CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

SCANNING SOUTHERN POLITICS for signs that the Republicans would replace the Democrats as the majority party used to be as futile as waiting for Godot.[1] In *The Emerging Republican Majority*, Kevin Phillips foresaw that Republicans would quickly gain an edge in presidential elections.[2] However, the pace of Republican gains below the presidential level was exceedingly slow in the former Confederate states as Democrats maintained their edge in all offices. The Democratic edge, moreover, was not a small one. For nearly three decades after the Civil Rights Movement transformed southern politics, the Democrats held the preponderance of governorships as well as congressional seats. Democratic dominance appeared even greater at the state legislative and local levels. In some southern states, located primarily in the Deep South, Republicans held almost no local or state legislative offices as late as 1980. A wealth of books and articles appeared trying to explain why the Democrats remained in power and Republican growth was so slow or elusive.[3]

The waiting finally appeared to end in the watershed year of 1994. In a backlash against the unpopular Clinton administration, Republicans won a majority of the region's U.S. Senate and U.S. House seats for the first time. Their share of state legislative seats also leaped upward, and Republicans took control of several state legislative chambers for the first time. Many analysts expected that Republicans would finally consolidate their majority during the remains of the 1990s. And yet, the Democrats did not collapse. The 1994 results did not represent a fluke, and Republi-

[1] Everett Carll Ladd, "Like Waiting for Godot: The Uselessness of 'Realignment' for Understanding Change in Contemporary American Politics," in *The End of Realignment? Interpreting American Electoral Eras*, ed. Byron E. Shafer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 24–36.

[2] Kevin P. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1969), 187–289.

[3] Charles S. Bullock, III, "Creeping Realignment in the South," in Robert H. Swansbrough and David M. Brodsky, eds., *The South's New Politics: Realignment and Dealignment* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 220–37; Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); James M. Glaser, *Race, Campaign Politics, and the Realignment in the South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); Gary C. Jacobson, *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government: Competition in U.S. House Elections, 1946–1988* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1990).

cans did make further gains. However, by the end of the decade, signs appeared that the Democrats would not go gently into a political coma. Democrats actually gained seats in some state legislative chambers and won back control of North Carolina's lower house. At the same time, Democrats ceased losing seats at the congressional level and even temporarily won back some governorships.

Core Questions

While undoubtedly dismaying Democrats, the scope of these changes places scholars of southern politics today in an advantageous position relative to their predecessors. Enough has changed that one can now talk about the southern partisan shift away from the Democrats and to the Republicans as a largely accomplished fact, rather than a matter for future speculation or even a process in its early stages. This book explores the following questions related to partisan change in the South:

- How should one measure partisan change and what has been the nature of partisan change in the South?
- What issues spurred Republican gains? Scholars have heatedly debated the comparative importance of racial and economic issues in driving Republican growth. More recent work suggests additional attention needs to be paid to social issues.
- Even if economic and social issues explain Republican growth more than previously thought, how does racial context influence southern politics? In a political system in which African Americans overwhelmingly support the Democrats and Republicans derive the vast majority of their support from whites, one suspects that racial context plays a key role even if nonracial issues play important roles in shaping the South's political terrain.
- What is the role of political elites in propelling or slowing partisan change? More pointedly, how do the actions of strategic politicians systematically affect the pace of partisan change? How much have issue differences between Democratic and Republican officeholders sharpened on the issues that propelled partisan change?
- How have institutions shaped partisan change in the South? In the wake of Reconstruction, the South created many new institutions to assure white and Democratic dominance. How have these older institutions, like the primary, that survived the Civil Rights Movement operated in the altered political environment? How have new institutions, like racial redistricting and term limits, aided the Republicans?
- Finally, what are the prospects for the future? Are the Republicans destined to continue their inexorable gains and dominate southern politics as the

Democrats did during the Solid South era? Or will the Democrats stage a comeback?

Describing Partisan Change

In their seminal and provocative work *Issue Evolution*, Edward Carmines and James Stimson argue that "realignment" is no longer a useful concept to describe or explain partisan change.[4] They contend that its meaning has been so debated and its definition tweaked so often to accommodate the latest theory that the term is no longer very useful. In a recent work, David Mayhew forcefully argues that the traditional theory of realignment, in which a critical election surrounding the new issue results in major changes in the composition of party coalitions and in the relative level of partisan support, poorly explains partisan change in American history.[5] While it is tempting to simply utilize "realignment" as shorthand for "major partisan change" here, I avoid using the term to prevent confusion with the theories of other scholars or their particular use of the term.

Even if one does not discuss partisan change in the context of "realignments," one can nevertheless attempt to develop a typology of partisan change in order to more accurately describe and classify different types of partisan shifts. To prevent this typology from eliding into merely classifying various occurrences of partisan change according to which theory they appear to fit, it should depend largely on easily observable data rather than on theories about the causes of partisan change. Of course, different theories may explain the appearance of particular types of partisan change.

A Typology of Partisan Change

The first major means of classifying partisan change is how rapidly it occurs. Realignments that occur in one election might be identified as *rapid* realignments. In *Dynamics of the Party System*, James L. Sundquist outlines his version of "critical election" theory in which the voting be-

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[4] Carmines and Stimson 1989, 19–26. The chapters in Byron E. Shafer, ed., *The End of Realignment? Interpreting American Electoral Eras* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991) further discuss the usefulness of realignment as a concept. The final chapter, Harold F. Bass Jr., "Background to Debate: A Reader's Guide and Bibliography," 141–78, provides an excellent overview and bibliography of work on realignment through 1990.

[5] David R. Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). See also Walter Dean Burnham, "Critical Realignment: Dead or Alive?" in *The End of Realignment? Interpreting American Electoral Eras*, ed. Byron E. Shafer (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 101–39; Carmines and Stimson 1989, 156–58.

havior of the electorate quickly shifts due to the arrival of a new issue cleavage in the electorate.[6] The support base of each party changes as does the overall level of support for each party—to the detriment of one and benefit of the other. In some cases, a new party displaces one of the existing parties. Although inspired by past scholarly observations of critical elections, I refer merely to "rapid" rather than "critical" partisan change in order to focus on the pace of partisan change and not on the much more complex question of whether or not a new issue cleavage explains the change.

In contrast, partisan change that occurs over the course of several decades can be labeled *gradual*. (I avoid the term *secular*, often used in the realignment literature, because this implies that partisan change is due to generational replacement.) Although partisan change is often described in the context of quick electoral upheavals, analogous to earthquakes, other scholars believe that partisan change can occur more gradually. Robert Speel, for example, argues that the shift toward the Democrats in presidential elections in New England was a slow process over several decades.[7] As described here, rapid and gradual realignments are extreme types and some realignments may be accomplished relatively quickly over a few elections even if they are not wholly rapid or gradual.

The second major distinction among types of partisan change may be made between *uniform* and *split-level* partisan change. Partisan change has conventionally been conceived as the result of major events that cause shifts in elite and mass partisanship and alter voting behavior at all levels of government. In partisan change that is uniform, the shift in voting behavior and partisan officeholding occurs at all levels of government. However, increasing numbers of scholars have identified cases in which, at least temporarily over several elections, voters cast their ballots for different parties at different levels of government. Speel, for example, notes that New Englanders increasingly voted for Democrats at the fed-

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[6] James L. Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1983), 11–12, 19–34. Note, however, that Sundquist specifically acknowledges that realignment often occurs over an extended period but argues against viewing critical elections as a type of realignment: "Like magnitude, pace of change is a less than satisfactory criterion for classifying realignments. A single realignment may have both abrupt and slower paced phases, but it is still one phenomenon, one process of change. Critical elections, in sum, are episodes in most realignments; they do not define a type" (11). The great scholar of southern and American politics, V. O. Key, was the originator of the concept of critical versus secular realignments. See V. O. Key Jr., "A Theory of Critical Elections," *Journal of Politics* 17 (February 1955): 3–18; V. O. Key Jr., "Secular Realignment and the Party System," *Journal of Politics* 21 (May 1959): 198–210.

[7] Robert W. Speel, *Changing Patterns of Voting in the Northern United States: Electoral Realignment, 1952–1996* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

eral level but often supported Republicans for state and local offices.[8] Split-level partisan change may result in different voting behavior, and perhaps even different partisanship, for various levels of government. The Republicans may dominate in federal elections, while the Democrats usually win state and local elections.

Scholars have heatedly debated whether the very nature of partisan change has fundamentally shifted in America in the latter half of the twentieth century. Phillips and Sundquist separately argue for partisan change in the more conventional sense of a major shift in the preferences of voters and which party wins elections.[9] However, Norman Nie, Sidney Verba, and John Petrocik and Martin Wattenberg argue that the electorate has increasingly become independent and less tied to any political party.[10] Gary Jacobson's work on the rise of the incumbency advantage due to increasingly candidate-centered campaigns tends to support these conclusions.[11] Harold Stanley suggests a way out of this dilemma.[12] The voting behavior of the electorate may be classified not only according to their central tendency but also their variance. Electorates with a large number of truly independent or candidate-centered voters who often split their tickets have a relatively high variance in their support for candidates of a party and are relatively *dealigned*. Alignments in which most voters present strong partisan attachments and tend to vote a straight-party ticket are *strongly aligned*. Note that rather than being forced to dissect the partisanship of the electorate, which may be heavily subject to disputes over question wording on surveys, one can measure the intensity of the partisan commitment by looking at the variation in election returns. Rather than being at odds, the realignment and dealignment literatures are compatible with one another as both the central tendency and variance of the electorate can change over time. The average level of a party's support can remain the same even if there is greater variation between elections and support for individual candidates.

In line with this discussion, changes in voting behavior must persist for several elections in order to be considered a *long-term* partisan change

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[8] Speel 1998, 14–15, 65, 181–83, 197–98, 200–203; see also Charles D. Hadley, "Dual Partisan Identification in the South," *Journal of Politics* 47 (February 1985): 254–68.

[9] Phillips 1969, 25–42; Sundquist 1993, 1–19.

[10] Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba, and John R. Petrocik, *The Changing American Voter*, enlarged ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 47–73; Martin P. Wattenberg, *The Decline of American Political Parties, 1952–1994* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[11] Gary C. Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 5th ed. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 2001), 21–40, 105–21.

[12] Harold W. Stanley, "Southern Partisan Changes: Dealignment, Realignment, or Both?" *Journal of Politics* 50 (February 1988): 66–67.

rather than merely a *deviating* election. Temporary circumstances may cause voters to depart from their normal voting behavior. However, if they quickly return to the previous partisan pattern, it seems reasonable to classify the election as deviating.

Classifying Partisan Change in the South

Certain aspects of partisan change in the South are relatively easy to classify according to this typology. First, it is easy to declare that the South has experienced long-term partisan change rather than a few deviating elections. The Democrats have often bounced back after an especially dreadful election performance, such as 1980 or 1994, but they almost always have not regained fully their previous level of support. Nor have the Democrats been able to prevent the Republicans from achieving steady long-term gains. Even the Watergate scandal and the election of southern Democrat Jimmy Carter as president in the mid-1970s gave the Democrats only a temporary boost. The detailed description of Republican gains at the local, state, and federal levels presented in the next chapter shows that Democratic gains during this period were ephemeral and did not derail the steady process of Republican growth.

Although southern partisan change has been punctuated by elections of especially impressive Republican success, it is also not especially difficult to classify partisan change in the South as gradual.[13] Since the mid-1960s, scholars have searched high and low for a specific election that transformed southern politics with nearly the intensity of Indiana Jones's search for the Ark of the Covenant. Claims have been made for many different presidential elections: 1948, 1964, 1968, 1980, and 1994. Much like cubic zirconia lacks the lustre of a real diamond, none of these elections quite fits the bill. In most cases, Democrats still held far too many offices in the wake of the election. Alternatively, the GOP made too many gains prior to 1994 for one to argue convincingly that rapid partisan change centered around this particular contest. Tracing the pace of Republican gains (see chapter 2) strongly suggests that partisan change was gradual. The pace of GOP gains may have varied over time in response to events with periods of relatively slow growth punctuated by impressive gains in one election, but they made relatively steady headway over several decades. Perhaps more important, they were clearly not the product of any one election. Many scholars suspect that even rapid parti-

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[13] Thomas L. Brunell and Bernard Grofman, "Explaining Divided U.S. Senate Delegations, 1788–1996: A Realignment Approach," *American Political Science Review* 92:2 (June 1998): 397.

san change tends to be accomplished over the course of several elections rather than a single contest.[14]

The debate over whether dealignment has accompanied partisan change in the South is a fierce one. Voters certainly became more likely to split their tickets in the 1970s compared to the 1950s.[15] Scandals and a highly critical media encouraged voters to take a negative view of government and political parties.[16] New scholarly evidence suggests that dealignment was relatively temporary and that partisanship is once again on the rise. Dealignment may have been a temporary side effect of the process of gradual realignment. Older conservative Democrats may split their tickets to express displeasure with national Democratic nominees. Alternatively, young conservative voters inclined to support the Republicans due to their stances on issues may often split their tickets if one or both of their parents are Democrats. Republicans frequently do not offer candidates for local or state offices, making it difficult to express support for the GOP for all office levels. Voters from the Solid South generation have joined the heavenly electorate in ever larger numbers as time has passed, so the share of southern white voters with strong long-term ties to the Democrats has shrunk. Additionally, the Republicans have run more candidates at all levels of government. Both trends likely have a positive effect on the willingness and the ability of new voters entering the electorate to both identify with and vote for Republicans.[17]

Larry Bartels contends that split-ticket voting reached its height in the late 1970s and that partisan voting has steadily grown since then.[18] In the 2000 election, southern Democrats and southern Republicans both overwhelmingly supported their party's nominee for president. Unlike in the past, it is now widely acceptable for whites to identify with Republicans. Indeed, it is more common than not, especially among middle- and upper-class white voters. The remaining whites who identify with the

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[14] Carmines and Stimson 1989, 19–26; Mayhew 2002; Bruce A. Campbell, "Change in the Southern Electorate," *American Journal of Political Science* 21:1 (February 1977): 37–64; John R. Petrocik, "Realignment: New Party Coalitions and the Nationalization of the South," *Journal of Politics* 49:2 (May 1987): 347–75.

[15] Larry M. Bartels, "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952–1996," *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (January 2000): 35–50; Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1979, 47–73; Wattenberg 1996, 17–23.

[16] Thomas E. Patterson, *Out of Order* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 3–10, 16–21, 200–206.

[17] Bruce A. Campbell, "Patterns of Change in the Partisan Loyalties of Native Southerners: 1952–1972," *Journal of Politics* 39:3 (August 1977): 737; Alan I. Abramowitz and Kyle L. Saunders, "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate," *Journal of Politics* 60:3 (August 1998): 647; Helmut Norpoth, "Under Way and Here to Stay: Party Realignment in the 1980s," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 52:3 (autumn 1997): 385.

[18] Larry M. Bartels, "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952–1996," *American Journal of Political Science* 44:1 (January 2000): 35–50.

Democrats for the most part support the national Democratic Party's stand on issues, so they feel little pressure to split their ticket. One might expect ticket splitting to further decline as Republicans contest an even higher share of local offices in the future.

The debate over whether dealignment or realignment best describes changes in southern politics is closely related to the question of whether the South has experienced uniform or split-level partisan change. Scholars have long noted that Republican support appeared greater in federal contests than in state or local elections. Some speculated that the conservative nature of southern Democratic politicians led to a split-level alignment in which southerners continued to send conservative southern Democrats to their state capitals and Congress but oppose national Democratic nominees for president as overly liberal. The greater conservatism of southern Democrats compared to their northern brethren helps explain the slow pace of Republican gains.[19] However, the evidence increasingly suggests that the split-level nature of the realignment was temporary. Southern Democratic candidates increasingly took liberal stands on a variety of issues and became steadily less distinguishable from their northern colleagues. At the same time, Republicans made steady gains below the presidential level, belying the notion that southerners had a split-party identification.

Explaining Partisan Change in the South

Much of the southern politics literature has attempted to explain Republican growth in the South as part of a standard process of partisan change. Although different scholars may develop competing theories, most essentially argue that old issues gradually decline in relevance to the electorate and new, more salient issues arise to divide voters in new ways.[20] Political change in the South is part of the regular turning of the wheel in which a new issue seizes the electorate and propels changes in the political bases and strength of the parties. Recent GOP successes can thus be placed in

[19] Glaser 1996, 80–141; but see Patricia A. Hurley, "Partisan Representation, Realignment, and the Senate in the 1980s," *Journal of Politics* 53:1 (February 1991): 24. Hurley argues that the strong conservatism of the Republicans slowed realignment to the GOP in the 1980s.

[20] Carmines and Stimson 1989; Jeffrey M. Stonecash, *Class and Party in American Politics* Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000); Sundquist 1993, 269–97, 352–449; David Brady and Joseph Stewart Jr., "Congressional Party Realignment and Transformation of Public Policy in Three Realignment Eras," *American Journal of Political Science* 26:2 (May 1982): 333–60; Everett Carll Ladd, "The 1994 Congressional Elections: The Postindustrial Realignment Continues," *Political Science Quarterly* 110:1 (spring 1995): 19; Peter F. Nardulli, "The Concept of a Critical Realignment, Electoral Behavior, and Political Change," *American Political Science Review* 89:1 (March 1995): 18–19.

the context of past upheavals in party fortunes, such as the demise of the Whigs and the rise of the Republicans in the 1850s and 1860s. Carmines and Stimson essentially take this approach in their highly influential study of racial issues and American politics.[21] Indeed, they believe that their study of racial issues is an example of "issue evolution," an approach they present as an alternative to traditional realignment theory.

These attempts by scholars to situate southern political change in the context of a general theory of partisan change centered around issues are both laudable and understandable but ultimately misguided. Southern political developments over the past several decades should not be viewed merely as a routine process of partisan change but as the long-term result of the South's democratization. Institutional changes, culminating in the Voting Rights Act of 1965, dramatically expanded the franchise and thus changed the landscape of southern politics. Nevertheless, Carmines and Stimson give short shrift to these changes. They mention them to explain the salience of racial issues but do not explain how the South's institutional legacy continued to shape politics beyond bringing new issues to the fore.

Issues certainly played a major role in promoting gradual Republican growth among white southerners over the course of several decades and the rapid completion of the long-term shift of black voters to the Democrats in the mid-1960s. However, one ignores the role of old and new institutions and the operation of strategic Democratic elites who already held power in this changed context at the peril of missing key factors that shaped the development of southern politics. Exploring elites and institutions as well as the historical context facilitates a better understanding of the role of various issues in southern politics over the past several decades. Indeed, an examination of the historical context helps explain that (1) though race explains why African Americans became nearly unanimously Democratic in the mid-1960s, (2) racial issues were not the predominant factor in promoting Republican growth among southern whites despite the great public importance of race in the 1960s and (3) southern GOP growth must be viewed as the result of a democratization process rather than part of the normal vicissitudes of party fortunes within an established democratic system. Because of the importance of the historical context, especially surrounding racial issues, the next section gives a brief overview of the historical role of race in the South.

The Historical Role of Race in the South

As is well-known, the American South was highly undemocratic at the dawn of the twentieth century. As Reconstruction drew to a close, white

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[21] Carmines and Stimson 1989.

supremacist Democrats used state institutions and other means to establish and maintain the dominance of their party. In *The Shaping of Southern Politics*, J. Morgan Kousser explains that the establishment of the one-party Democratic South under conservative Bourbon leadership did not result from the unified support of even white southerners. The establishment of overwhelming Democratic dominance resulted directly from successful efforts to exclude most non-Democrats, black and white, from the franchise and thus from political power.[22]

A variety of means were used by the conservative Democratic barons to accomplish the exclusion of most non-Democrats and establish the permanent dominance of their party, race, and class. Three groups were the primary targets of the Bourbon Democrats. Wealthy white southerners viewed African-American political equality as unnatural and efforts to assert black political power even tentatively as a great insult to their status as leaders of the South. Equally important, African Americans identified their freedom with the Republican Party. Blacks naturally identified with the party of Emancipation and an overwhelming share of African Americans steadfastly supported the GOP. Continuing black support for the Republicans during Reconstruction was not at all surprising when one contrasts that vocal support for black rights offered by many Republicans, particularly fervent Radicals like Representative Thaddeus Stevens and Senator Charles Sumner, with the outright opposition to black political equality and support for Jim Crow by most Democrats. The few insincere, patronizing, and transparent attempts by Democratic politicians to solicit black votes failed. African Americans acted to support their political interests by voting Republican.

Bourbon Democrats similarly were nonplussed by the prospect of voting by poor whites as support by the lower classes for Populist or Republican candidates might challenge their economic and political dominance. Governments acting in the interests of landless whites and yeoman farmers might abolish the regressive taxation system under which white plantation owners often paid a far lower share in taxes than poorer whites who did not own vast estates and barely scratched out a living. Native white Unionists, who had often suffered greatly for their support of the Union during the Civil War, were pejoratively labeled "scalawags" by their opponents as part of the effort to suppress opposition to the Democrats. Similarly, though most northern immigrants moved south for ide-

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[22] Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880–1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); Michael Perman, *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888–1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

alistic reasons, they were broadly tarred with the epithet "carpetbagger" in order to stigmatize them. Some northern immigrants wanted to bring economic development and prosperity to the region, while others wanted to aid black southerners by establishing educational institutions for freedmen.[23] These goals were anathema to Bourbon Democrats who worked steadily to marginalize those northern immigrants whom they could not co-opt into supporting the Democratic Party and their goals.

White conservatives paraded the threat of government under the evil triumvirate of blacks, "scalawags," and "carpetbaggers" to gain support for black disfranchisement. Democracy, even for whites, was doomed in the South by the unwillingness of most whites to acknowledge the right of blacks to basic political rights. Proponents of disfranchisement nevertheless had to tread gingerly. The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, flatly states, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." In addition to possibly inviting judicial action, southerners hesitated to ban blacks directly from voting because they also feared intervention by a federal government under Republican control. Northern Republicans had a strong incentive to protect their southern wing as some southern support was critical to the national Republican majority prior to 1896.[24] Southern jurisdictions consequently used nonracial means that had the far from coincidental effect of eliminating black access to the ballot. A variety of means, including literacy tests, poll taxes, registration laws, fraud, and violence, were used to disfranchise African Americans. As the education of blacks under slavery was illegal, the literacy gap between blacks and whites was quite large.

Corrupt Democrats in majority-black counties often successfully gained control of the election machinery and counted black votes as having been cast for the Democrats regardless of how blacks voted or if they voted at all. Fraud was particularly rampant in Louisiana, where parishes with overwhelming black Republican majorities managed to somehow record humongous majorities for Democratic candidates. Manipulation of the black vote by corrupt white politicians in majority-black counties was critical to the maintenance of statewide Democratic control in Alabama prior to the adoption of a new state constitution in 1901 designed to assure Democratic supremacy. Mississippi and South Carolina Democrats happily used violence to assure the election of their preferred candi-

[23] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 291–307.

[24] Richard M. Valelly, "National Parties and Racial Disenfranchisement," in Paul E. Peterson, ed., *Classifying by Race* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 188–216.

dates.[25] Violence against blacks carried little stigma in the Reconstruction South. Indeed, white women actually competed to bring pies to white men imprisoned for murder under the federal Ku Klux Klan Act.[26]

The use of nonracial means to accomplish black disfranchisement meant that many less-affluent whites also lost access to the suffrage. This outcome was intended on the part of the conservative whites who led the disfranchisement movement as they believed that the "wrong sort" of whites were just as unfit to govern as blacks. The representatives of heavily white areas that contained few affluent plantations were often aware of the potential impact of disfranchisement laws on their constituents and the likely consequences for their own political future. They and their constituents consequently opposed black disfranchisement at a higher rate than did white representatives from the heavily black plantation counties of the "Black Belt" (named for the rich soil, not the people) or worked to water down its potential effect on white voting.[27] More farsighted white Populists and Republicans realized that they had little chance of commanding a majority in the region without black support.

Bourbons strategically maneuvered to undercut whites opposed to suffrage and to buy off their support with measures designed to limit the impact of disfranchisement measures on poor whites. The oft-misunderstood grandfather clause was the classic example of this sort of measure. Contrary to popular understanding, grandfather clauses were actually designed to enfranchise rather than disfranchise voters. Grandfather clauses permitted voters who were disfranchised by other laws to vote if their grandfather could vote. The grandfather clause ingeniously created a loophole through which white voters, but not newly freed blacks, could hope to jump to evade disfranchisement. The clause succeeded brilliantly in attracting white support to the disfranchisement cause but failed miserably, or spectacularly from the perspective of wealthy Bourbons, at maintaining white levels of enfranchisement. Illiterate whites were usually embarrassed by their illiteracy and too proud or too fearful of public humiliation to take advantage of the clause in order to register.[28]

State constitutional conventions in the 1890s helped consolidate Democratic control and made the exclusion of blacks a part of each state's organic law. These new state constitutions reduced the need for statutes or corruption to exclude African Americans or protect Democratic dominance and set the pattern for southern politics until the Civil Rights

[25] W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1935), 670–708; Foner 1988, 442; Kousser 1974, 26, 54–56, 152–54; Perman 2001.

[26] Lou Falkner Williams, *The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials, 1871–1872* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

[27] Kousser 1974, 88–91, 97–99, 166–68, 175–78; Perman 2001.

[28] Kousser 1974, 58–60; Perman 2001.

Movement. Populists occasionally challenged the dominance of conservative Democrats but with ephemeral success. The one-party system made it easy for Democrats elected as populists who supported progressive measures to gradually shift over their careers into racial demagoguery or economic conservatism. South Carolina Governor and Senator "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman, for example, began his career as a tribune of the white masses but ended as a stalwart conservative backed by the Bourbons. Neither set of positions conflicted with his consistent advocacy of white supremacy. It may appear miraculous to those who best remember him as a segregationist candidate for president in 1948 and a staunch conservative in the U.S. Senate, but Strom Thurmond was elected governor of South Carolina as a progressive Democrat in 1946.[29]

The Longs of Louisiana probably had greater success than any other southern populists in enacting their program. Their "share the wealth" program of providing schoolbooks to children and building roads while attacking large corporations proved tremendously popular with the white masses. Occasionally the Longs even publicly recognized race baiting as deleterious to the interests of poor whites because it served to distract from governmental solutions to problems that conflicted with the interests of the wealthy elite. However, the long-term success of the Longs was undercut by the corruption of their administrations and the inevitable reaction that repeatedly led to the election of thrifty white anti-Long conservatives as reformers.[30]

In sum, the political dominance of the Democrats prior to the Civil Rights Movement resulted not from overarching dominance among the voting-age population but from institutional mechanisms designed to exclude Democratic opponents from the franchise and minimize their impact on southern politics. The fight for a broad franchise was a long struggle that took over several decades in the courts, in Congress, and on the streets. Legal activists struggled to convince federal judges to overturn discriminatory state laws and state constitutional provisions for violating federal law and the federal constitution. They won a major victory as early as 1944 when the Supreme Court declared in *Smith v. Allwright* that the Democratic primary was "state action" and banned the white primary. During the Civil Rights Movement, activists working in southern communities worked to register blacks and mobilize support for black enfranchisement. Their heroic efforts made possible the passage of a strong federal voting rights law by Congress in 1965.

While the Fifteenth Amendment and past legislation had theoretically

[29] Jack Bass and Marilyn W. Thompson, *Ol' Strom: An Unauthorized Biography of Strom Thurmond* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1988), 79–88; V. O. Key Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Vintage, 1949), 142–43, 147–50, 302–10.

[30] Key 1949, 156–82.

enshrined protections against racial discrimination in voting into law, the
Voting Rights Act of 1965 was the first legislation to contain sufficient
provisions for enforcement. Section 5 of the Act barred "covered juris-
dictions," generally the worst offenders in the South, from enacting any
new law governing voting without preclearance from either the U.S. At-
torney General or the D.C. District Court. This provision prevented
southern states from enacting new laws designed to disfranchise African
Americans after the overturning of old ones by either federal legislation
or federal judges. Additionally, Section 2 of the Act authorized private
lawsuits to enforce voting rights, and Sections 6 and 7 allowed the U.S.
Attorney General to send federal registrars to covered jurisdictions if a
sufficient number of complaints of voting rights violations were received.
The Supreme Court upheld the central provisions of the Voting Rights
Act of 1965 in *South Carolina v. Katzenbach* (1966). Rapid increases in
African-American voter registration followed implementation of the Act.
White registration also substantially increased.

In short, the Civil Rights Movement was more than a successful social
movement for minority rights. It was also central to a process that must
properly be labeled as one of *democratization*. The long-term hyperdomi-
nance of the Democrats was highly unnatural. The Civil Rights Move-
ment, itself a product of broad social and economic processes,[31] shattered
the core institutions that maintained the undemocratic status quo. The
end of the complete dominance of southern politics by the Democrats
and their shifting of policy positions on race were the natural conse-
quences of the great expansion of the franchise not only among blacks
but among whites as well.

The Civil Rights Movement nevertheless left much of the electoral sys-
tem intact. While it destroyed some institutions, such as barriers to voter
registration, it maintained others, like primary elections. Indeed, Section
5 of the Voting Rights Act made it difficult to change these institutions
by requiring federal preclearance for changes to any voting practice or
procedure. In contrast to more dramatic revolutions, the Civil Rights
Movement did not remove much of the old elite from public office. Exist-
ing officials continued to occupy their offices and could wield substantial
resources to maintain them even in the face of an expanded franchise.
Unlike the political upheavals prior to the Civil War, the Civil Rights
Movement did not result in the collapse or replacement of either of the
two major national parties. In the immediate aftermath of the passage of
both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965,

[31] Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970*
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

most southern whites retained their Democratic party identification. It took time for the changes wrought by the expanded franchise to percolate through the political system and result in a more vibrant, democratic politics.

The following sections outline how elites, institutions, racial context, and various issues shaped the growth of the southern GOP. Democratization created changes that eventually reshaped all of these factors. Elites had to respond to an expanded electorate. The Civil Rights Movement destroyed some institutions even as it maintained others and created new ones. The racial context of southern politics greatly changed as African Americans gained the right to vote and, more recently, Latinos expanded their southern presence outside of south Texas. Perhaps most important, the destruction of the old system allowed southern voters to focus on new issues. Racial issues did not disappear, but the demise of the old anti-democratic system and the passage of federal civil rights legislation eliminated the ability of elites to appeal to voters based on the maintenance of a dead white supremacist electoral system. It also made it more difficult for elites to suppress other issues in the name of maintaining white solidarity in order to preserve a legal system that no longer existed.

Elites, institutions, issues, and the racial context do not operate separately from one another. Although each of the following sections (and then chapters in the book) focuses primarily on one of these factors, they tend to interact to produce important partisan changes in southern politics. Consequently, information about one factor will inevitably jump into another section that focuses on the other. I have attempted to place these sorts of discussions of multiple factors in the section or chapter where it makes the most sense to raise the issue.

Political Elites and Partisan Change

Political scientists have long noted the important role that strategic elites play in politics. In his now classic work, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, David Mayhew argues that the desire to win reelection is central to members of Congress and must remain the primary goal of most representatives as success in reelection is necessary to achieving all other goals. He further explains that Congress is uniquely designed to further these reelection goals.[32] Gary Jacobson and Samuel Kernell detail how strategic actors both respond to electoral pressures and greatly influence electoral outcomes in their pathbreaking work, *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections*. According to Jacobson and Kernell, strong candidates act stra-

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[32] David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

tegically by seeking election when their chances of victory are high and foregoing contests during times of weaker opportunity. The decision by strong candidates to seek election greatly influences whether incumbents win reelection and a party gains or loses seats in congressional elections. In later work Jacobson argues that the impact of national trends on electoral outcomes is increasingly dependent on the responses of strategic elites to these trends, rather than the impact of the trends on voting behavior. Additional works have confirmed the applicability of Jacobson and Kernell's basic thesis to senatorial, gubernatorial, and state legislative elections.[33]

Carmines and Stimson were among the first scholars to attempt to expand the impact of elites beyond their action in an individual election by integrating the role of elites into a theory of systematic partisan change. Carmines and Stimson pay attention to elites in their role as policymakers and setters of the issue agenda. The rise of differences between the parties on new issues may spur changes in the partisan preferences of voters. In particular, they contend that the growing gap between the Democrats and Republicans on racial issues, underlined by the 1964 contest between Johnson and Goldwater for the presidency, spurred further Republican growth as the issue gained support for the GOP among white racial conservatives even as African Americans became hugely supportive of the Democrats.[34] Edsall and Edsall similarly argue that the racially conservative stance of Ronald Reagan attracted many white voters to the Republican banner in his runs for the presidency in 1976, 1980, and 1984 even as black voters were alienated by his racial conservatism.[35]

Carmines and Stimson cleverly show that changes in the relative positions of the two parties on issues can result from electoral happenstance as well as political opportunism. The defeat of liberal Republicans by liberal Democrats in 1958 in the North and the defeat of conservative Democrats by conservative Republicans in the South had the impact of moving the congressional Democratic Party to the left and the congressional Republican Party to the right on racial issues. On the other hand,

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[33] Gary C. Jacobson and Samuel Kernell, *Strategy and Choice in Congressional Elections*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); Jacobson 2001, 92–93; Jonathan S. Krasno, *Challengers, Competition, and Reelection: Comparing Senate and House Elections* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); David Lublin, "Quality, Not Quantity: Strategic Politicians in U.S. Senate Elections, 1952–1990," *Journal of Politics* 56 (1994): 228–41; Gary F. Moncrief, Peverill Squire, and Malcolm E. Jewell, *Who Runs for the Legislature?* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000).

[34] Carmines and Stimson 1989, 37–84.

[35] Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1991), 148–214.

strategic elites often intentionally try out new issues and modify existing ones in their never-ending battle for public support.[36]

Despite the marked advance of Carmines and Stimson's work in explaining the role of political elites in promoting partisan change, more needs to be done to incorporate the key insights of Jacobson and Kernell. Equally important, one needs to consider the unique role of political elites in states where the franchise has been radically expanded. Specifically, I intend to show the following.

Former Democratic Monopoly Slowed Republican Gains. In order for democratic politics to function well, voters must have a choice among candidates and parties. As V. O. Key nicely explains, the old southern system of restricting all choice to within the Democratic primary did not function well.[37] The absence of consistent factions with opposing ideas did not allow voters to hold politicians accountable for their actions. While voters in most liberal democracies can choose from more than two parties at the polls, voters require at least two parties and two sets of candidates if they are to have the chance to select between competing programs or to at least reward or punish the incumbents for their performance in office.

As the franchise expanded and the South became more democratic, the overwhelmingly dominant Democrats faced difficult times as they needed to please an increasingly diverse set of voters with conflicting priorities. However, their status as the dominant party gave them enormous advantages in undertaking the challenges posed by the greatly changed political arena. Democratic officeholders generally did not form a unified structure of candidates seeking collectively to hold on to power. However, the weakness of Democratic Party organizations allowed Democratic candidates to adopt a variety of issue positions without fear of reprisal from any central party authority. At the same time, all Democratic Party candidates continued to benefit from the overwhelming identification of the region's voters with the Democrats. The absence of a strong central party authority further did not prevent the formation of strong networks among Democratic officeholders and other elites. Put in this light, it hardly seems surprising that the versatile Democrats should be able to maintain their dominance of southern politics in the wake of the relatively evolutionary changes wrought by the Civil Rights Movement on the southern political system.

Candidate recruitment is critical to party success in the American system. The dominance of the single-member district system for elections

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[36] Carmines and Stimson 1989, 6–7, 14–19, 59–72.
[37] Key 1949, 142–50, 299–310.

and the plethora of political offices requires an aspiring major party to recruit a battery of candidates if it is to appear credible. The decision by strategic high-quality candidates to seek election under the banner of one party rather than another may stymie or accelerate partisan change. The ability of a new or rising party to attract any candidate, let alone a high-quality candidate with a good chance of success, is critical to a party's growth. After all, a party cannot win elections in which it does not run candidates.

The focus of much of the literature on partisan change in federal elections results in neglect of Republican problems in recruiting any candidates in many local and state legislative contests. As chapter 3 explains, a lack of candidates impeded GOP efforts to expand their base of office-holders in the region for many years. Democrats had such dominance of offices at every level of government that recruiting candidates with previous experience in public office was difficult for the GOP. Potential Republican candidates for legislative bodies knew they would form a very small and often powerless minority among a sea of Democratic legislators—hardly a temptation for any aspiring politician.[38] Even candidates for executive positions faced the challenge of operating within a network of Democratic officeholders. Chapter 3 explores these issues and how the incumbency advantage helped maintain Democratic dominance by discouraging Republican opposition.

Racial and Economic Contexts Shape Elite Recruitment. In undemocratic states with a single party, the path to power is relatively straightforward: join the ruling party. The stunted political system of the pre–Civil Rights Movement South did not offer aspiring politicians much more of a choice. The dominance of the Democrats made the choice of political party obvious for individuals hoping to advance.

Democratization expands viable political opportunities beyond a single party and makes the decision to join the Democratic Party less obvious. Strategic elites must act more cagily in a more open, democratic political system, weighing the advantages of joining one party over another. The opening of the South's political system to non-Democratic competitors created new opportunities. However, the opportunities presented by GOP membership vary widely around the region. After all, the southern electorate is now more diverse, but it is hardly uniform and the potential for Republican candidates to win office may vary considerably.

As part of its exploration of the role of racial context, chapter 5 examines how strategic elites respond to the varying electoral dynamics in different parts of the South to the benefit of the Republicans in some

[38] Sundquist 1983, 285–87, 373.

areas but to their detriment in others. Republicans have difficulty attracting candidates and winning elections in areas with high numbers of African-American voters, as blacks vote heavily Democratic. Running for office is a difficult, uphill battle at best. Strategic candidates will not want to seek election as Republicans in areas where the presence of sizable numbers of black voters means that the GOP label reduces the viability of their candidacy.

Race is not the only demographic context to influence elite recruitment. Debates over economic issues, especially the role of government in promoting employment and social welfare, shaped debates between Democrats and Republicans outside the South since the New Deal. Low-income voters tended to value social welfare programs and give support to the Democrats while high-income voters resented being taxed to pay for this government-provided safety net. As the GOP began to achieve some success in the South, southern politics began to reflect this now traditional divide over economic issues as well. Chapter 6 demonstrates that Republicans have had greater success in recruiting candidates in heavily white, high-income areas as part of its discussion of the continuing power of economic issues. Democrats have increasingly found it difficult to attract candidates in these areas in recent years as Republican dominance has grown.

Elite Positions on Social Issues Slowed Realignment in Rural Areas. Elite responses to the pressures posed by new issues raised in a more democratic South shape where the GOP makes gains and where it does not. After all, a party cannot win office where it does not have candidates. However, elites can also shape the speed and the scope of partisan change through the issues positions they take. When local political elites of different parties react to new issues by taking similar positions, change should likely slow as voters have little reason to alter their past party preferences.

Black and Black detail how the racial conservatism of many white Democratic candidates in the 1960s and 1970s derailed prospects for any rapid partisan shift centered on racial issues.[39] Similarly, rural Democrats slowed the ability of Republicans to attract voters based on social issues through the adoption of highly conservative positions on social issues. In most parts of the rural South, there is usually little gap between Demo-

[39] Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Rise of the Southern Republicans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 152–73. See also Stanley P. Berard, *Southern Democrats in the U.S. House of Representatives* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 118–42, for more evidence on the continuing conservatism of southern Democrats in the 1970s and 1980s.

cratic and Republican partisans or local officials on social issues because the liberal position is highly unpopular and would be political suicide for the ambitious politician—or even one who merely desires to continue to hold office. Members of neither party favor gun control in rural areas where hunting remains popular. Similarly, school prayer continued in many rural schools with the blessings of Democrats and Republicans alike even after the Supreme Court declared it violated constitutional requirements on the separation of church and state. Few abortion clinics exist in rural areas. In contrast, urban southern Democrats were more likely to adopt socially liberal positions due to pressures from more liberal urban Democrats. The gap in party positions in urban areas allowed the GOP to appeal to urban social conservatives in a way that was not possible in rural areas.

The lack of a difference between Republicans and Democrats on social issues in rural areas worked to the advantage of Democrats and stalled partisan change toward the Republicans in the rural South. Why should socially conservative Democrats leave their party when Democrats are no more liberal on social issues than Republicans? Democrats, however, could not forever forestall change related to social issues in rural areas. Prodded by urban and suburban liberals, Democratic candidates running for statewide and federal office have gradually taken more liberal positions on social issues. As part of its exploration of rising social issues, chapter 6 explains how awareness of the partisan gap on social issues at the elite level gradually seeped into rural areas. Even though local rural Democrats largely maintained their traditional conservatism, the greater liberalism of state and national Democrats aided Republican candidacies among rural voters.

Institutions and Partisan Change

If the presence of a broad swath of Democratic elites impeded Republican efforts to gain political traction in the post–Civil Rights Movement environment, institutions assured that Democratic elites could not stave off substantial Republican gains indefinitely. As outlined above, Democratic rule during the Jim Crow era was not a natural outgrowth of the region's politics. In the wake of Reconstruction, southern Democratic elites adopted a variety of institutions that eliminated black participation and undercut anti-Democratic parties, like the Republicans and Populists.[40] Scholars have further highlighted how racist white politicians used their control of southern political institutions to prevent blacks from

[40] DuBois 1935, 572–75, 630, 694; John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction after the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 194–227; Keyssar 2000; Kousser 1974; Perman 2001. *Struggle for Mastery: Disfranchisement in the South, 1888–1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2001).

gaining an effective voice even after the Voting Rights Act of 1965 assured African Americans access to the ballot. In many states, political leaders gerrymandered the boundaries of congressional and state legislative districts so that African Americans would not form a voting majority able to elect blacks to either the state or the national legislature.[41]

As part of the effort to undermine institutionalized racism, Congress and the federal judiciary, continually prodded by activists, attacked and eliminated many institutions that were part of the edifice that maintained white supremacy. However, institutions perceived as nonracial even if they were established for racial reasons, like primary elections, continued to operate in the changed post-Movement political climate. It is easy to overlook the crucial role of institutions because many of them were developed long ago and are an accepted part of the political landscape. While many scholarly works examine the partisan impact of one institution or another,[42] less attention has been paid to the systematic role of institutions in propelling forward Republican southern gains over the past forty years. Old institutions like the primary often operate in new ways that advantage the Republicans.

New institutional rules designed to protect the gains of the Civil Rights Movement also influenced southern politics. The Voting Rights Act as interpreted and enforced during the 1990s redistricting round not only protected existing majority-minority districts but forced the creation of substantial numbers of new ones. The systematic creation of numerous new majority-minority constituencies for local, state, and federal legislative bodies advantaged Republicans as well as minority Democrats.

Scholars who focus exclusively on issues or candidates ignore key forces that shaped partisan change in the South. In examining the wide-ranging game of politics, it is crucial to remember that the rules help dictate winners and losers. After all, this is why supporters and opponents of the Civil Rights Movement put so much effort into fighting over the nature of the rules. Southern congressional delegations would not have so vehemently opposed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 if they had not believed that it would undermine their positions. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

[41] Chandler Davidson and Bernard Grofman, eds., *Quiet Revolution in the South: The Impact of the Voting Rights Act, 1965–1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); J. Morgan Kousser, *Colorblind Injustice: Minority Voting Rights and the Undoing of the Second Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Frank R. Parker, *Black Votes Count: Black Empowerment in Mississippi after 1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

[42] Jay Barth, "The Impact of Election Timing on Republican Trickle-Down in the South," in Robert P. Steed, Lawrence W. Moreland, and Tod A. Baker, eds., *Southern Parties and Elections: Studies in Regional Political Change* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997); David Lublin and D. Stephen Voss, "Racial Redistricting and Realignment in Southern State Legislatures," *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (October 2000): 792–810.

would not have declared, "Give us the ballot—we will transform the
South," if he had not held similar beliefs about the importance of rules
governing access to the franchise and to politics more generally.[43] In this
work, primarily in chapter 4, I show that institutional rules aided the
southern realignment in the following ways.

Primary Elections Accelerate Republican Gains. Southern states estab-
lished primary elections both as a method to exclude blacks and settle
factional disputes within the Democratic Party. As an internal party af-
fair, primary elections historically could legally exclude blacks. The use
of elections to settle nomination contests helped legitimize the nominee
and prevent defections to an opposing party by the loser. In the one-
party South, the Democratic primary was the critical election as it se-
lected the nominee of the party who was almost invariably destined to
win the general election.

The Supreme Court declared that the Democratic primary was "state
action" and banned the white primary in *Smith v. Allwright* in 1944. The
Voting Rights Act of 1965 led to a major influx of new black and white
voters who were attracted to the Democratic Party, and its primary, be-
cause of the liberalism of the national party, the party's traditional social
and political dominance, and because the Democratic primary remained
the contest that really settled the election. Why join the Republicans
when the action was with the Democrats?

White conservatives and moderates saw their dominance within the
party diluted by the entry of African Americans, but they remained dom-
inant within the party—at first. However, as some white conservatives,
excited by the conservatism of Republicans like Barry Goldwater and
Ronald Reagan, began to abandon the Democrats for the Republicans, it
became easier for liberals and harder for conservatives to win Democratic
nominations. This spurred further defections by white conservative can-
didates, who saw their chances of winning Democratic nominations de-
cline, and white conservative voters, who grew dissatisfied as the party
nominated increasingly moderate or liberal candidates. Like a rock gath-
ering speed as it rolls down a hill, the cycle constantly repeated and
reinforced itself until white liberals and racial minorities dominated
Democratic primaries.[44]

Racial Redistricting Aided Republican Growth. The Supreme Court at-
tacked anti-black racial gerrymandering in *Allen v. State Board of Elections*

[43] Martin Luther King Jr. and James Melvin Washington, eds., *A Testament of Hope: The
Essential Writings and Speeches of Marting Luther King, Jr.* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991),
197–99.

[44] Sundquist 1983, 375.

in 1969. However, it was the Court's 1986 decision in *Thornburg v. Gingles*, after Congress amended the Voting Rights Act in 1982, that really paved the way for an aggressive effort by African Americans and Latinos to force localities and states to create majority-minority districts for local, state, and federal elections.

The regular round of redistricting following the 1990 Census led to the creation of numerous new African-American and Latino majority districts and the election of many new minority congressional representatives and state legislators. Many southern states elected their first black representatives to the U.S. House since Reconstruction. However, the concentration of minority Democrats, especially African Americans, in majority-minority districts undercut the Democratic base in adjoining districts and aided the Republicans. Moreover, it provided an incentive for whites to run as Republicans as the number of districts favorable to white Democrats declined.

The Supreme Court attacked districts with bizarre boundaries designed to aid the election of minorities as "racial gerrymanders" that violated the Equal Protection Clause beginning with their decision in *Shaw v. Reno* (1993). States and localities still have an obligation to draw majority-minority districts where they can draw reasonably compact districts and racial bloc voting prevents the election of minority candidates. Some majority-minority districts have nevertheless been eliminated in the wake of *Shaw* and jurisdictions have become more resistant to demands to create or protect majority-minority districts. Over the long term, this shift will probably aid Democrats.

The Initiative Process and Term Limits Opened Doors for Republicans. The presence of incumbent Democrats formed a barrier to Republican gains, especially in local and state legislative contests. Incumbents have resources that discourage strong candidates from opposing them and make them difficult to defeat even if they attract a challenger. By forcing Democratic incumbents to retire, term limits expanded political opportunities for Republicans. As state legislators resemble other people in their loathing of unemployment, term limits never would have passed without successful use of the initiative process. Term limits have not passed in any southern state where voters lack the right to initiate new laws by placing them on the ballot.

Racial Issues, Racial Context, and Partisan Change

Scholars have fiercely debated the role of various issues, especially race, in promoting southern Republican growth. Many scholars argue that race played the dominant role in polarizing southern voting behavior. Once Democrats abandoned the historic commitment of their party to

white supremacy in favor of liberal positions on racial issues, African Americans unified in the Democratic Party. At the same time, conservative positions on racial issues adopted by Republicans attracted white voters to the GOP. According to this argument, southern whites supported the Democratic Party prior to the Civil Rights Movement because southern Democrats protected white supremacy and the national Democrats avoided interfering with the South's racial hierarchy. The disenchantment of white southerners with the national Democratic Party began with Truman's push to integrate the armed forces in 1948. Many southern Democrats bolted from the party in that year in order to lend support to Strom Thurmond's States Rights Democrats, though they returned to the party after the election. On the other hand, Truman's stand markedly increased African-American support for the Democrats.[45] White anger with Democrats crystallized with President Lyndon Johnson's aggressive promotion of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The Republicans became an attractive alternative for southern whites due to Barry Goldwater's outspoken opposition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the support given his 1964 presidential campaign by many conservative southern Democrats. Since 1964, Republican candidates have wooed southern white voters through their advocacy of more racially conservative policies than those of their Democratic opponents. At the same time, Democratic candidates support racially liberal policies, like affirmative action and minority set-asides. Alienated by the racial conservatism of Republicans and attracted by the racial liberalism of Democrats, most southern blacks back the Democrats. This solid support for the Democrats by black voters only further serves to identify the Democrats with African Americans in the mind of southern white voters and increase their support for the GOP.[46]

This story forms a compelling historical narrative. And one would be foolish to argue that racial issues were not central to political debates in the 1960s. However, the importance of race during this critical transition period does not inherently mean that it became the central source of political division in the period that followed. Focusing on the consequences of democratization for southern politics as well as the operation

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[45] Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 295.

[46] Earl Black and Merle Black, *Politics and Society in the South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 235–36; Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Vital South: How Presidents Are Elected* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 141–75; Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1992).

of democratic politics today helps provide a stronger understanding of the extent to which race influences southern politics today.

Maintaining white supremacy was the central motivating principle of the Jim Crow southern political system. Other issues might be debated, but only if they did not threaten the racial status quo. Southern congressional delegations worked to advance southern interests on a number of fronts, but their primary goal was to protect the South against federal interference in the continuation of the "southern way of life"—that ever-so-polite euphemism for black political and economic subordination. Southern congressional delegations constantly monitored federal legislation for any threat to the southern system of white supremacy.[47]

The Civil Rights Movement brought the injustice of this racist, undemocratic system to national attention and forced the federal government to take action against it. However, the centrality of civil rights issues to political debates in the 1960s does not mean that it remained central. After all, the forceful implementation of federal legislation combined with the desire of many southerners, black and white, to move forward and beyond the South's racist past changed key aspects of public life in the South. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 forced the integration of public accommodations and brought down the signs labeling facilities for "white" and "colored" that served as visible public symbols of Jim Crow. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 permanently ended the exclusion of African Americans from the franchise.

In short, the Civil Rights Movement shattered the institutions that were critical to maintaining both white supremacy and Democratic dominance in the South. Once the back of white supremacy had been broken, Democrats could no longer argue that failure by whites to support the party constituted a racial betrayal that could lead to the end of white supremacy and black political power. The core institutions of white supremacy had already been defeated and efforts to maintain it constituted an increasingly rearguard action. Moreover, the national Democratic Party was aggressively moving to attract black voters. The successes of the Civil Rights Movement actually freed whites to consider other political questions besides race precisely because the battle for the existing system had been so conclusively lost. One of the wonderful political results of the changes of the 1960s is that it allowed southerners to focus on issues besides the racial organization of their society.

Even if race remained of primary concern to voters in the racially charged atmosphere of the 1960s and early 1970s, the GOP found it nearly impossible to achieve many gains by aggressively emphasizing racial conservatism. In the wake of the events of the 1960s, most southern

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[47] Key 1949, 370–73; Black and Black 2002, 42–55.

Democratic officials continued to eschew liberal positions on racial issues in favor of conservative or moderate ones in order to protect their white conservative base. As Black and Black explain, Republican candidates found it difficult to gain any traction running on racial issues against southern Democrats during this period.[48]

The Republican decision to write off the black vote just as black vote increased dramatically was also costly to the GOP. Blacks usually backed even relatively conservative Democrats as the lesser of two evils and because of the identification of the national Democrats with racial liberalism. However, African Americans were quick to back Republican candidates, like Governors Winthrop Rockefeller in Arkansas and Linwood Holton in Virginia, whose support for racial liberalism contrasted favorably with the racial conservatism of their Democratic opponents in the eyes of black voters.

The demise of the old system combined with the lack of major differences between Democratic and GOP candidates on racial issues finally forced white southerners to begin the process of curtailing their overarching obsession with protecting white supremacy and debate other issues that animated politics elsewhere. Moreover, once African Americans began voting in large numbers, Democratic candidates had extremely strong incentives to turn the focus away from race even as they quietly abandoned conservative positions on racial issues. Democrats who took unacceptably conservative positions on racial issues risked alienating black voters who made up a growing share of the Democratic primary electorate. Many white Democrats also needed black Democratic support to secure a majority in the general election. On the other hand, overly liberal positions might alienate moderate and conservative whites, so Democrats had powerful motivation to focus on nonracial issues in order to maintain their biracial coalition of blacks and whites.[49]

Race nevertheless has not disappeared from southern politics, though often for very different reasons than in the past. The share of blacks in the population, referred to here by the shorthand of "racial context," plays an important role in multiple ways. In the past, racial context mattered because white voters who lived in areas with many blacks feared the end of white supremacy most keenly and provided more aggressive political support for the racial and political status quo. Whites who inhabit regions with many blacks may still retain a greater sensitivity to racial questions. However, any backlash against the presence of blacks is outweighed by the influence of black voters in these areas. Today, racial context influences the geography of elections by inhibiting GOP success

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[48] Black and Black 2002, 138–204.
[49] Ibid., 174–202; Glaser 1996, 80–141.

in areas with sizable black populations due to overwhelming support for Democrats among African Americans. Chapter 5 explores how racial context matters in the post–Civil Rights Movement South and shows the following.

Racial Issues Matter More for Blacks Than Whites. Even without the South's history of black oppression, the minority status of blacks would be likely to make racial issues more sensitive for blacks than whites. The starkly different stands of the two major parties on racial issues further raises the salience of racial issues in the minds of African Americans. Goldwater strongly identified the Republicans with opposition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, a position that was utterly unacceptable in the eyes of black voters. Republicans remain unacceptable to black voters because of their continued opposition to racially liberal policies and the identification of their party with southern symbols, like the Confederate flag, that reek of racism to many African-American southerners. Even for blacks attracted to the Republicans because of their positions on nonracial issues, the continued partisan divide over racial issues renders the Republicans largely unacceptable. Black support for the GOP remains very low throughout the region as a result.

Racial issues no longer matter as much for white southerners. As the majority, whites do not share black historical memories of oppression or fear becoming a racially oppressed minority. Some whites nevertheless resent the increased status of African Americans and policies, like affirmative action, designed to make up for past oppression. Support for the racially conservative party, the Republicans, naturally increases as a result. However, racial issues are now only one type of issue competing for the attention of white voters. The demise of the old system has allowed whites to focus on issues other than race. Nevertheless, even if whites' voting behavior is not primarily explained by their beliefs on racial issues, racial context can still exert great influence on Republican success because of near uniform support for the Democrats among black voters.

Racial Context Constrains Republican Gains. African Americans' near unanimous support of Democratic candidates assures that racial context has an enormous impact on the geography of Republican gains. The presence of large numbers of black voters makes it easier for Democrats and harder for Republicans to win election. As the black share of the population increases, Democratic candidates need a smaller share of the white vote to win a majority. Republicans find it exceedingly difficult to win contests in areas with a black majority or a sizable black minority. Equally important, the GOP finds it hard to attract white candidates in these areas. As the discussion on elites in chapter 3 explains, ambitious

politicians do not like to identify with the losers. In areas with a black majority or strong black minority, it makes sense for strategic politicians to seek election as Democrats as this is the dominant party. Moreover, even if a savvy white candidate manages to win election as a Republican in such an area, he or she remains vulnerable to the threat that a challenger may combine a unified black vote for the Democrats with a small share of the white vote and win.

White Backlash Is a Relatively Minor Factor. Studies of white voting behavior in the South prior to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 often showed that whites living in areas with sizable black populations were more likely to support racially conservative candidates. Theories suggest that blacks present more of a threat to white political control in black areas, spurring greater white conservatism. More recent studies sometimes confirm that these findings apply to politics today, though others dispute them.[50] I find little evidence of continuing white backlash. The expression of black electoral power matters more for southern politics than any negative reaction among white voters to that power.

Racial, Economic, and Social Issues and Partisan Change

The absence of issue cleavages that was the legacy of the pre–civil rights political system benefited the Democrats as they could continue their role as a "big tent" party designed to contain all major strands of southern public opinion. The more that partisan elites differentiated the two parties, and the more that voters identified these changes, the more that the Republicans were liable to benefit as people would have a reason to leave the Democrats and join the Republicans. The identification of

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[50] Charles Bullock III, "Congressional Voting and the Mobilization of a Black Electorate in the South," *Journal of Politics* 43 (1981): 662–82; Mark A. Fossett and K. Jill Kiecolt, "The Relative Size of Minority Populations and White Racial Attitudes," *Social Science Quarterly* 70 (1989): 820–35; Michael W. Giles and Melanie A. Buckner, "David Duke and Black Threat: An Old Hypothesis Revisited," *Journal of Politics* 55 (1993): 702–13; Michael W. Giles and Kaenan Hertz, "Racial Threat and Partisan Identification," *American Political Science Review* 88 (June 1994): 317–26; Mary Herring, "Legislative Responsiveness to Black Constituents in Three Deep South States," *Journal of Politics* 52 (1990): 740–58; Robert Huckfeldt and Carol Weitzel Kohfeld, *Race and the Decline of Class in American Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); David Lublin, *The Paradox of Representation: Racial Gerrymandering and Minority Interests in Congress* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 87–89; Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, "Social and Economic Factors and Negro Voter Registration in the South," *American Political Science Review* 57 (1963): 24–44; D. Stephen Voss, "Beyond Racial Threat: Failure of an Old Hypothesis in the New South," *Journal of Politics* 58 (November 1996): 1156–70; Kenny Whitby and Franklin D. Gilliam, "A Longitudinal Analysis of Competing Explanations for the Transformation of Southern Congressional Politics," *Journal of Politics* 53 (1991): 504–18.

the Republicans with the conservative position further aided the GOP among most white voters.

Not all scholars adhere to the view that racial issues have been the primary cause of Republican gains among southern whites. Some scholars claim that the role of race in explaining southern politics in the post–Civil Rights Movement era has been overestimated. Rather than arguing for the primacy of race, they contend that the traditional New Deal cleavage over economic and social welfare issues extended to the South once the disfranchisement of blacks ended and southern politics began to resemble the conventional two-party framework. This analysis suggests that Republicans gained support primarily from voters who either benefited from the GOP's support for lower taxes or opposed the expansion of government and social welfare programs on philosophical grounds. GOP support grew not due to its advocacy of racial conservatism but to the middle and upper classes' support of economic conservatism.[51] The growing prosperity of the region further aided the GOP as it increased the attractiveness of economic conservatism.

More recent scholarship points to rising social issues as spurring greater identification with the Republicans among southerners.[52] Social issues encompass a range of issues outside the traditional debate over either racial or economic issues. Many discussions of social issues focus almost exclusively on abortion rights because it is a highly emotional issue for advocates on both sides of the intense debate surrounding this topic, but other contentious social issues include school prayer, gun control, gay rights, and pornography. Some suggest that the rising prominence of social issues in public debate and the identification of the GOP with the conservative position on each issue have encouraged white southerners, conservative on most social issues, to leave the Democrats, a party increasingly identified with social liberalism, for the Republicans.

Of course, racial, economic, and social issue theories of partisan change are not mutually exclusive.[53] Even if the democratization of southern politics has reduced the importance of racial issues, they may remain of great importance for a subset of whites. Racial issues may work in a complementary fashion with economic and social issues to spur voters who support conservative policies on more than one type of issue to

[51] Alan I. Abromowitz, "Issue Evolution Reconsidered: Racial Attitudes and Partisanship in the U.S. Electorate," *American Journal of Political Science* 38 (February 1994): 1–24; Richard Nadeau and Harold W. Stanley, "Class Polarization in Partisanship among Native Southern Whites, 1952–90," *American Journal of Political Science* 37 (August 1993): 900–919.

[52] Greg D. Adams, "Abortion: Evidence of an Issue Evolution," *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (July 1997): 718–37.

[53] Black and Black 1987; Nadeau and Stanley 1993.

support the Republicans instead of the Democrats. Alternatively, racial issues may explain why some low-income voters support the GOP even if most low-income voters give their votes to the Democrats as the party that defends social welfare programs. I argue that the role of racial, economic, and social issues in promoting GOP gains has often been misunderstood and make the following arguments in chapter 6.

Economic Issues Best Explain Partisan Change but Are Now Declining in Relative Importance. Contrary to racial theories of partisan change, economic issues most quickly began to differentiate Republicans and Democrats after passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. During the 1964 presidential campaign, Goldwater did as much, and possibly more, to identify the Republicans with economic conservatism, the political cause closest to his heart, as with racial conservatism. For several decades, economic issues almost exclusively explained why some white voters identified with the Republicans rather than Democrats as well as the voting behavior of white southerners. At the same time, differences between southern Democrats and southern Republicans over economic issues began to grow within the halls of Congress. Southern Democratic support for liberal social welfare policies grew while southern Republicans led the movement of opposition to such policies within their party. The increasing differentiation of the two parties meant that the GOP was more attractive to economic conservatives as time passed. The rapidly increasing prosperity of the South worked in parallel to increase the appeal of the Republican message on economic issues as time passed.

Race may indirectly play a role in the rise of economic issues as the influx of black voters spurred southern Democrats to adopt more liberal positions on these issues. At the same time, economic liberalism was less likely to split their biracial support coalition in the same manner as a focus on racial issues. The importance of economic issues in terms of their predictive power over southern white partisanship and voting behavior has not declined over time. However, other issues have begun to rise in importance.

Racial and Social Issues Are Rising in Importance. Most racial theories of partisan change point to 1964 as the critical year that polarized the electorate over the issue of race. However, the analysis presented in chapter 5 suggests that race did not begin to play a major factor in explaining white partisanship until the mid-1980s. The average southern white Democrat was not more liberal than the average southern white Republican on racial issues until after 1980. Despite the recent salience of racial issues, there appears to be some continuity with the past. The areas that provide the most ardent support for Republicans today are the same

areas that supported Strom Thurmond—who ran on an anti–civil rights platform—in 1948. Since the mid-1980s, the influence of race has continued to grow.

The social issues gathered force even later. The average southern white Democrat was actually slightly more likely to be pro-life than the average southern white Republican until after Ronald Reagan emphasized abortion during his victorious 1980 campaign for the presidency. Abortion increasingly differentiated Democratic and Republican politicians and voters after 1992. Today, racial, economic, and social issues all play a roughly equal role in explaining southern white voting behavior, though economic issues remain the most powerful for now.

Outline of the Book

Authors of books on southern politics have often taken a historical or state-by-state approach to their subject. The region's seemingly obsessive interest in its past, particularly the Civil War, certainly encourages this approach. The difficulty of the region in grappling with long-term, often seemingly intractable problems surrounding race and economic development further spurs students of southern politics to take the long view. At the same time, the real variation in the politics among southern states encourages systematic, comparative study of the politics of each state. The region's many colorful political figures tempt the author to take this approach if only not to forego opportunities to retell the stories of the region's politics that make the subject so interesting to many of us who follow it closely.

Both of these approaches have merit. However, this work follows a different path in its organization around different themes related to the focus on democratization. By bringing together a discussion of how institutions, elites, and issues interact in a one-party region where access to the franchise has recently been greatly expanded, this work hopefully contributes to the literature on southern politics by providing a more integrative approach. Though the chapters rarely follow a historical outline or systematically detail the operation of factors in individual states, I nevertheless hope that this work remains attentive to both history and geographic variation. As this chapter has already explained, I believe that knowledge about institutional structures and elite networks created in the past is critical to understanding the development of southern politics today. Moreover, focusing on broad patterns should provide a deeper understanding of why politics in one southern state differs from that of another.

Before turning to themes of elites, institutions, and issues, chapter 2

describes the rate of Republican gains at the local, state, and national level. Chapter 3 examines GOP difficulties in recruiting candidates to challenge the impressive Democratic pool of incumbent officials. The massive dominance of the Democrats combined with the dearth of potential and actual challengers to these officials alone goes a long way toward explaining the slow development of the GOP. Chapter 4 explains why southern political institutions interacting with the expanded franchise nevertheless made it possible for the Republicans to eventually successfully challenge Democratic control of the region. Chapter 5 explores how racial context conditioned the scope of Republican success. When African Americans compose a sizable share of the electorate, Republican growth is usually inhibited due to strong black support for the Democrats. Chapter 6 assesses the relative importance of racial, economic, and social issues in promoting Republican growth among white voters. Additionally, the chapter shows how the responsiveness of strategic elites to demographics and issues, conditioned by the operation of key institutions like primary elections and redistricting, aided the Republicans in some areas but made it more difficult for the GOP to make advances in others. Chapter 7 concludes with an examination of the outlook for the future and the prospects of both parties in the South.