

# Interest Groups and Democratic Legitimacy

## Analyzing the Influence and Impact of Interest Groups on Elections/Results

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### Introduction or Abstract

#### My introduction

James Madison warned the American government that the establishment and/or expansion of factions will lead to the deterrence of Democracy. Factions or interest groups, as they will be referred to as in this research, have illustrated biased tendencies when it comes down to their decisions making. Simply put, people within a specific interest group will pursue their own interests and exclude any actions or decisions that may benefit the opposition. In this research we will explore the effects interests' groups bias and how it has affected American Democracy through actions taken by voters themselves, such as assigning blame, making limited economic voting decisions, absolute trust in the media and most importantly of all, the decrease in the overall amount of confidence in knowledge about candidate's political agenda. We will further explore the influence of having a majority two-party government has had and will continue to have upon our government. In addition, to analyzing how the increased growth and trust of media information has led to many misinformed Americans to base their political knowledge off of.

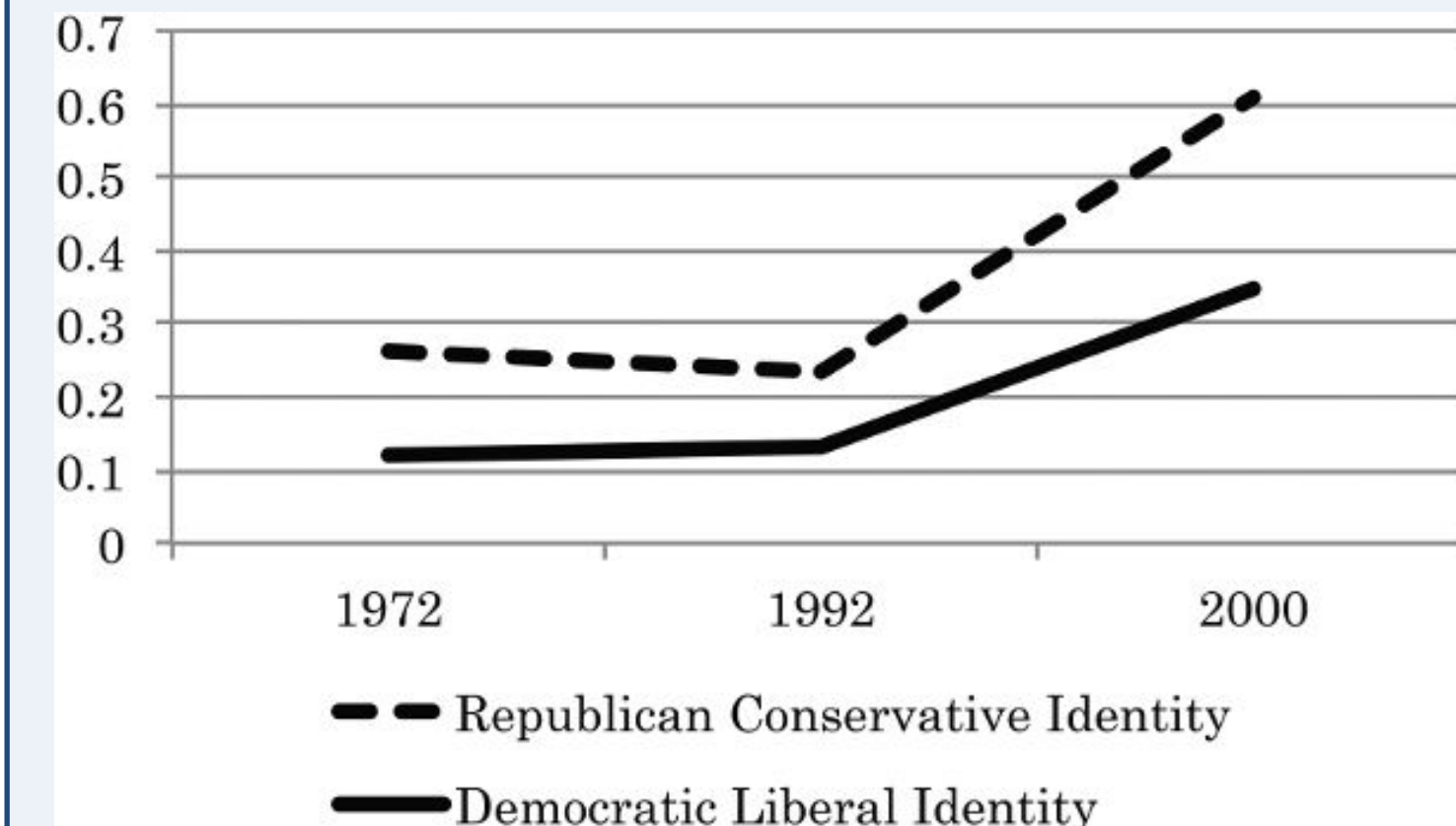


Figure 3.2 Identity Based Ideology

The following graph illustrates the problem being studied in this research as a clear significantly increasing pattern is illustrated stemming since 1992 during former President Bush's term.

### Objectives

#### My objectives

The objective of this research is to shed light into the various reasons that lead voters to form decisions and/or opinions of prominent issues or candidates that have been influenced by their very own interest groups. The incredible rise and influence of interest groups has led to the formation of a group of people who have contributed to affective polarization. The term refers to the phenomenon where individuals' feelings and emotions towards members of their own political party or group become more positive, while their feelings towards members of the opposing party or group become more negative. Simply put, interest groups have given their members a sense of extremely high confidence that leads them to believe in whatever members of the in-group say is correct. Furthermore, they have developed a feeling superiority amongst American politics that their group is the most important and the most influential. Since the rise of interest groups, people have willingly surrounded themselves in an environment that only encompasses their own interests and reinforces their thoughts. Thus, the objective of this research is to indicate the future implications the strong polarization amongst interest groups will have on democracy and its integrity to uphold the well-being of the majority.

With this research we hope to find a growing pattern amongst voters who have based their voting decisions by factors that do not pertain to politics at all.

### Research & Data

#### My research and data:

Based on the research conducted by Lilliana Mason and Nathan Kalmoe in "Radical American Partisanship: Mapping Violent Hostility, Its Causes, and the Consequences for Democracy" we are introduced to the irrationality of partisan. The American public's reluctance to engage in informed research prior to casting their votes reflects a concerning and growing trend of ignorance in politics. However, despite the abundance of resources available, many voters have blatantly neglected the want or need to do research, which has led to decisions based on emotion rather than evidence. The partisan is further increased by the influence of political groups, which have created an environment where members are conditioned to believe that only their opinions are true and valid, that their group is the majority, and their actions are justified. Research was done from many different surveys and authors, however, Kalmoe and Mason had the best visual representation of this disparity.

#### The data below contributes to illustrate just how much partisanship has grown and its possible effects on voting and the validity of Democracy:

-In November 2017, just over 60 percent of partisans believed the opposing party was a "serious threat to the United States and its people."

-Forty percent described the opposing party as "evil." And nearly 20 percent agreed that people in the opposing party "lack the traits to be considered fully human- they behave like animals".

-The figure to the right shows 60% Republicans and 60% of Democrats Agree that the other party is a Serious threat to the U.S.

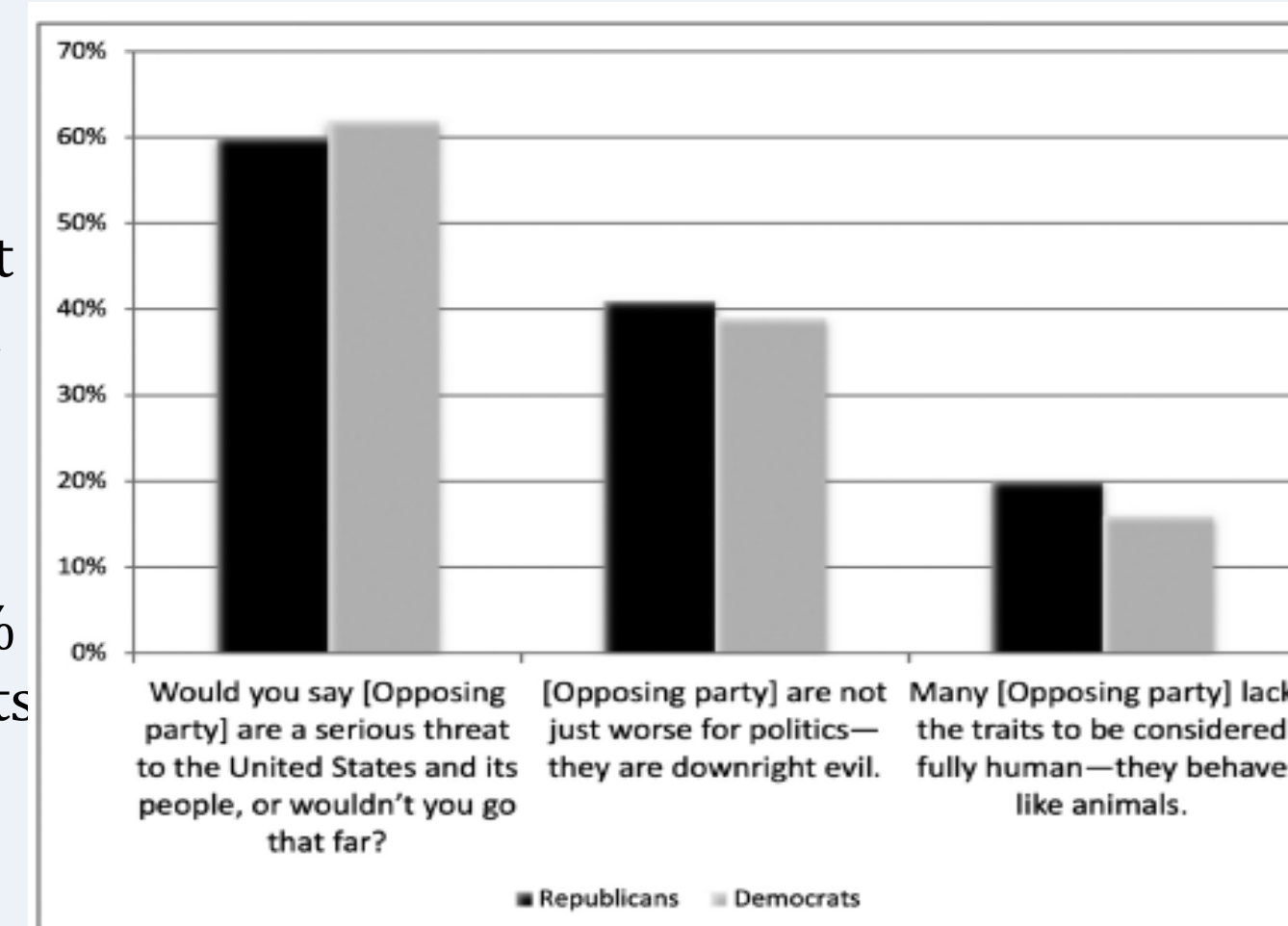


Figure 4.3 Partisan symmetry in moral disengagement. Data from the 2017 election survey

-20% of Republicans and 16% of Democrats characterized their opponents as behaving "like animals"

### Results

#### My results

Our research reveals a troubling reality in American politics in which many voters rely on emotions and unrelated events to make their decisions, rather than considering the facts. Interest groups worsen the situation by creating division, making members feel like they're the majority and their needs matter most. This has led to more societal divides and increased political violence, like the January 6th attack on the Capitol. People blindly follow leaders and extreme ideas pushed by these groups. Plus, the gap between Democrats and Republicans keeps getting wider, making it harder to talk things out. Fixing this mess means we need to encourage critical thinking, bring everyone to the table, and respect democratic norms.

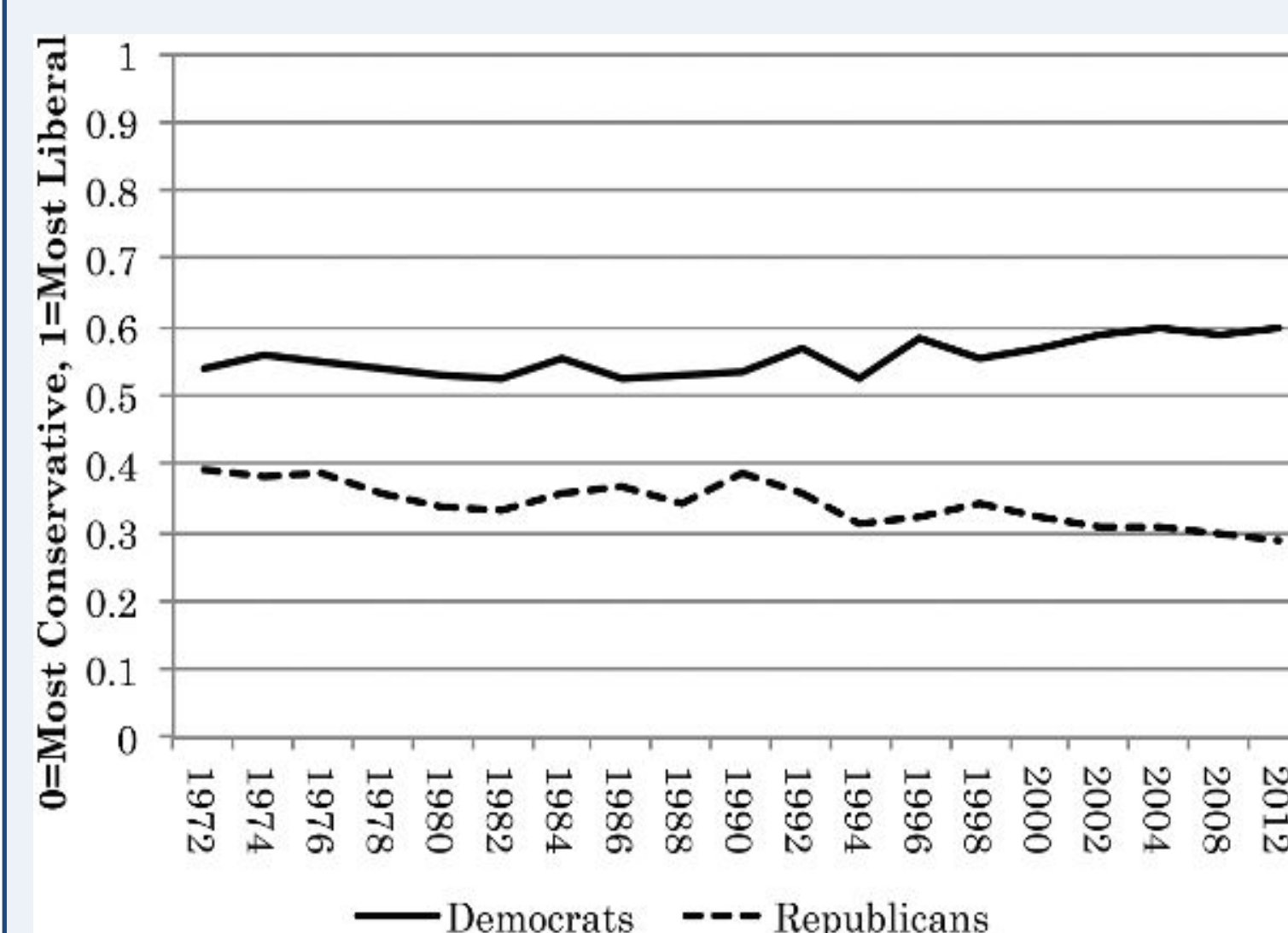


Figure 3.1 Traditional Measure of Ideology 1972-2012

The figure demonstrates the results of voter's outlook on each others' parties when asked whether liberals and conservatives are "people who are most like you in their ideas and interest and feelings about things". Leading us to analyze strong results that the partisan amongst political groups has been and will continue to increase causing each political group to separate more and more each year.

### Conclusion

#### My conclusion

The influence of interest groups on elections and their outcomes cannot be underestimated. These groups have mastered the art of tapping into people's emotions and have somehow swayed unrelated (even at times non-political events such as sports and other major media) events to sway public opinion in their favor. The data has indicated that interest groups are convincing their members that they represent the majority and that their needs are the most important, as a result interest groups have increased divides within the American public and increased political polarization. One of the prime examples discussed all throughout is the events of January 6<sup>th</sup>, which was a perfect example of the potential consequences extremism and blind and party allegiance could lead to. Although it is clear that interest groups will continue to play a significant role in shaping electoral outcomes, it could seriously impact or even lead to the downfall of American democracy.

In addition to the influence of interest groups, the rise of social media platforms and users has further contributed to partisan divides in American politics. These platforms have served as "echo chambers" that amplify extremist viewpoints and continue to reinforce pre-existing beliefs even if they are wrong. As a result, polarization increases. Thus, it is important to address and study all aspects politics that lead people to willingly neglect education-based votes.

### References

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