.S. into this hole and helps maintain polarization. New reforms are likely needed to promote more responsible parties.

Two-Round, Ranked Choice and Other Voting Reforms

Some kinds of electoral reform may help to address these issues. Two-round and ranked choice voting, for instance, can potentially encourage candidates to broaden their support to gain a majority and limit the impact of vote splitting. In each case, the majority requirement for victory incentivizes candidates to seek the support of voters who initially preferred another candidate and enhances the legitimacy of the winner. This places a centripetal counterweight (i.e., pressure to move toward to the center) to the centrifugal forces of sorting, divisive mobilization and negative partisanship.

These reforms could be applied to both primary elections and general elections, separately or in tandem, or to effectively fuse the two into a sequential two-round election featuring a nominating round, in which multiple candidates from the same party can stand, followed by a second round general election in which a specified number of leading candidates from the first round compete for office.

Runoff and Two-Round Elections

Runoff elections can be a feature of both primaries and general elections, as in Georgia; general elections only, as in Louisiana; or (as described above) a sequential two-round combined election which dispenses with partisan primaries altogether, as in California and Washington State's "top-two" or Alaska's "top-four" systems. These latter cases effectively shift the responsibility for choosing a parties' nominee from party members only to all voters.

In general, the need to attract broad support under such systems should advantage candidates with more coalitional appeal, sidelining extremists. However,

1 See Chapter 6 in this volume.

runoff systems have a mixed record on racial issues: while Arkansas adopted a two-round primary in 1924 to allow anti-Klan voters to coalesce behind a more moderate candidate in the second round (Bullock and Johnson 1992), Mississippi adopted runoffs in 1967 to prevent plurality Black winners (Parker 1990).

Evidence from both the U.S. and abroad suggests that a second round of voting almost always encourages some level of bargains and trade-offs between parties and candidates (Cerrone and McClintock 2021; Colomer 2004). Sartori (1994, 63-4) praises the system's "intelligent choosing" design and "two-shot" nature, which enables voters to have a second choice or even change their mind between the first and second round. Classic runoff systems, which elect the eventual winner by majority, are also less likely to elect insurgent candidates. Blais et alia (2007), after arranging several experimental elections, concluded that extremists have almost no chance under such an electoral model.

The ideological sorting of the electorate tends to sideline more moderate voices in the electorate at large and gives priority to a motivated and often ideologically-extreme "selectorate"

The nature of runoffs, however, can result in less than ideal second-round choices or, in exceptional circumstances, even leave voters with two fringe candidates unacceptable to a majority. Peru and Chile faced this situation in their 2021 presidential elections due to vote splitting among more centrist candidates. In Peru, far-left Pedro Castillo and populist-right Keiko Fujimori made it to the runoff with just 18.9 percent and 13.4 percent, respectively. In Chile, the runoff featured far-right José Antonio Kast (27.9 percent) against far-left Gabriel Boric (25.8 percent).

The same could easily have happened in the 2017 and 2022 French presidential elections. The eventual winner in both contests, Emmanuel Macron, gained only 24.0 percent in 2017 and 27.9 percent in 2022. Extreme right candidate Marine Le Pen joined him in the runoff with 21.3 percent in 2017 and 23.1 percent in 2022. But it is not hard to imagine Le Pen along with extreme left candidate Jean-Luc Mélanchon, who won 19.6 percent in 2017 and 21.9 percent in 2022, doing well enough to displace Macron from the runoff.

Closer to home, we have seen quirky outcomes in California's top-two system. Unlike conventional party primaries in most other states, this requires all candidates to compete in a first round, with the best-supported two moving on to the general election (i.e., second round)—even if one candidate gains a first-round majority or both candidates are from the same party. Occasionally, a surfeit of candidates and vote splitting for the dominant party allows two candidates from the other party to make it to the general election. Besides being vulnerable to outcomes that leave voters with one, or even two, unpalatable choices, studies are mixed on whether the California reforms have promoted less polarized and more responsibly-acting officials. McGhee and Shor (2017) find little evidence, but Grose (2020) argues that new legislators elected under the system are more moderate than the incumbents they replace.[2]

Ranked Choice Voting

Ranked choice voting (hereafter RCV) applied in single-winner contests, also known as the alternative vote, shares some of these same elements (and is

2 See also Alvarez and Sinclair 2015 and Nagler 2015.

sometimes known as instant runoff voting for this reason). Its distinguishing feature is a ballot structure that permits voters to rank candidates in their order of preference. If no candidate is the first choice of a majority, the votes of the candidate with the fewest first preferences are redistributed to the candidates ranked next by each voter. The process repeats until a candidate has a majority of all valid unexhausted ballots and is declared elected.

Maine adopted this approach starting in 2018 for its federal primaries and general elections, as did Alaska in 2022 for all state and federal general elections (as part of its 'final-four' voting system discussed below). In both cases, it was voters, not politicians, who delivered these reforms onto reluctant state legislatures via popular initiatives. Support from sitting politicians was lukewarm at best. Activists were motivated by the growing problem of political polarization that rendered state legislatures less workable and the minority victories that were a feature of elections under plurality voting. For instance, both states had elected a succession of minority-supported governors—8 of the last 12 in Alaska and 9 of the last 11 in Maine.

How are political parties likely to respond? Given that both cases are very recent, the century-long Australian experience with RCV is instructive. When first introduced at the state level in 1907 it was assumed that parties would nominate multiple candidates for RCV elections, effectively using rankings to replace primaries, but this did not occur and parties quickly settled on a single nominee to manage their vote most effectively (Reilly 2021). In time, a stable party system developed, underpinned by voters for smaller parties being compelled to express a second or later choice for one or other of the two main parties or coalitions. These major parties compete for the political center, as extremist position-taking risks alienating supporters of other parties and thus losing potential ranking flows from excluded candidates. Despite operating in the highly adversarial system that gives greater power to its disciplined parliamentary parties, this also results in frequent convergence on policy positions by the two major parties (or coalitions)—one reason that polarization is low compared to the United States, despite other similarities (Reilly 2018).

RCV also influences how political parties campaign: "every Australian election is preceded by an intense period of bargaining between the parties as to how they will advise their supporters to rank opposing candidates" (Farrell and McAllister 2005). While American parties have yet to introduce Australian-style "how to vote" pamphlets, such cross-endorsements have been a feature of RCV elections in both Maine and Alaska. Maine's first elections under the new system in 2018 saw Democrat Jared Golden unseat incumbent Republican Bruce Poliquin in a district that went for President Trump by 10.3 percent in 2016 and 7.4 percent in 2020. Golden won from second place after cross-endorsing two independent candidates, overtaking the plurality-leading Poliquin as a result. Golden subsequently shifted to a more centrist position in Congress than the rest of the Democratic Caucus.

Much depends on how voters use their rankings. In Maine, most voters in the Second District contest followed their chosen party's signaling. This meant that about two-thirds of Republicans cast a single ranking only, while for Democrats this pattern was reversed, with over 60% ranking at least one other candidate. A 2015 survey in New South Wales, which uses the same form of RCV that is the standard for American elections, found that around half the electorate used multiple rankings while the other half ranked only one candidate, a similar pattern to that seen in Maine. That survey also found older and

conservative voters more likely to just issue a single preference and younger progressives more likely to use their full rankings, a pattern that is also likely in the U.S. (Reilly 2021).

Another issue is candidate and party proliferation. More candidates tend to be associated with numbering errors and greater voter and ballot 'exhaustion' (Burnett and Kogan 2015). As a result, emerging best practice in RCV election administration limits the number of rankings offered to voters, for both presentational and practical reasons. The Center for Civic Design (2018, 4-5), for instance, recommends ballots have a maximum of five or six rankings. This advice also conforms with the practical application of RCV in large city elections in San Francisco, Minneapolis, and New York, which limit voters to between three and five rankings, in part to satisfy the requirements of mass elections using voting machines. In Alaska, discussed below, four rankings plus a write-in option are offered. In sum, more than a binary choice is desirable but too much choice can confuse, particularly in the American context, where voters elect a plethora of officials.

A top four or five primary means that both traditional and insurgent candidates from one or both parties can potentially make it to the general election.

Final-Four or Final-Five Voting

A recent innovation intended to address these concerns is the replacement of partisan primaries by a nominating first-round election, with the top four or five candidates going on to compete at a second-round RCV general election. First used by Alaska in 2022, such 'final-four' voting (FFV hereafter) systems are designed to winnow the candidate field and then require the general election winner to gain not just a plurality but a majority of the vote for victory.

Allowing multiple candidates from the same party to compete with each other and potentially advance has mixed effects. On the one hand, it gives voters a greater range of choices and injects more competition into general elections. Compared to runoff systems or top-two primaries, this reduces the chance that only a quirky or extreme set of candidates make it to the general election. However, it also reduces the party's ability to control its nominees and present a disciplined campaign with clear options to voters.

In addition, the effects of running a multi-winner election with a single-choice ballot (rather than having one vote per seat as typical in American at-large elections) mean that FFV's first round is effectively a single non-transferable vote (SNTV), which has its own distinctive impacts on political parties. Since the system elects the highest-polling candidates regardless of their vote total, some successful candidates will likely attract far more votes than others. International studies of this system at general elections found it forced parties to make strategic choices about the number and support given to their nominees, to avoid nominating too many (and thus splitting their vote) or too few (and thus missing out on potential winnable seats) candidates. But when used in a nominating round, as in Alaska, these strategic dilemmas are less acute. Because there are multiple winners, SNTV elections are also less vulnerable than plurality elections to inadvertent outcomes out of sync with the general voting population, which can often aid the "wrong" or opposing candidate (Bowler, Donovan, and Van Heerde 2005; Duverger 1964; Lijphart 1994).

A top four or five primary means that both traditional and insurgent candidates from one or both parties can potentially make it to the general election. When combined with an RCV general election, as in Alaska, this offers institutional incentives for parties to modify their erstwhile campaign strategy and thus their approach to electoral competition. In particular, dispensing with the party primary mitigates the need to speak exclusively to party diehards. While encouraging candidates from the same party to try to carve out their own ideological niche or geographic base to gain a place in the RCV general election, it also makes it unlikely that only more extreme candidates make it through to the general election.

The system also promotes more diverse candidate offerings. Mathematically a top-four primary guarantees a slot in the general election to any candidate winning over one-fifth of the vote and, in practice, often allows those with much smaller support levels to gain a seat—meaning candidates with around 10 percent support or less should frequently make it through, as was the case with SNTV in Japan (Cox and Niou 1994; Grofman 1999; Klein 2001; Lin 2006). Accordingly, we can expect third parties or independents to regularly claim a place on the general election ballot. In Japan, the system effectively offered political parties two contrasting strategies: smaller parties should coordinate behind a single candidate while large parties should put forward multiple candidates to maximize their seat haul—but not so many as to risk splitting the vote.

Alaska's 2022 statewide contests (for Governor, U.S. House, and U.S. Senate) confirmed this comparative experience, suggesting that FFV promotes candidate diversity while also facilitating voter choice. The percentage of the first-round vote required to advance to the top-four RCV general election ranged from 2.2 percent to 10.1 percent, a low barrier to entry even with only four candidates making it to the general election. In all the federal contests, the top-four included at least one Democrat, one Trumpist Republican and one non-Trumpist Republican. The gubernatorial contest did not include a non-Trumpist Republican but featured centrist independent former Gov. Bill Walker. In every case, FFV prevented winnowing out of more centrist candidates, such as incumbent Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski (who won re-election under the new system but would likely have lost a closed primary election) or new Alaskan House Rep. Mary Peltola (a Democrat who built a sustained statewide following after finishing a distant fourth in the first-round election). Joint campaigns and cross-endorsements across party lines, an indicator of moderation and accommodation, were a feature of both campaigns (Reilly, Lublin, and Wright 2023).

Such cross-partisan, split-ticket voting gave Alaskan voters, most of whom are not irrevocably committed to one party or another, greater political leverage than in the past. Effectively, the new system further factionalized Alaska's already weak and divided political parties, then allowed voters to aggregate these now explicit factions into new coalitions, giving a leg-up to independents and moderates over partisan diehards and hardliners. Critics of FFV saw this as undermining the strength of the political party brand (Santucci 2022), thus diluting the classic roles of political parties as organizations that bundle policies, structure collective outcomes and present clear choices to voters (Aldrich 1995; Gunther and Diamond 2001). For advocates, however, this model has the potential to generate "substitute challengers" which could open the door to new entrants and weaken the cozy two-party duopoly of the "politics industry" (Gehl and Porter 2020, 28-9). The need to obtain support from voters who prefer other candidates in the general may also undercut the intraparty bitterness frequently seen in traditional party primaries.

Conclusion

APSA President John Ishiyama's call for this Task Force highlights the irony that parties are now simultaneously more "responsible" in that they are much more disciplined but less "responsible" in helping achieve the compromises needed to function and govern. The centripetal electoral systems discussed above show some promise of mitigating the polarization that reduces the propensity of parties to act responsibly and negotiate the compromises necessary under the American constitutional system. Runoffs and two-round systems which offer a second round of voting give voters more options, including the ability to change their vote over time, and encourage big-tent campaigns. RCV promotes coalition-building and dialogue between competitors while still promoting a two-party system. Both incentivize candidates to campaign less roughly, since they may need reciprocal support from each other's voters—although that may require a degree of political learning over time.

The Alaskan FFV model, which combines both two-rounds and RCV, offers the strongest incentives for more cooperation amongst campaigning politicians, with potential flow-on effects in government. However, it also removes from parties the ability to choose and arguably control their own nominees, effectively shifting this responsibility from party members to general election voters. While the first use of this system in Alaska proved to be largely in line with theoretical expectations, it is also in its early stages as an experiment in institutional design. Nevada, which voted in 2022 to adopt a top-five version of FFV, may offer more evidence to assess if a required second initiative vote in 2024 passes. Currently, precisely because of its novelty, we have promising but also limited data to assess the system's longer-term impact on political parties and responsible party government.

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CHAPTER 12

Toward a Different Kind of Party Government: Proportional Representation for Federal Elections

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ABSTRACT

The old case for a two-party system did not: (a) fully grapple with 'presidential' democracy, (b) foresee the dangers of polarization, or (c) give sufficient weight to demands for representation. We therefore sketch a vision of *multiparty presidential democracy*, introducing relevant literature along the way. This vision rests on reforms to make multiple parties viable, push that system toward pre-election coalition, and improve descriptive representation regardless of how many parties there are. Key features are proportional representation (PR) for U.S. House, then reforms of single-seat offices (like President and Senator) to let multiple parties compete as parties. We give some 'pros and cons' of three PR forms: mixed-member proportional, single transferable vote, and open-list proportional. We also explain why PR might not lead to the sort of fragmentation that some critics and proponents alike expect.

A Different Kind of Party Government

The notion of a system of responsible political parties as articulated in the 1950 APSA report was one in which the parties would set out a "choice between the alternatives of action" (APSA Committee on Political Parties 1950). The report specifically, in its very title, understood that to mean *two* possible courses of action—a responsible two-party system. The core notion of a "responsible party" is one that not only sets out a course of action, but is able to follow through on it if elected to power.

Our contribution to this discussion nearly three quarters of a century later will not be to elaborate on whether such a model is or ever was desirable. Independent of its desirability, a responsible party is almost impossible under a presidential form of government. The separation of executive and legislative electoral processes and the separate survival of the elected branches (via fixed terms) provide too many countervailing incentives for party-policy responsibility to be feasible. Parties under such conditions are much more likely to be "presidentialized" than responsible. What this means is that presidential candidates set out their own priorities to win their separate contests, while legislators cater to localities or interest groups that may have different priorities from those of the presidential candidate (Samuels and Shugart 2010). Once in office, the absence of the parliamentary confidence mechanism means there's little to hold the executive to a collectively agreed policy platform (see also Azari 2017).

Thus we do not attempt to reiterate the case for responsible parties, understood as collective teams offering competing governing options. Rather, we propose a different kind of "responsible" party government, consistent with the themes of this wider task force, that could institutionalize a process of reflecting the diversity of both opinion and socio-demographic constituencies currently either subsumed within or left outside of the two-party system.

As a starting point, we posit that it would be inaccurate to claim that the U.S. party system finally arrived at the "responsible two-party system" in the form of today's

polarized parties (see, e.g., Mounk 2018). What we have in the American system today is not a variant of responsible parties. If anything, parties have become *ir*responsible. Their nomination and policy-setting processes allow highly organized groups to pull each party away from the median voter.[1] Yet the polarization and unwillingness to compromise seen most especially in the GOP (Hacker and Pierson 2015) is a far cry from the model of responsible parties setting out competing programs of government.

It is not that a wide range of opinions about policy and ideological options are not already represented in the U.S. two parties. However, most voters have little opportunity to cast an effective vote to express their preferred paths, due to winner-take-all contests, including at the primary nomination stage.

What we have in the American system today is not a variant of responsible parties. If anything, parties have become irresponsible.

We sketch (and introduce relevant literature on) a different way of representing the diversity of ideological and policy preferences of American voters. This alternative relies on a form of proportional representation (PR) for the U.S. House, combined with other reforms for bodies where PR is not practical due to the election of single offices, such as the presidency and Senate (absent major constitutional amendment).

Contra some critiques of PR (see below), we see it as a potential contribution to *responsible multiparty* politics. We mean "responsible" in a similar way as the 1950 report: voters signaling policy direction via their party choices. However, the "responsibility" for implementing policy would rest with *coalitions of parties*. Those coalitions could emerge either before or after elections. Future elections would offer opportunities for voters to shift to different parties if they were unhappy with the records of their previous parties. Crucially, that would not mean shifting to the single party on the other side of the political divide.

It is likely that the presence of the Senate and the presidency would encourage parties to form electoral alliances (pre-election coalitions). Therefore, in most elections, there would continue to be two major such alliances. With PR for the House (and other rules for other bodies that we shall address briefly later) some parties would agree to cooperate in elections with other parties with whom they share basic affinity. For instance, "progressive" and "center left" could be distinct parties within a broad left alliance, and social conservatives and economic conservatives could be distinct parties but would cooperate in a broad right. Or, when circumstances called for something different (like a 'pro-democracy alliance'), the institutions we describe might help bolster that. Such a model can offer voters more voice in the setting of policy direction, without sacrificing the building of electoral majorities. In fact, alliances of this sort are common in existing PR systems (Carroll and Cox 2007; Ganghof 2015; Golder 2006), and PR generally is more favorable to ensuring legislative majorities that reflect a majority of the electorate (Lijphart 1997; McDonald and Budge 2005; Powell 2000).

In a sense, this notion of alliance-facilitating PR could harness the best of the current U.S. party system, yet marginalize that system's worst features. The current system sees progressive and center-left actors in the

1 We mean "median voter" in the multidimensional sense (Huber and Powell 1994, 293; McGann and Latner 2012, 831). In the U.S., this person might be 'operationally' liberal and 'symbolically' conservative (Cayton and Dawkins 2020; Ellis and Stimson 2012; Grossmann and Hopkins 2015).

Democratic Party, while the Republican Party hosts both economic conservatives and authoritarians. Consider the observation of Henry Droop (2012 [1869]) on two-party politics and "majority voting" (i.e., winner-take-all):

> As every representative is elected to represent one of these two parties, the nation, as represented in the assembly, appears to consist only of these two parties, each bent on carrying out its own programme. But, in fact, a large proportion of the electors who vote for the candidates of the one party or the other really care much more about the country being honestly and wisely governed than about the particular points at issue between the two parties; and if this moderate non-partisan section of the electors had their separate representatives in the assembly, they would be able to mediate between the opposing parties and prevent the one party from pushing their advantage too far, and the other from prolonging a factious opposition. With majority voting they can only intervene at general elections, and even then cannot punish one party for excessive partisanship, without giving a lease of uncontrolled power to their rivals.

We do not have to believe a strict interpretation of Droop's words—that most voters are "moderate"—to understand the value to current conditions of the prescription he offered more than a century and a half ago: a proportional system. The problem of one party "pushing their advantage too far" is an even greater problem in an era of two-party polarization, as is the inability of voters who are less aligned with the mainstream of their preferred party to rein it in other than by voting for the opposing party that they likely find unacceptable. The larger point is that the country consists of more options than any given voter has placed before her by the candidates of the two dominant parties. A PR system might expand the menu, allowing different parties to reflect different "alternatives of action." It also, as we shall discuss, allows for a given party to have multiple candidates, whose personal attributes reflect different socio-demographic groups, placed before the voters. At present, the only opportunities voters have to select from among policy options and candidate attributes within these broad left and right camps is at presidential primaries—and even then, often only for voters who happen to be in early states on the primary calendar when a plurality of voices are still competing for delegates.[2] A PR system for the House would permit this sort of competition to take place in forging the main majority-seeking caucus options inside the House of Representatives instead of just at the quadrennial party conventions (and only for some primary voters). It therefore gives voters a chance to weigh in at general elections for Representatives and not only at the candidate-selection stage. It also does not present them with the stark choice at present, which is either to swallow their disagreements with the dominant tendencies in their preferred parties or cross party lines (an untenable option for many voters, at least at present).

PR and Fragmentation

What many readers think of when PR comes up is party fragmentation, difficulty building governing majorities, and amplification of fringe voices (Hermens 1941). However, these concerns are mostly caricatures of real-world PR systems. To the extent that these concerns contain grains of truth, they are largely irrelevant to the U.S. context. Or they are mostly problems of elite will to compromise (Lijphart 2013; Rosenfeld 2020; Santucci 2020; Ziblatt 2017).

From a strictly technical perspective, there are at least two reasons why any realistic version of PR for the U.S. House would be unlikely to foster 'excessive'

2 And it is well worth remembering that this competition for delegates takes place within a form of proportional representation in the Democratic Party, and also does so in several states (especially those early in the calendar) in the Republican Party (Jones, McCune, and Wilson 2020).

fragmentation. First, the sort of PR system that could be reasonably adopted in the U.S. is a moderate version. With 435 House seats—or even a plausible increase to say 600—and 50 states, an extremely proportional system is not in the cards.[3]

We assume the multi-seat districts required for any PR system could not span state lines.[4] That is, a state could serve as a multi-seat district (electing members "at large" by a proportional method). Quite likely, the larger states would be subdivided into multiple districts, in order to avoid excessively large numbers elected per district. Most advocates of PR in the U.S. indicate a preference for a range of district magnitude (the number of seats per district) of no more than 5 or 7.[5] Such a PR design prevents the extreme fragmentation associated with PR in countries such as the Netherlands (with its single nationwide district of 150 seats) or Israel (with its single district of 120). Moreover, the *seat product*—the assembly size times mean district magnitude, which is a strong predictor of the shape of a party system (Shugart and Taagepera 2017; 2020; Taagepera 2007)—would be modest.[6]

The second reason, aside from a relatively low district magnitude and modest seat product, why a U.S. PR system might not be fragmenting is the presence of the Senate and presidency, for which plurality and majority systems remain the only realistic options (again absent major reform for the Senate[7]). Thus parties competing with distinct party labels in proportional contests (for U.S. House seats) could have incentives to present joint (or "fusion") candidacies for these other offices. In turn, the incentive to present joint candidacies might hold down fragmenting tendencies in the proportional contests.[8]

Descriptive Representation and Institutional Design

The political representation of racial, ethnic and linguistic minorities is a perennial issue in American politics. Resolutions have taken several forms over the years: disenfranchisement (Valelly 2016), incorporation on dominant-group terms (Shefter 1986), the post-Voting Rights Act (Davidson and Grofman 1994) settlement on single-seat districts (SSD), and recent attempts to use that law to reduce descriptive representation (Latner et al. 2021).

In a sense, this notion of alliance-facilitating PR could harness the best of the current US party system, yet marginalize that system's worst features.

Single-seat districts (SSDs) have proven capable of representing some groups more-or-less in proportion to their numbers (Collingwood and Long 2019; Davidson and Grofman 1994; Lublin et al. 2009). Substantively, representation via SSDs has reduced economic inequality, at least in jurisdictions that the VRA used to cover (Aneja and Avenancio-León 2019; Cascio and Washington 2014; but see Eubank and Fresh 2022).[9]

3 See Hermens (1936, 412-3) for an example of "extreme" proportionality. The interwar German electoral law set up several 'layers' of nested districts, so that very few votes would be 'wasted.'

4 That is, nationwide proportionality is out of the question, including systems of "compensation" where there might be local districts, but proportionality would be determined by pooling votes across districts (Elklit and Roberts 1996) and thus across all states or groups of states. We assume such designs are non-starters because the Constitution states that House seats are apportioned to states, which implies they can't be effectively shared between states.

5 For states with as few as three Representatives, PR is still feasible. For states with two, PR means that most of the time each of the top two parties would earn one seat from the state. For states with just one, PR is impossible. This need not doom a PR system as a whole; some existing PR systems have a few districts that elect just one member. Solutions such as expanding the House can minimize the number of such states, or a minimum of three per state could be set (tolerating some degree of malapportionment of states in exchange for proportional representation of voters). These are complicated questions that we shall not attempt to resolve here, but which need not detain us from evaluating the potential effects of the sort of moderate PR system sketched here.

6 The current seat product of the US House is 435 (the number of seats in the House times district magnitude which is 1). If a PR system had a mean magnitude of 4, for example, the seat product would be 1740—a bit smaller than the modest PR systems of Spain or Sweden and a far cry from the values of really extreme PR systems like Israel (14,400) or the Netherlands (22,500).

7 One "major reform" might give each state three Senators, elected at the same time.

8 Again, the incentive to coalesce depends on pre-existing will to compromise; as noted earlier, such pre-election coalitions are common in many existing PR systems.

9 The Supreme Court invalidated the VRA 'coverage formula' (Section 4) in 2014.

Yet limits to the SSD remedy are well known: it works where groups are geographically concentrated *and* where there are relatively few 'communities of interest' to represent (Abott and Magazinnik 2020; Gimpel and Harbridge-Yong 2020; Leib 1998). Protecting more geographically dispersed or internally heterogeneous groups (e.g., Latino and Asian voters) has proven more difficult under SSDs (Kogan and McGhee 2012). Moreover, ascribing protected classes to a single constituent interest can foster "tokenism" and weaken coalition policymaking capacity (Guinier 1992; Lublin and Voss 2000).

Partisanship also increasingly matters. The electoral "capture" of voters of color by the Democratic Party makes it possible to take majority-minority districts for granted and focus resources onto "swing" voters (Frymer 2010). It also gives Republicans in state legislatures an incentive to undermine the VRA by packing targeted groups into uncompetitive Democratic districts (Keena et al. 2021; Levitt 2013). Meanwhile, the U.S. Supreme Court is increasingly calling into question any use of race-conscious districting, referring to the case law as "notoriously unclear and confusing." (Merrill v. Milligan 2022, 6). If the Court further insulates state legislatures from federal voting rights protections, alternatives to the SSD regime will likely be in higher demand.

Proportional representation is one possible response to these challenges. The argument that PR improves minority representation typically rests on the ability of racial and ethnic parties to win seats through lower 'thresholds of exclusion' (Lijphart 2004; Norris 2004; Reynolds 1995). Yet it also rests on evidence that larger parties run more inclusive slates under PR (Latner and McGann 2005; Shugart and Taagepera 2017, 76-77, 89-90). PR permits dispersed groups to aggregate their votes over larger geographic areas. It also might permit groups less attached to established parties to form new ones if they so desired.[10]

Yet PR is not a panacea. Even in proportional systems, candidate-centered ballots permit voters to withhold support from minority candidates (Negri 2017; Protsyk and Sachariew 2012; Sipinen and Söderlund 2022). Some forms (like MMP below) may not be viable without constitutional amendment. Others require extensive voter education and elite coordination (Pildes and Donoghue 1995, 270-2). More generally, those who have fought for generations to secure representation under current rules have good reason to look skeptically at changing those rules.

What type of PR?

This section gives some 'pros and cons' of three common PR forms. One of them, mixed-member proportional (MMP), combines two kinds of seats: one 'tier' elected in single-seat districts, then a second tier from party lists from which seats are allocated so that parties' final seat shares are proportional to their vote shares.[11] Another is single transferable vote (STV), recently dubbed 'proportional ranked-choice voting.'[12] A third is open-list proportional representation (OLPR), which permits voters to set party-list order by choosing among candidates.[13] A vote then helps elect a candidate and their party. For space considerations, we do not cover closed-list PR (in which voters choose among parties only).[14]

10 See Dyck and Johnson (2022) on how party identification varies over time for some groups in the U.S.

11 For details on MMP, see Shugart and Wattenberg (2001) or the explainer offered by the New Zealand Electoral Commission: https://elections.nz/democracy-in-nz/what-is-new-zealands-system-of-government/what-is-mmp.

12 For an introduction to 'pure' STV, see C.G.P. Grey's video explainer: https://www.cgpgrey.com/blog/politics-in-the-animal-kingdom-single-transferable-vote. 'Pure' means without mechanisms like ticket voting.

13 See Kosar and Santucci (2021) for an explainer.

14 Moreover, many see closed-list PR as a non-starter for U.S. conditions due to its lack of candidate choice. Eberhard (2018) gives focus-group results to this effect.

Mixed-Member PR (MMP)

Political scientists who specialize in electoral systems typically rate MMP as among the very best options (Bowler and Farrell 2006; Carey et al. 2013). Recent research confirms its ability to balance national expertise-based policymaking with local responsiveness (Shugart et al. 2021). MMP also might not disrupt race-conscious (single-seat) districting (although we have noted other problems with that). Two issues nonetheless raise questions about viability in the U.S. context: how to construct the 'compensation tier,' and the potential for 'decoy lists' in that tier.

Achieving proportionality under MMP requires compensation via the party-list tier. It would work best with a *much* larger U.S. House. MMP often has 50% of seats in single-seat districts and 50% from compensation lists. It can deliver a high degree of proportionality with a lower share (perhaps as low as 25%) but only on condition that the compensation regions be relatively large—ideally nationwide. We assume that nationwide or multi-state regional compensation is a nonstarter in the U.S. It likely is unconstitutional on its face. The Constitution stipulates that seats are *apportioned* among states, not *shared* among them. Thus only state-level compensation is doable, leaving even a significantly larger House insufficient for proportionality.[15]

The second problem is the possibility of large parties defeating the compensation mechanism via decoy lists. These are possible under 'two-vote' MMP (which would be necessary if reformers sought to induce multiparty politics). Party X directs voters to vote for Party X candidates in districts, but to cast their list vote for its decoy. When this happens, instead of Party X getting its district seats and only whatever number of list seats it needs to compensate for disproportionality arising from the district tier, it gets those district seats plus a fully proportional share of the list seats for its decoy. This practice can be avoided only by having a nationwide electoral administrative agency overseeing list registration (as in Germany and New Zealand) or by having only a single vote for both tiers (which however vitiates key advantages of MMP).[16]

Single Transferable Vote

STV is theoretically compatible with nonpartisan elections and permits electoral coalitions that defy party grouping (Lakeman and Lambert 1970: 111; Richie 2022). These properties make it popular but raise questions about longevity, given parties' likely responses. For a sense of administrative issues, which include voter education, see Anthony et al. (2021).

Where STV has been stable, various mechanisms exist for tempering its nonpartisanship (Bowler and Grofman 2000; Clark 2020; Farrell and Katz 2014). These include disciplined multi-party politics (Ireland), rules to give first-choice votes outsized importance (Malta), and a ticket-voting option so widely used that the system works effectively as closed-list PR (Australian Senate).[17]

In the U.S., by contrast, STV historically has not been stable. It was adopted in 22 cities from 1915-47, then repealed in all but one by 1962.[18] Reasons for this trajectory include: frustration with vote counts and election results (Harris 1930), bipartisan

15 In current House apportionment, thirteen states have 1 or 2 members, and MMP arguably requires four (perhaps three) in a state as an absolute minimum for compensation to work. Even with a House of 600 seats, several states would have fewer than three members. MMP nonetheless may be viable for state legislatures (Nagel 2014). On the possibility of expanding the House, see Drutman, et al. (2021).

16 Regulation might be done on a state-by-state level, but this would empower one or a few states to undermine a national election's integrity by turning a blind eye to decoy lists.

17 Since 2016, Australian voters have had the option of ranking parties rather than either voting for one party ticket or else having to rank all candidates on their Senate ballot (McAllister & Muller 2018). This new option is still more akin to closed-list PR than to any other system, except that it allows the vote to transfer from one party to another.

18 This figure does not include two federally administered towns with advisory councils or two more former single-tax colonies.

opposition from party elites (Amy 1996; Weaver 1986), and weak party discipline due to party change (Santucci 2022, Ch. 7).

Open-List PR

We have arrived at OLPR by working through what it might take to implement MMP, taking seriously some challenges associated with STV, and looking for a reasonable alternative. We are not the first to have followed such a path (Lien 1925; Gosnell 1939).[19]

OLPR systems come in many 'flavors,'[20] and a 'one-vote' version may be easiest to implement. It would not make new demands on voters or election officials. It just means each voter's vote is for *both a candidate and the list as a whole*. In this way, the system might offer the advantages of PR, while remaining relatively familiar to stakeholders.

Descriptive Representation in STV and OLPR

Space constraints prevent an extended discussion of how these systems might shape racial and gender representation. This is an active research area. Key issues include: the extent to which voters 'shun' candidates from target groups (Crowder-Meyer, Gadarian, and Trounstine 2023; Protsyk and Sachariew 2012; Sipinen and Söderlund 2022), whether parties field such candidates in the first place (McGing 2013), and whether the need to maximize party vote share leads party leaders to nominate fewer such candidates (Valdini 2012). How do different forms of PR compare to one another in terms of delivering descriptive representation? Comparison of closed lists with STV *and* OLPR suggests closed lists outperform both (Dhima et al. 2021). A tentative conclusion might be that nominations matter—racist/sexist parties mean racist/sexist outcomes. Cultural attitudes also matter (Valdini 2012), but again these may shape nomination practices (Hirczy 1995). Quotas also seem to shape party behavior in the long run (Barnes and Holman 2020).

Reforms for Single-Seat Offices

How might results of U.S. Senate and Presidential elections be aligned with those to the House? One possible reform is cross-endorsement ballot fusion, which permits multiple parties to endorse the same candidate.[21] This would be compatible with allowing OLPR (for the House) to feature joint lists (Shugart and Taagepera 2017, 92-5). Another possibility for these offices is single-seat STV, also known as 'instant runoff' or the Alternative Vote.[22]

Conclusion: Potentially More Than Two Parties

PR adoption in the United States far from guarantees a multiparty system. It is important to recognize that *the U.S. already has a smaller number of parties than it 'should have'* given the fundamentals of its current House electoral system. Even electoral systems consisting only of winner-take-all SSDs should be expected to have more than two parties if they have hundreds of districts (see Shugart and Taagepera, 2017; 2020; Taagepera, 2007). The experiences of Canada and even the United Kingdom show that SSDs with plurality rule are compatible with multiparty politics. Thus SSDs are not the only factor constraining the number of parties. Other constraining factors would persist even if the House were elected by PR.

One such constraint is the Senate (with its coequal powers). A body for which, at any given election,

19 MMP did not 'exist' when those studies were published. However, the broad conclusion in each was that simple ballot formats might not have provoked adverse reactions by voters and election officials.

20 For instance, "flexible" lists are not truly "open" but are sometimes conflated with them: voters have votes for candidates but these votes alter party-set list order only when a candidate's votes cross some threshold. "Free" lists permit voters to cast multiple votes for candidates on more than one list.

21 Cross-endorsement fusion stands in contrast to cross-filing, whereby one candidate may declare multiple party designations. See Masket (2009) on cross-filing as an anti-party reform.

22 Getting inter-party coordination under instant runoff might mean requiring voters to rank all candidates (Reilly and Maley 2000; Reilly 2021).

only 33 or 34 seats are being filled in such a high-population country suppresses the emergence of additional parties.

Another constraint is 'unit-rule' allocation of presidential electors, which may lead voters to 'desert' minor-party candidates.[23] The reforms we proposed for single-seat offices might alleviate voters' incentive to desert. Or they might lead to fewer 'spoiler' candidacies overall.[24]

Finally, we should not discount the role of primaries. When we look at the range of countries with first-past-the-post (FPTP) elections (given no primaries), none with an assembly larger than Jamaica's (63) has a *strict* two-party system. These countries include the United Kingdom and Canada (where multiparty competition is in fact nationwide). Whether the U.S. should be called 'FPTP' itself is dubious, and not only because some states (e.g. Georgia) hold runoffs or use the Alternative Vote (e.g. Maine). Rather, the U.S. has an unusual two-round system in which the first round winnows the field. This usually is at the *intraparty* level, although sometimes it is without regard to party (e.g. in Alaska and California). Some of that winnowing-round competition might become *interparty* at the general election if PR were in place. On the other hand, it is perhaps difficult to imagine total abolition of primaries, and if they were to remain, new-party entry might remain more limited than otherwise expected.

In sum, adopting PR for the House of Representatives, particularly a model in which district magnitude is typically not much higher than five, might not proliferate parties as much as its critics fear and some proponents desire. We nonetheless hope to have sketched (and introduced scholarship on) how a responsible multiparty system might work.

23 Presidentialism per se is not the reason for a lower than expected number of parties in the USA. Shugart and Taagepera (2017) show that the seat product model of how party systems are connected to the assembly electoral system is just as reliable in a large dataset of elections around the world when a system is presidential as when it is parliamentary.

24 Fusion, instant runoff, and other single-seat reforms do not fully obviate 'spoiler' candidacy. The key issue is whether the putative 'spoiler' otherwise would be part of some larger coalition (Riker 1982, 765).

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CHAPTER 12—COVER PHOTOS

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CHAPTER 13

Prioritizing Parties

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ABSTRACT

We outline two seemingly contradictory observations about political parties in the United States: Parties are essential to democracy, but U.S. institutions are often hostile to them. Therefore, we argue that reforms that try to sidestep political parties in elections or that ignore their role in legislating are unlikely to improve democracy. We also suggest more attention be given to the nature of our two-party system. Finally, we argue that institutional reform should be coupled with an effort to cultivate a more healthy understanding of the role of political parties in American political culture.

Talk to political scientists about political parties long enough, and one of them will start quoting E.E. Schattschneider. On the very first page of his celebrated if now a bit dated book *Party Government*, Schattschneider (1942) asserts that "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties."

Devotion to Schattschneider's claim is maybe the fastest way to distinguish most political scientists from most other observers of American politics. While political scientists may be critical of American parties, they rarely try to imagine a political system without parties at all. Reformers, journalists, and ordinary citizens, on the other hand, see gridlock, polarization and partisan hostility and conclude that parties themselves are the problem.

While we agree with Schattschneider that parties are an indispensable part of a functioning democracy, it is also true that our political parties are experiencing a great deal of dysfunction. But we do not think those flaws can be corrected by undermining political parties. Indeed, we think we have more than two centuries of evidence of American institutions designed to thwart political parties, with no real success.

Rather, we think the problem is precisely with those constraints on political parties. If Schattschneider is right that parties are necessary for democracy, and, if many U.S. institutions are indifferent or even hostile to political parties, then we need to confront the possibility that those institutions are themselves undermining democracy.

If our institutions are holding back American democracy, the next step is not obvious. The U.S. Constitution is famously hard to change, and many Americans would resist changes to make parties more powerful. But acknowledging this tension is a critical step in improving democracy in the United States.

Unthinkable Save in Terms of Parties

What does it mean to say that partyless democracy is "unthinkable"?

Obviously, we can have democratic elections without parties. Many elections for city councils, school boards, county commissioners, and other offices are explicitly non-partisan, but we would not label them undemocratic. Rather, the lack of political parties limits and distorts the ability of the mass public to play their role in a democracy.

Organization and cooperation underpin every stage of democratic government—from the selection of candidates for office, to their election, to the shaping and adoption of a legislative agenda, to the implementation of that legislation, all the way around to the next election, where voters hold those in office accountable for what they've done since the last election. When John Aldrich (1995) systematically explored "why parties" emerge, he showed that in the legislature, in the electorate, and as candidates, ambitious politicians needed institutions to help them do their job. They created parties to do that. Many actors could provide that organization and facilitate that cooperation, but political parties are present throughout the process. It is political parties that organize Congress and foster coordination between the legislative and executive branches. It is parties that nominate candidates and mobilize campaigns to elect them. Voters, therefore, ought to be thinking about parties first when they vote.

To see what we mean, consider two tempting alternatives, both of which are common journalistic frameworks for discussing elections. First, one might vote "for the person, not the party." Or second, one might vote for the candidate who is ideologically most preferable, or whose policy preferences are closest to them. Both of these non-party approaches to vote choice create problems when we consider their likely implications for actual governance.

In the first case, focusing on the person ignores the team they will work with once they get to office. It is not enough to send a group of level-headed, knowledgeable citizens with good values to the legislature. You need to know who they will work with and who will advise them once they get there. The same applies in the second case, where an ideologically ideal candidate may not be able to actually implement their policy preferences. They will need to work with others in the legislature—meaning in their party—to advance their goals. A moderate candidate might support either party's leadership, but their first and most important vote is the one where they decide which party's leaders should control Congress.

Political theorist Robert Goodin (2008) plays out this thought experiment in greater depth in his essay on "no-party democracy." Goodin argues that alternative criteria for selecting a candidate would no doubt emerge if parties were not available. Voters might elect someone on the basis of ethnic kinship or their personal charisma. None would be superior to a party, he concludes, because a party provides a tie between the citizenry and the reasons by which politicians make their decisions.

Perhaps fortunately, most voters do, in fact, rely on political parties as their first heuristic in voting. Partisan attachment is overwhelmingly the strongest predictor of vote choice (Campbell et al. 1960; Green, Palmquist and Schickler 2002; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; Miller and Shanks 1996). This requires, of course, that the parties offer candidates who will, when elected, follow through on the commitment of their label. That is easiest done by parties that have control over their own nomination process, but it at least requires candidates who embrace the team they have chosen.

Institutions Against Parties

If political parties are so central to a well-functioning democracy, they are conspicuously absent from the U.S. Constitution. Indeed, the framers were quite overt in their dislike of parties (or "factions") as they conceived of them, and they tried to set up their new government accordingly.

James Madison (1787) argued that the constitution would guard against "the mischiefs of faction" by making it hard for divergent interests to coordinate or capture control of government. George Washington

([1796] 2000) warned against the spirit of party that he saw in the machinations of those aligned with the Federalists and the anti-Federalists. Thomas Jefferson (1789), protesting the suggestion that he was aligned with the Federalists, wrote to Francis Hopkinson that "If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all."

In many ways, the Founders were successful at limiting parties. So much so that historian Richard Hofstadter (1970) described their work as a "constitution against parties." Politicians have since labored to overcome these defects. The Electoral College, which at first selected the top two vote-getters as president and vice president, was reshaped to reflect the partisan conflict between two rival tickets.

And not all the constraints on parties are due to constitutional design. As Seth Masket has shown in *No Middle Ground* (2009) and *The Inevitable Party* (2016), progressive era reformers often sought to limit the power of what they saw (often rightly) as corrupt political parties by limiting parties in general. The results, however, often empowered wealthy interests, undermined efforts to convey the full benefits of citizenship to new immigrants, made politics more confusing to average voters, and reduced the accountability of elected officials.

If we think that the election of Donald Trump represents the kind of development that undermines democracy, it's important to acknowledge that his election is a direct consequence of institutional changes that weakened American parties. In 1968, after the Democratic Party nominated Hubert Humphrey against the will of a significant group of party activists, the party moved to reform its nomination process, opening it up to rank-and-file members of the party. The simplest way to implement this was in state-run primaries, which expanded for both Democrats and Republicans in the years that followed.[1] The reforms were not necessarily meant to undermine the party's control over its own nominee[2] (Cohen et al. 2008; Ranney 1975), but the consequences of those reforms were seen to cut out the role of party leaders in vetting candidates, instead advantaging narrowly factional candidates who had an intense, if minority, following (Polsby 1983).

In *The Party Decides*, Cohen et al. (2008) argue that the parties, seeing this problem, worked to mitigate it by throwing support behind their preferred candidates in the primary contests themselves. They could no longer guarantee a win, but they could shape the choices voters faced and even nudge voters toward a party-approved choice. From about 1980 to the present, the parties were largely successful in determining presidential nominees, although with several notable failures. In 2016, Republican Party leaders agreed on little, but most agreed that Donald Trump was too unreliable, too self-interested, and too ignorant of party commitments and the norms of American politics to be their party's best choice. But the post-reform system that parties were using to sway the nominations required more than just opposing Trump; it required them to choose an alternative. Without that, the choice fell back to the dynamics that Nelson Polsby described, and a narrowly factional candidate won, just as he would have predicted.

As Hans Hassell (2017) and others have argued, the parties also shape the outcomes of congressional nominations in a similar way. But there, too, their influence

1 This process illustrates how unintentionally interdependent the parties' internal rules are with state laws. The Democrats' demand for more primaries was met by state legislatures, who provided primaries to all parties.

2 Austin Raney argues that reformers expected to create more opportunities for rank-and-file voters to meet and deliberate, such as in the caucuses that a few states still have.

is one of many forces. The low-level of information and participation in primaries often makes it harder for the informal methods that parties must use to prevail.

Saving democracy by saving parties?

If democracy requires parties, and our democratic institutions have consistently hindered them, are there ways to reform our institutions to make parties, and democracy, healthier?

Unfortunately, it is clearly not enough just to make parties strong again. For one reason, "strong" is not a simple thing for parties. As Julia Azari (2016a) noted, the political parties of today are weaker institutionally, but their followers are still quite loyal, a toxic combination she labels "weak parties with strong partisanship." The combination is toxic because, as we noted above, voters who reliably vote for their party's candidates are expecting those candidates to meet the standards of their party. Weak parties are less able to ensure those candidates do so.

Few political scientists would say that the Republican Party in the United States is a healthy, well-functioning party.[3] If a party is supposed to shape an agenda and brand for the voters to choose, then nominating Donald Trump in 2016 was a misstep—one that many Republicans observed at the time (Burns, Haberman, and Martin 2016). And the anti-democratic impulses that Trump encouraged—questioning the outcome of legitimate elections without evidence—have pulled the party into a dangerous place. Now that these elements have control of the party, they are empowered by the party institutions one might hope would have restrained them a few years earlier. Now anti-democratic forces within the Republican Party can make the decisions about what kind of primaries to hold, who should hold party leadership posts, even the nature of the party's platform. Institutions that could have helped the party and American democracy in 2016 might just be hurting them today.

There is less consensus on the nature of dysfunction in the Democratic Party,[4] but there, too, increasing the power of party leadership could be problematic. We do not believe that the Democratic National Committee conspired to deprive Sen. Bernie Sanders of the presidential nomination in 2016 or 2020, nor do we think they could have. But the perception among many likely Democratic coalition members is that the "elites" have too much power. This led to the compromise in 2018 to strip unpledged delegates (often called "Superdelegates") of their vote on the first ballot at the national convention.

In other words, while we think the United States needs responsible parties at the center of its democracy, (1) the existing parties do not always act responsibly, and (2) many Americans are wary of their taking up that responsibility.

Some reformers conclude from this that, since our parties have lost some control over their nominations and their agendas, we should stop looking to them to fill that role and should instead develop new institutions that do not need parties. The political science research we have outlined above yields two important cautions: efforts to block parties generally fail to exclude them altogether, and the party-weakened alternatives that emerge are often worse than what existed before.

As alternatives, the research offers a few paths toward better party-based democracy. The 1950 APSA commission's report issued a series of recommendations,

3 See for instance Azari 2016b, Blum 2020, Skocpol 2016, Balz 2023, Caldwell and Meyer 2022.

4 See Azari 2021a, 2021b, Bernstein 2021, Farrell 2019.

including one that is often overlooked. The commission called for more research on political parties, perhaps an obvious recommendation from a group of academics (American Political Science Association 1950). But we think that *everyone* interested in improving American democracy ought to be paying more attention to political parties, from academics to reformers, journalists to politicians. This means not just building on the existing academic knowledge presented in this volume, but in the framing of any new information gathering, in these several ways:

First, political parties should be a central consideration of any reform proposal. The question should not be limited to how would this reform change the candidates that run or that win, but rather how would this reform change how political parties fill their roles.

Consider, for instance, reforms that aim to sidestep the role of parties in choosing nominees. There are several, including ranked choice voting in single-member districts, top two or final-five voting, or "blanket primaries." In all cases, multiple candidates from each party compete together in a round of voting that takes the place of partisan primaries. In some cases, ballot formats address some of the problems of having many choices, such as allowing voters to rank several options. But in all of these models, the formal role that the party plays in selecting the candidates that will run under their banner is circumvented.

Such institutions do not need to undermine parties. Australia uses a system like these, the alternative vote, in which voters rank their choices in a single-member district. But Australia has a robust party system, in part because its other institutions are nurturing to political parties. We need to better appreciate how America's decentralized, informal parties will react to these reforms. In California's top-two primary system, for instance, there is evidence that party organizations can act to communicate to voters who is the party-endorsed candidate among the many with the same party label (Kousser et al. 2015).

But how do parties do that work with ranked-choice ballots? Candidates in ranked-choice elections have an incentive to discourage co-partisans from supporting their same-party rivals while parties want voters to rank all of the candidates of the same party. Candidates have struggled with both of these messages in recent elections with transferable votes (Blake 2022a; Scribner 2022). With fierce intraparty conflict on the same ballot as inter-party conflict, the party's job in communicating to voters is that much harder. Findings like these raise serious questions about whether most forms of ranked-choice ballots would help political parties do their job in the U.S. context, absent other reforms.

Second, as we seek to strengthen American democracy, the role of parties should be central in reporting on and understanding of legislation and policymaking. Compared to a half-century ago, the modern Congress is incredibly partisan. But it is also often seemingly dysfunctional. This dysfunction may come in part from the narrowness of the majorities that each party has been able to assemble (Lee 2016). Such parties have little incentive to compromise.

Observers sometimes suggest that merely sending more moderates to Congress would make things function more smoothly. But with these narrow majorities, it is often the self-identified moderates who create the most difficulty for party cohesion (see, e.g., Blake 2022b; Davidson 2020; Leonhardt 2022; Noel 2021; Widdicombe 2022). Such difficulties can also expose the limits of the majority party's power in shepherding through its agenda.

That is, parties are not just important for elections. They are important for governing. It is common to define political parties primarily in terms of their goal of capturing control of government. But American democracy does not elect a policy dictator. Policymaking continues after the election with coalition formation and management. Parties are at the center of that process. The U.S. political system is famously shot through with veto points. The separation of powers requires coalitions to form across chambers and branches, and at multiple levels of the federal system. Such coalition-formation is deliberately hard. The starting position for that process is the coalitions shaped by the political parties.

Third, we need to more thoughtfully explore the nature of our two-party system. Some observers find unique value in the two party system (Rosenbluth and Shapiro 2018), but many have lately noted that a robust multiparty system would address some of the concerns raised above (Drutman 2020). With only two choices, voters have a particularly blunt instrument to express their dissatisfaction with a party that embraces anti-democratic views. Even Republicans who are greatly bothered by anti-democratic candidates within their party still consider those options better than whoever the Democrats are putting up. And under a two-party system, factions with very significant differences must find harmony in one of two enduring coalitions.

The United States offers significant barriers to a multiparty system, in much the same way that it offers barriers to robust parties in the first place. Political scientists have long understood that Duverger's Law (1954), which ties our first-past-the-post electoral rules to a two-party system, is far from an iron law.[5] And only the United States has quite so firmly established two parties. But only the United States combines plurality rule single-member districts with presidentialism based on an Electoral College and primary elections that allow factions to express their independence within established parties.

Given this context, a change from our two-party system would likely take more than one or two minor reforms. Ranked-choice voting is unlikely to encourage multipartyism without multi-member districts. The most common challenges to the two-party "duopoly" are from independent candidates or from broad anti-party movements such as No Labels or Andrew Yang's Forward Party. There are more fundamental questions calling us to collectively imagine what American institutions would let vibrant, programmatic parties thrive, perhaps many of them.

Finally, however, institutions alone probably will not save us. America's political culture remains suspicious of political parties. Any reforms to empower parties, if implemented in a democratic way, would run afoul of that suspicion.

That need not be an insurmountable obstacle. Political leaders can and have led citizens to a richer understanding of the needs of democracy. Just as we want to shore up America's commitment to inclusive, multiethnic democracy, we should shore up America's respect for the role of groups of citizens, organized together to advance political goals through the electoral system. Those groups will organize—as political parties—regardless of what institutions we throw at them. Better to encourage them to act responsibly than to fight them.

A better understanding of political parties in all of these aspects of our politics would, we think, help empower American democracy at its current critical moment.

5 Maurice Duverger (1954) himself may have over-stated the tendency, but even he acknowledged that it was only a tendency: "The simple-majority single-ballot system favors the two-party system."

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CHAPTER 14

Conclusion

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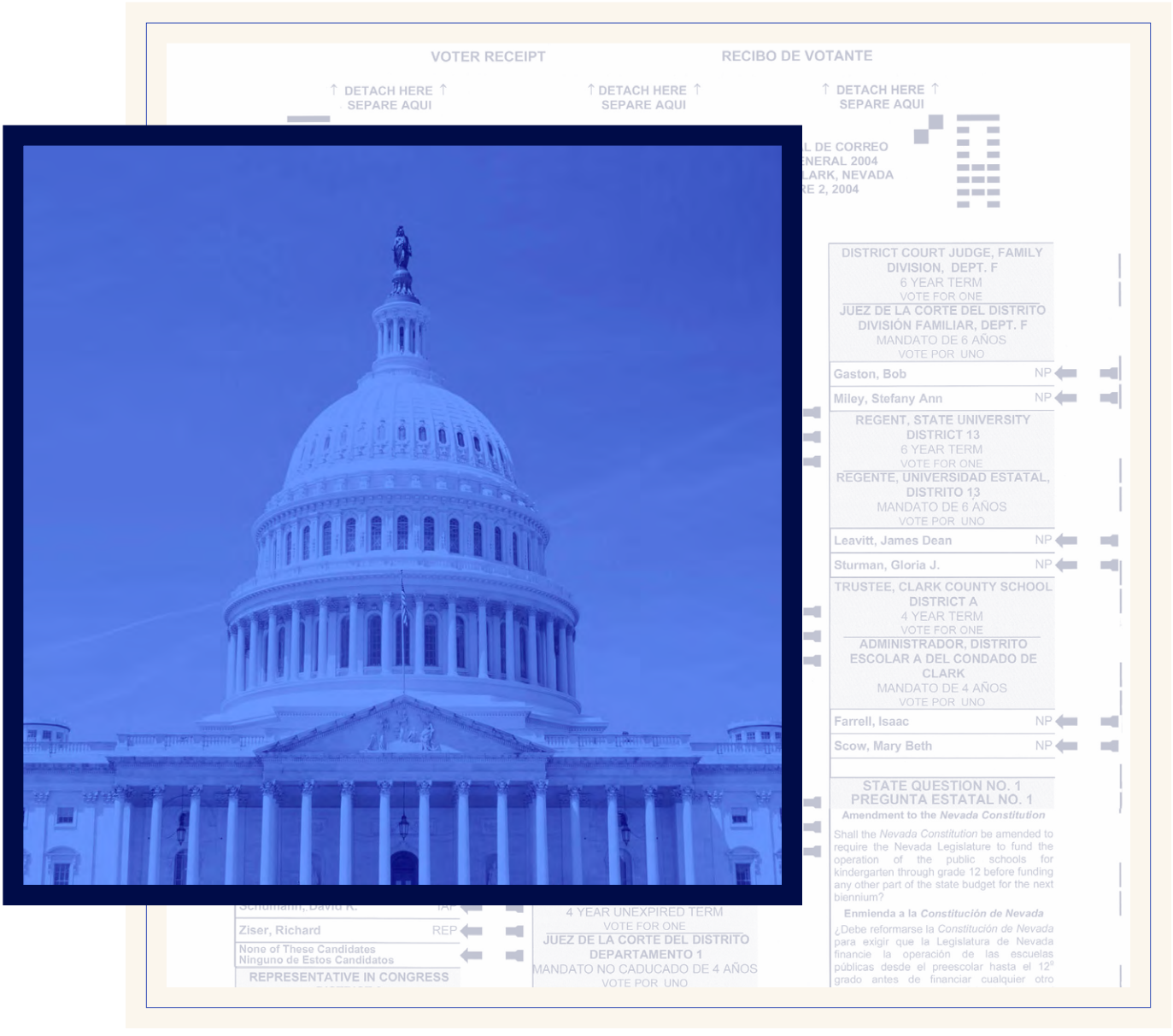

This report exists because political scientists are alarmed by the real possibility of serious democratic backsliding in the United States. Parties and partisanship have played and are playing a central role in this deepening problem. While the 2022 midterm elections have been interpreted as a rebuke of some of the worst forms of anti-democratic extremism on display in recent years, the threat to democracy remains. We cannot rely on voters alone to save democracy, especially considering the institutional weaknesses described by Christina Wolbrecht, Jake Grumbach, and Rachel Beatty Riedl in prior chapters.

As former APSA President John Ishiyama outlined in his forward, we need our political parties to act more responsibly. While the 1950 APSA report recommended more disciplined parties, Ishiyama focuses on the need for parties to behave better. Beyond their central role in advancing personal and policy agendas, parties are key institutions who have a sacred trust that requires adherence to democratic norms and the prioritization of protecting our democracy and making it function.

Like the earlier report, this one is a product of its times. Traditionally, our two major parties have been described as big tents—cacophonous and often unwieldy efforts to combine groups and interests behind a label to gain election. But today, partisans increasingly view members of the other party not just as political opponents but as deep threats to both the Republic and their way of life. Whereas messy compromise was once the hallmark of politics both between and within parties, party leaders in both the public and Congress increasingly demand discipline and loyalty behind an agenda from their followers and an unflinching commitment to victory over the greater good.

The Worst Case

Chapters in this report by Katherine Tate, Lilliana Mason, Zoltan Hajnal, and Keneshia Grant and Marcus Board, Jr. identify some powerful roots of the current conflict in debates over social and political equality. This conflict poses two very different visions for America that increasingly cast the other as an existential threat to their way of life and even the Republic. When the parties disagree about the nature of truth, citizenship, and the scope of democracy, common governance is damaged.

The partisan fight over social equality has heightened the emphasis on racial, ethnic and religious identities and brought some of the nation's deepest rifts into the voting booth (Mason 2018). Heightened emphasis on identity issues and comparative status by Democrats and Republicans has torn at the social fabric (Kalmoe and Mason 2022). As the share of white Christian Americans has declined and social change has rapidly spread, Republicans have cast themselves as defenders against moral collapse. Democrats view themselves as advocates for even more progress toward pluralism and political equality.

These battles haven't been limited to fiercely fought campaigns. Within institutions, adherence to norms has declined (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2019). The perceived legitimacy of the Supreme Court, previously the most trusted of the three branches of government, has taken a beating (Haglin et al. 2022). Parties fight ruthlessly over nominations with Republican Senate majorities refusing to even consider nominations from Democratic presidents. Supreme Court decisions striking down longstanding precedents on hot-button

issues like abortion and voting rights have sharply divided Americans and rolled back rights that many Americans had considered to be well-protected.

Outside institutions, America has seen an increase in intimidation at the polls and even violence (Edlin and Baker 2022). Most obviously, an insurrection attempted to overturn the democratic outcome of the 2020 presidential election, followed by years of election rejection from extremist right-wing candidates. Though electoral fraud remains virtually non-existent, false fraud claims have undermined the legitimacy of elections and served as a useful pretext for efforts to restrict the right to vote (Feldman 2020). Republicans cast Democratic efforts to ease access to the franchise as designed to benefit their party and even promote fraud. Democrats see Republicans restricting voting rights for millions of Democrats and voters of color. Responsible parties would work together to expand access to the franchise in a way that accommodates reasonable security concerns and reinforces electoral legitimacy. That isn't happening.

The well-being of the nation falls aside when political leaders choose division and distraction as political strategies.

The potential remains for escalating political violence, further democratic breakdown, and an American government that is largely unresponsive to the needs of its people. When leaders prioritize partisan victory over national success, voters are left choosing between enemies and allies instead of evaluating candidates and performance. The well-being of the nation falls aside when political leaders choose division and distraction as political strategies. We hope that the insights from this report help to avert further democratic breakdown.

American Democracy Today

As Susan Scarrow notes in this report, trust in political institutions is low, which can serve as a healthy check on political leaders but also may gradually undermine their legitimacy. Trump-allied Republicans have repeatedly attacked the legitimacy of American elections, most infamously during the January 6th attack and failed coup attempt at the U.S. Capitol. Beyond further eroding public trust in government, these actions represent an erosion of political norms that ultimately undergird any political system during the day-to-day operation of government. These problems are not unique to the United States. In much of the world, new populist and anti-system parties are grabbing votes and even power in both new and well-established democracies.

Beyond threats to democratic institutions that are the heart of American civic values and our national project, partisan conflict and anti-democratic extremism increasingly prevent the government from functioning as it should. Showing a wise desire to protect liberty and freedom, the Founders separated powers among the executive, legislature, and the judiciary. But this separation means that compromise is required to make government work, especially since enacting legislation requires consent from a House, Senate, and President elected by different means. Control of these institutions is often split between the parties, which often prioritize blocking the initiatives of the other—if only to deny the other side a victory—even on pressing issues that seem open to compromise through the "pulling and hauling" of the legislative process. Public opinion is increasingly disconnected from government action in this environment.

Hope in Reform

Parties were formerly much more ideologically diverse than today, with primaries that encourage candidates to hew to strident positions often viewed as the culprit.

But abolishing or tweaking primaries is no panacea. Seth Masket and Hans Noel explain that there is little evidence that primaries now result in nominees more extreme than the party membership, so other nomination mechanisms would likely change little. Even opening primaries to independents or all voters has little effect, since this change primarily attracts unaffiliated voters who agree with the extremes. Consider that in 2016, the unaffiliated participants in open presidential primaries were more likely to vote for Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders than other more moderate alternatives.

At the same time, primaries have led us into a political cul-de-sac. Expecting the situation to change while maintaining the same incentive structure appears a triumph of hope over experience. Two chapters here suggest potential alterations to our electoral system with greater potential to break current logjams than open primaries. Jack Santucci, Matthew Shugart, and Michael Latner discuss the possibilities for open list proportional representation. Contrary to our current winner-take-all system, this could allow parties to win a share of seats that roughly corresponds to their share of votes, with voters having a say on which candidates within each party receive seats. Rather than encouraging sharply competing political forces to remain uneasily united within two major parties, it could allow multiple parties to form, which would enable both majority rule and varying governing coalitions.

Alternatively, David Lublin and Benjamin Reilly explain the potential virtues of ranked choice reforms, particularly final-five voting. Polarization has decimated the moderates that greased the wheels of dealmaking in Congress by making it hard for them to survive party primaries where victory is needed to advance to the general election. Final-five voting eliminates the party primary and would allow candidates with a range of views, including moderates, to advance to the general election. It provides incentives during campaigns and while governing for candidates to reach out to other voters in order to amass majority coalitions.

This report is not designed to advocate for any particular set of reforms but instead to inform the debate. The literature is discouraging on the possibilities for ameliorating the partisan and extremist incentives that inhibit the function of the federal government and erode democratic norms and institutions. However, experimentation has been one of the virtues of America's federal system. Some states, like Alaska and Maine, are already trying out new ranked choice systems. Proportional representation perhaps requires a shift from a candidate to party centered system. But strong partisanship makes this a much smaller leap than in the past and open list approaches allow candidate choice. Importantly, any changes will have to consider not only their ideological impact but the representation of America's highly diverse population. Fortunately, neither proportional representation nor ranked choice are inherently inimical to maintaining these gains and may even provide new opportunities for inclusion. We remain hopeful that change is possible.

The Road Ahead

Regardless of the choices made by potential reformers, we are likely in for a long commitment to the project of protecting American democracy. The goal remains a functioning, representative, pluralistic American democracy capable of protecting and empowering all its citizens—with a realistic assessment of authoritarian threats, wherever they originate. We hope this report provides a solid grounding for reformers, so that they have the tools to make quick progress in the most productive directions. The project of protecting American democracy is urgent.

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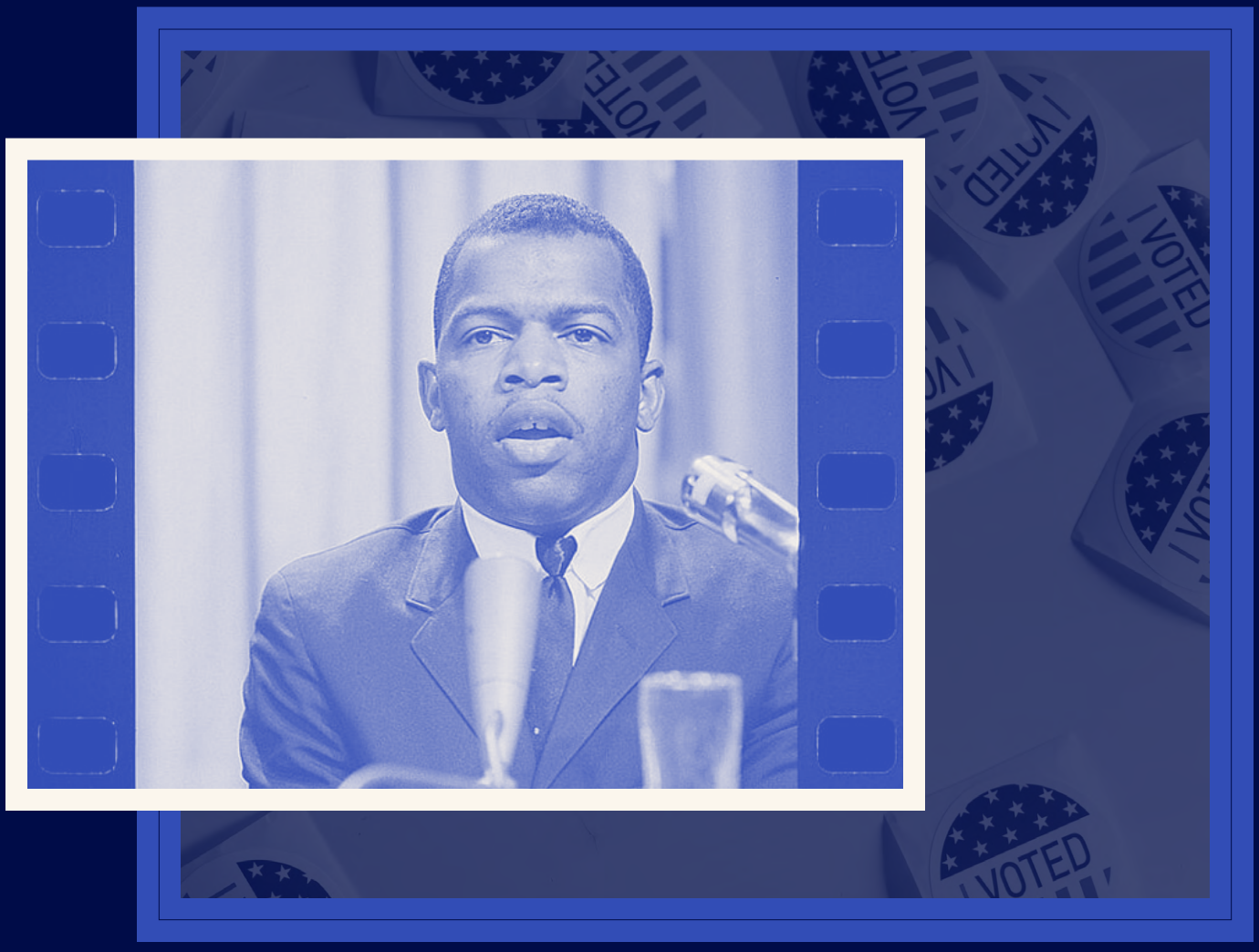
AFTERWORD

Lessons for Practitioners: From Understanding to Action

JENNIFER DRESDEN, Protect Democracy



Any final reflection on this report must begin with gratitude and appreciation. The report that the task force has produced is a tremendous synthesis of the leading research in the field. Those of us engaged in the day-to-day work of strengthening and securing American democracy for future generations owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the task force who have dedicated their time and deep expertise to this effort. We similarly owe our appreciation to the American Political Science Association for recognizing the scope and gravity of the challenges facing our democracy and contributing to the search for solutions in a way that only APSA could.

When staff at Protect Democracy and APSA first began discussion of this project in 2021, the challenge was clear to all involved. The United States is facing fundamental challenges to our democracy that have emerged or metastasized in a way not experienced in the country in many years. Advocates and policymakers have pursued viable solutions to some of these challenges and continue to explore and debate the merits of many more.

But American political parties stand out as a persistent vulnerability in the system. So far, solutions have been in short supply despite the fact that scholars have studied political parties as central actors in democratic and authoritarian systems for decades. The preceding pages are full of lessons and empirically-grounded wisdom. All Americans sincerely looking to understand how we got to where we are and how we might move forward would do well to take the time to read the report in full.

Given necessary limitations of space, the goal of this afterword is to draw out the essential lessons for those pursuing solutions to American political parties' current challenges. These are not specific reforms, but rather three key principles that together should serve as a north star to guide reformers.

First, **political parties are essential to U.S. democracy**. Public antipathy toward political parties is widespread, and the current major parties have countless shortcomings—yet parties play essential roles in our democracy. Parties connect voters to the political process, mobilizing supporters at elections and offering them a way to identify the candidates that align with their values and ideas. Parties provide opportunities for aspiring office holders to gain skills and support, and they organize the very process of governing—helping elected officials work together to advance a policy agenda without having to build a new coalition for every issue. And parties are essential gatekeepers. They should be a first line of defense in preventing would-be authoritarians from hijacking our democratic system and undermining it from within.

Without political parties, democracy would be even more chaotic, inefficient, and opaque than it is today. Advocates should keep the central role of political parties in mind as they pursue reforms. Would a given change to our electoral system or an alteration of party rules make it easier for parties to serve these gatekeeping, organizing, and representative functions? Or would they prevent parties from doing so, inadvertently weakening our democracy? The recent history of our politics might leave some wishing that their preferred faction might have been freed of partisan constraints. But, in general, reforms that weaken parties open far more space for damage to our democracy's health. Institutionalized,

democratic parties, not seemingly-savior candidates, should be the focus of our goal setting.

Second, **we must recognize the difference between implementation and experimentation**. Our work should be grounded in the existing, rigorous body of research to the greatest extent possible. In some cases, the implications of years of policy research may clearly point towards a particular approach.

In other areas, however, a rigorous reading of the empirical record offers no such consensus. Reading the typical political column in a newspaper or listening to the typical political podcast, one would never know that many political scientists today do not see party primaries as the principal drivers of political polarization among elected officials. One would never know the range of options for electoral system reforms or the very real tradeoffs and unknowns that political scientists assess among them. In these contexts, thoughtful innovation and experimentation may offer promising paths forward. But that is a different undertaking than implementing policy on which the vast majority of experts agree.

The job of advocates is, of course, to advocate. But the reform process would benefit from humility in acknowledging areas where the evidence does not clearly mediate in favor of a single solution and boldness in pursuing change where it does. Democratic politics is far from a technocracy, but we do ourselves a disservice in policymaking if we do not consider the full breadth of evidence available to us. Where there is debate among experts, we can still use that to understand the potential benefits of a reform, the potential stakes of failure, and the political tradeoffs that such a reform entails.

Third, **the ultimate benchmarks for any future reform are simple: Does the reform strengthen our democracy, leaving it more representative and effective? Does it make our democracy more resilient and better able to withstand authoritarian threats?**

Concerns over extremism and asymmetric polarization in American politics very often dominate conversations about our country's democratic health, and for good reason. Yet as the chapters in the report make clear, the failure of our political parties to behave responsibly—to live up to the norms of forbearance and mutual toleration—is inextricably linked to an array of other challenges. Polarization is a problem that can only be solved in context.

Reforming political parties to incentivize responsible behavior will require wrestling with their history and current reality of racial inclusion and exclusion. It will require thinking about the ways that parties incorporate organized interests, as well as the multiple ways that incorporation can fail—either collapsing into exclusion or ballooning into factional capture. It will require tackling the thorny challenges of party government in our current system. Among the most important jobs of parties in a democracy is to enable organization and cooperation across the political system. Advocates' work going forward will need to encompass how those needs are met even outside of elections and within the halls of Congress and statehouses.

In short, the outcome of any reform effort is never certain, but we are not walking blind. Generations of scholars have dedicated their lives to rigorously interrogating the ways that parties can serve as the connective tissue of democracy and evaluating explanations for when they fail to do so. The task force has collected that knowledge and wisdom in a format that is accessible and usable for policymakers, advocates, and the public.

It is a firm foundation on which to now build.

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MORE THAN RED AND BLUE:
POLITICAL PARTIES AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

ASPA PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON POLITICAL PARTIES