



Parties face ideological splits

Reid Wilson

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The coalitions that make up both major political parties are as deeply distrustful of the other side as ever. But within those coalitions, both parties face their own ideological disunity, even on issues that are central to their respective identities as the center right and center left of the American political spectrum.

A new [study from the Pew Research Center](#) finds the Republican base divided along economic and educational lines on issues such as immigration and America's role in the world, both staples of President Trump's agenda.

The same report finds Democratic voters divided over the role of government, and whether that role extends to American commitments overseas, a hint at the changing shape of the coalition that twice elected [Barack Obama](#).

The survey highlights the growing debates in both parties about their future direction, one underscored by ongoing battles between President Trump and Republican leaders like former President George W. Bush and Sen. [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.), and between liberals who back Sen. [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.) and more centrist Democrats who control the party's few remaining levers of power.

On the Republican side, Trump's biggest fans are among those Pew labels as "core conservatives," mostly financially stable men who hold traditionally conservative views, and "country first conservatives," who are older, less well educated and skeptical of immigrants and globalism.

Both support Trump in huge numbers. But three-quarters of country first conservatives say immigrants are a burden to the United States because they take jobs and government benefits, while only 43 percent of core conservatives agree. More than two-thirds of core conservatives say American involvement in the global economy is good for markets and growth, something with which just four in 10 country first conservatives agree.

A similar divide exists over the economy: Three-quarters of core conservatives say the U.S. economic system is generally fair, while only half of country first conservatives agree.

“There’s support for the president, but there’s division on these issues that are at the forefront of his own agenda,” said Carroll Doherty, the Pew Research Center’s director of political research.

The schism within the GOP has been on full view over the past week, after Bush used a speech in New York to castigate the inward-looking nature of Trump’s "America First" agenda, without naming Trump himself.

“We’ve seen nationalism distorted into nativism, forgotten the dynamism that immigration has always brought to America,” Bush said last week. “We see a fading confidence in the value of free markets and international trade, forgetting that conflict, instability and poverty follow in the wake of protectionism.”

In a speech to the California Republican Party, Stephen Bannon, the former chief strategist in Trump’s White House, took several deeply personal shots at Bush and his worldview.

“President Bush, to me, embarrassed himself,” Bannon told state Republicans. “Speechwriter wrote a highfalutin speech. It’s clear he didn’t understand anything that he was talking about. He equates the industrial revolution, the agriculture revolution, globalization. He has no earthly idea whether he is coming or going — just like it was when he was president of the United States.”

Democrats face their own schisms, illustrated by the ongoing power struggle between the Sanders wing of the party and its present leaders.

Among Democrats, the most reliably liberal group, dubbed the "solid liberals," are more likely to believe that hard work and determination is no guarantee of success for most people. Younger, less affluent liberals, dubbed opportunity Democrats, disagree: Three-quarters said they would be able to get ahead if they work hard.

A third group of Democratic voters, a crowd of economically challenged minorities, is more likely to think America should focus its efforts at home, rather than overseas. That group also holds more culturally conservative views: Nearly two-thirds say it is necessary to believe in God to be a moral person, a view shared by just 9 percent of solid liberals and a third of opportunity Democrats.

The two things both sides agree on is their view of President Trump, and their view of each other. Republicans broadly approve of the job Trump is doing in office, while Democrats are almost universally opposed. Views of Trump’s performance while in office are more polarized between the two parties than views of any president in the past six decades.

The poll found Democratic voters are motivated in large part by their opposition to Trump. More than half of solid liberals said the knowledge that a friend had voted for Trump would strain the relationship.

Nearly four in ten solid liberals had attended a political event or an organized protest, and almost half, 49 percent, have contributed money to a political candidate. Among core conservatives, the next-most engaged segment of the electorate, 32 percent had given to a candidate.

Republicans and Democrats view the other side with a degree of skepticism, even loathing, that is unprecedented in modern politics.

“The defining feature of modern American politics isn’t fissures within parties, it’s fissures between parties,” said Rob Griffin, a political scientist at the Center for American Progress and

George Washington University. “In an era of hyper-partisanship, people are going to end up supporting their own tribe when it really matters. Not necessarily because they love their own party, but because they fear the other.”

Another Pew Research Center study this year found eight in 10 Democrats and Republicans have an unfavorable view of the other party, and nearly half see the other side in a very unfavorable light.

“It appears that increasing numbers of partisans believe their political opponents are driven by nefarious intentions, not genuine political disagreements,” said Emily Ekins, director of polling at the Cato Institute.

The two sides are increasingly polarized along cultural lines, as well. Democratic-leaning groups are more likely to say that reading books or going to museums are activities they enjoy. Republican-leaning groups are far more likely to say they enjoy hunting and shooting.

Amid the polarized electorate, Americans are increasingly pessimistic about the future of the country. Just over a quarter, 28 percent, of all voters say life for the next generation will be better than it is today. Almost half, 48 percent, say it will be worse.

The Pew Research Center’s political typology report relied on interviews with more than 5,000 American adults over two long windows in June and July. The margin of error for the full sample is plus or minus 1.6 percentage points.