The Effects of the Nonpartisan Blanket Primary on Electoral Change in Louisiana, 1964-2003

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Persuaded by the Echoes of Their Own Voices: How Cognitive Biases Crucially Influenced the Bush Administration’s Decision to Go to War with Iraq
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This study argues that the conventional wisdom of a broad failure of the U.S. intelligence community prior the 2003 War in Iraq mistakenly ignores the oversized influence of the Pentagon’s Office of Special Plans, whose repeated and colossal errors in judgment were the direct cause of mistaken beliefs about the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and ties to terrorist organizations. This paper details six crucial erroneous judgments of the Bush Administration’s intelligence analysts and evaluates the connection of those policies to the predictably irrational effects of cognitive bias. The cognitive biases approach ultimately offers a compelling explanation for why top administration officials not only made serious errors in judgment but also ignored consistent and compelling evidence that contradicted their faulty assessments. The paper concludes that the errors made by intelligence analysts and the consumers of that intelligence neatly align with the predictions of a bounded rationality model that takes into account the effects of cognitive bias.

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Do the institutional differences of state election laws help to explain the uneven process of electoral change in the Deep South during the last quarter of the 20th Century? Previous research on Southern electoral change has studied the effects of numerous variables within an assumed context of similar electoral institutions. This paper examines the unique institution of Louisiana’s nonpartisan blanket primary through a comparative study of Deep South state legislative elections between 1964 (the first election following the passage of the Civil Rights Act) and 2003 (the last election before Hurricane Katrina in 2005). Employing statistical and spatial analysis, regression, and elite interviews, this paper finds three initial effects of the nonpartisan blanket primary on electoral change that have faded with the increase in two-party competition: impact on candidate number, impact on party performance, and an impact as a direct result of the set of unique electoral situations created, such as single party run-off elections and candidate election through a single electoral primary.