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1

Southern Politics

The Southern political leader is yet somehow “Southern.” He has a nationality inside of a nationality.¹

We are a peculiar people. We have peculiar environments. Our conduct of our political affairs should be a bit peculiar.²

Maryland was represented at the First Federal Congress by Michael Jenifer Stone, one of six members sent by that state’s voters to the House of Representatives. Stone owned a plantation called Equality. Filled with slaves, it embodied the new nation’s haunting mutual constitution of race and democracy. From the start, as the historian Edmund Morgan put the point, “republican freedom” in the United States “came to be supported, at least in large part, by its opposite, slavery.”³

Opening a century after the Founding, *Southern Nation* inquires about the long legacy of this relationship during the decades following secession, war, and military occupation—that is, between 1877 as Reconstruction concluded and the start of the New Deal in 1933. Focusing on what white southern Democrats did after they regained control of their congressional delegations by the close of Reconstruction, we investigate when and how the states that had practiced chattel slavery on the eve of the Civil War conducted themselves inside the national polity. How did the return to Congress by representatives committed to white supremacy further a particular view of southern nationhood? To what extent did they advance the South as a nation within the nation? And to what extent were they able to project the terms of this nationality beyond their region, making the United States a southern nation?

4 CHAPTER 1

After abolition and the constitutional negation of the doctrine announced two decades earlier in *Dred Scott*, that no black person could be eligible for American citizenship, the Union again was made whole. With the South still suffering the devastation that had been wrought by the war, undergoing wrenching transformations to its economic and social order, experiencing a new racial pluralism in its state and local politics, and suffering a pervasive climate of uncertainty scored by violence, the region's representation in Washington became a focal and sometimes decisive instrument for adjudicating among white preferences. At stake were policies that would determine the degree to which the South could govern what most whites in the region believed to be its own racial affairs, as well as lawmaking that would shape the section's political economy. This combination proved vexed and difficult, posing knotty problems and forcing thorny choices.

Once again, as during the antebellum years, Congress became the chief arena within which southern delegations could seek to shape their region's—and the country's—character. Given its significance, the legislature's procedural rules, as before, also came into play, as southern members understood how shifts in procedures could affect influence and transform probabilities.

These substantive and institutional dimensions of post-Reconstruction America were fraught. The South was hardly a single territorial bloc with simple or uniform qualities. Not all of its states had seceded. Demographic realities varied. Not just the extent but the types of agriculture diverged. Political arrangements were multiple. In this context, it is important to inquire about the frequency and content of the emergence of a congressional “Solid South” and the conditions that facilitated southern success in extruding black citizens from public life, sometimes in tension with other valued goals, and to identify the issues and means by which southern ideas, practices, and priorities were projected beyond the region to shape the contours of the American state and the country's national policies. We thus want to know when the preferences, interests, and actions of southern representatives were mere tangents to the main story of American lawmaking and when, by contrast, their congressional presence became vital, even pivotal, thus making the whole of the United States into a southern nation.

Parallels and Complexity

We are not the first to attend to these fundamental themes about the effects of southern behavior and influence on the substance of lawmaking and the rules within which Congress operated.

Writing in 1949, the historian Richard Hofstadter reflected on “the present tension between the Solid South and American liberal democracy” and recalled that more than a century earlier the South Carolina statesman John C.

Calhoun had characterized the South as a force for stability and compromise in American political life. Calhoun argued that slavery provided a “central point of interest” around which the entire white South would unite, and that the South in turn provided a “central point of union” that protected the North from conflict “growing out of the division of wealth and poverty, and their concomitants, capital and labor.” This role as a “balance wheel against labor agitation,” he argued, could only be played if the South militantly maintained regional solidarity and abjured party divisions in national politics. For the young Republic to be a successful political entity, Calhoun counseled, the South had to act as a separate, coherent, and unified nation within a nation.⁴

Calhoun would fail to attain the constitutional guarantees he hoped would protect southern autonomy in matters of bondage and race. Ten years after his death, eleven of the fifteen states composing the slave South seceded and constituted themselves as an independent confederacy of sovereign states. The Union, a country that in 1860 was home to just under 27 million free whites, 476,000 free blacks, 400,000 slaveholders, and 4 million slaves, was forcibly splintered in two. The South’s subsequent defeat, the termination of slavery, and the postwar military occupation ended any hope of formal institutional parity for the South within the Union. But it raised afresh the fate of Calhoun’s fiercely expressed wish that in national political life the region should compose a southern nation determined to protect self-government as it worked to secure white supremacy and safeguard its leading role in national political institutions.

Comparing the post-World War II era to antebellum America, Hofstadter took note of the South having restored what in effect was *home rule*: local control over state government by elements of the white population free from federal interference. The region had reversed many of the consequences of Radical Reconstruction, defended local autonomy against federal intervention, and been restored in recent decades to its pivotal position in the national polity. Despite the emergence of anti-Jim Crow activism, Hofstadter could record that “the South has stood firm under a combination of the master-race theory and the one-party state,” that “southern delegations in Congress . . . hold the balance of power,” that southerners had learned to achieve Calhoun’s dream of concurrent powers within the national legislature, and that the Democratic Party thus “finds itself in the anomalous position of being a party of ‘liberalism,’ whose achievements are subject to veto by a reactionary faction.”⁵

Hofstadter’s powerful parallelism invites the question of how the situation in the mid-twentieth century came to resemble that of the antebellum years. Was this simply a matter of continuity across a wide expanse of time? Attention to the post-Reconstruction era in fact reveals a complex and contingent patterning of southern behavior and influence. What was consistent, however,

was the rock-solid commitment of southern members to safeguard the ability of their state and local governments to shape and police the region's racial order after slavery. Notwithstanding this passionate quest, three closely connected facets of political development varied a good deal during the half-century after Reconstruction: the degree of security for southern racial autonomy; how comfortable southerners felt to pursue diverse interests and build cross-regional and, at times, cross-party coalitions; and the scope of their legislative influence.

Southern political behavior, in short, was not all of one piece. It varied over time within changing situations of partisanship and across issue areas. If the outcome, ultimately, was the one identified by Hofstadter at midcentury, the path traveled beforehand had been uneven and circuitous. Further, the ways in which southern representatives journeyed in the national legislative arena, we will see, significantly shaped the political economy of the region itself, dooming it to a degree of deprivation that was far from inevitable.

As we understood our own voyage on this historical road, we were guided principally by V. O. Key's magnificent *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, a book based on a massive research program that appeared just as Hofstadter was underscoring the behavior of the South in Congress as a distinct nation in the spirit of Calhoun. Written by the country's leading political scientist, a Texan who had been induced to take on the subject by no less than President Harry S. Truman, Key's volume burst on the scene as a sharply etched portrait of the region and its politics, at the heart of which lay the status of the South's large black minority. "Whatever phase of the southern political process one seeks to understand," Key contended, "sooner or later the trail of inquiry leads to the Negro." A year later, Hofstadter opened a review of *Southern Politics* by observing that "the South has never lost its nationalism." Ever since the 1850s, when the United States ceased to be a secure setting for chattel slavery based on race, the region's "relations with the rest of the nation have been much like the conduct of foreign affairs, or as Professor Key calls it, 'a sort of sublimated foreign war.'" With the South believing itself to be under "a continuous state of siege," it deployed the Democratic Party as the primary instrument to manage this relationship. As the dominant political force in the South, the party served as both an "army of resistance and the diplomatic corps: through it the South has manifested its solidarity against the rest of the nation, and through it she has contracted valuable alliances with other elements in the country."⁶

As much as Hofstadter admired Key's book, he took note of a certain imbalance. Its focus on national politics, Hofstadter observed, "occup[ied] only a minor portion of the book," and its contribution was limited by Key's inability to systematically evaluate the importance of the issues and votes on which the South seemed to possess a distinctive set of policy concerns. The

crucial question of southern politics, Hofstadter argued, was not simply whether the South voted more or less with the Democratic Party in Congress, but whether the region had succeeded in shaping national lawmaking through the variety of mechanisms at its representatives' disposal—by influencing the legislative agenda, by controlling congressional committees, or by directing debate and outcomes on the floor. The answer to this question, Hofstadter concluded, required “another book,” one focused specifically “on the South’s role in national politics.”⁷

Southern Nation pursues this task by advancing an analysis of the role and influence of southern members of Congress from Reconstruction to the New Deal. This approach underscores the persistent possibilities of division among southern Democrats as they struggled to find cohesion in circumstances of very considerable sectional diversity. Southern achievements, which were considerable, were secured unevenly and haltingly. Rather than assume that the cohesion of southern representatives always came easily and was persistently high, or that southern members were always wily and masterful in deploying influence in Congress, we show how southern security and capacity were produced over time under conditions of anxiety and uncertainty.

So doing, the book also offers elements, we believe, that are vital pathways to our contemporary circumstances. Thus, from one vantage, we are deepening historical knowledge about a pivotal era. As signified by Hofstadter’s temporal comparison and Key’s empirical study, work on the South in American political life has been particularly robust for the early Republic through Reconstruction, and again from the New Deal to the present day. By contrast, work on the region from the moment of southern reintegration to the close of the Hoover administration has primarily concentrated on how the South managed to impose and regulate a holistic system of racial segregation within the region, rather than on the region’s role in national politics. Because Jim Crow’s triumph was made possible by the acquiescence of the Supreme Court and the bipartisan withdrawal of national attention to the South’s racial order, questions about the South in national politics during the five and a half decades from 1877 to 1933, with some important exceptions, do not often focus on Congress, the key institutional site in which southern legislators conducted their region’s “foreign affairs.”⁸

As an analytical history, *Southern Nation* probes the role of the South in political development before the New Deal, with implications for understanding America during and since. The book also helps us understand how and why the subjugation of African Americans has been so deep and so entrenched even during periods of progressive achievement. Within the period under consideration, it aims to discern how the South shaped the parameters of the American state and influenced the content of its public policy and, just as importantly, the rules and practices that define Congress, the country’s central

lawmaking institution. In short, we are interested in how southern politics remade the United States above and below the Mason-Dixon Line.

An ancillary objective is to chip away at the wall that often separates the study of Congress from the study of public policy and American political development. As a contribution to historical political studies, *Southern Nation* demonstrates how attention to the substance of congressional representation can illuminate vexing historical questions. As a contribution to the study of Congress, the book shows how attention to historical context, to collective identities beyond parties, and to policy content can help us better understand the institution's workings. In all, we seek to connect understanding the South with its influence in relation to national party politics, economic development, and changes to Congress itself.

Southern Nation illuminates how white southern Democrats came to wield their influence once they regained control of their party during the “redemption.” As a contribution to the history of Congress and to the place of the South in Congress, the book draws on both quantitative measures, in the spirit of V. O. Key, and the more qualitative approach suggested by Richard Hofstadter. Like Key, we rely on a range of quantitative measures of congressional behavior and theories of lawmaking to assess the potential influence and role of southern members of Congress. But we also follow Hofstadter's suggestion to more closely analyze, through in-depth qualitative case studies, the varying role of southern lawmakers in shaping policy in a larger number of important issue areas. In doing so, we believe that we present a more systematic account of the role of southern legislators in Congress than has previously been offered, as we disclose how white southern politicians obstructed their own region's economic and educational development by blocking policies that would have helped it advance in these areas, for fear of upsetting the region's increasingly rigid racial hierarchy. With the ideology of white supremacy pervading their deliberations and actions, they took decisions that had a lasting impact on southern and national politics, then and now, including the divided partisan nature of the North and the South, the degree of ideological polarization in American politics, and gaps in economic and educational standing—themes to which we return in the conclusion.

A Southern Nation

No question has loomed larger in America's experience than the role of the South. At the founding of the Republic, nearly two of five residents in the South were African slaves. The infamous three-fifths clause of the Constitution provided the states in which chattel slavery was continued or established with what amounted to a representational bonus of 25 percent in the U.S. House of Representatives. Westward expansion and the “first emancipation” in north-

ern states resulted in fifteen states practicing slavery before the Civil War, each of which qualified for two Senate seats. From the admission of Louisiana to statehood in 1812 to 1849, southern states returned exactly half of the Senate, providing the institutional basis for an effective concurrent veto over national policy. As a result of these features of political representation, the slaveholding South received an additional boost in the Electoral College.

The combination of regional distinctiveness, an extreme system of human domination, and sectional political power produced what the historian Don Fehrenbacher calls “a slaveholding republic,” referring not just to the South but to the United States as a whole. From the start, southern members used their outsized position in Congress to protect and fortify their social order. The majority of antebellum presidents were slaveholders. Most Supreme Court justices were southern. Federal authority enforced the right to buy, own, sell, inherit, and recover slaves, even in the nation’s capital. The country’s foreign policy routinely was mobilized to protect slavery by a variety of means, including remonstrations against any foreign recognition that slaves could escape across national boundaries. Enforcement of restrictions against participation in the slave trade, which continued to bring slaves to the American continents after it was proscribed in the United States, was meager. The judiciary routinely reinforced property rights in slaves, culminating in the 1857 case of *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, which also declared that even “a free negro of the African race . . . is not a ‘citizen’ within the meaning of the Constitution of the United States.” Congress likewise recognized that fugitive slave laws were a condition of comity between the sections, and from 1836 to 1844 Congress even circumscribed its own ability to discuss slavery by imposing on itself the institutional mechanism of “gag rules.” Overall, “the proslavery cause benefited from the structure of American politics, which required that any northerner serving in, or aspiring to, high federal office make some kind of peace with the nation’s peculiar institution.”⁹

The early Republic was a southern nation. Embedded inside a liberal polity—one organized around principles of individual rights, popular sovereignty, representation, limited government, and toleration—was the world’s largest slave system, safeguarded through the procedures, institutions, laws, public administration, and jurisprudence of the national regime. Slavery could not have persisted without the sufferance, accommodation, and military security proffered by the rest of the country, while slavery’s crops integrated the nation’s domestic and overseas economic relationships. Moreover, the region’s disproportionate political powers strongly shaped and directed policy decisions, not only about slavery but about territorial expansion, warfare, Indian policy, the contours of democratic reforms, internal improvements, the tariff, and other prominent policy issues of the period. Despite great variation across the South, the section acted politically in common when it believed it faced

threats to its essential interests. Over time this commitment grew more intense as the northern states abolished slavery within their borders, the international environment grew more threatening, and the white South's defense of slavery as a positive institution faced increasing opposition from activists in the North and overseas. Slaves manifestly had allies, and the stakes of debates about the scope of slavery in the western territories grew more substantial.

It was a southern nation to which Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont arrived three decades before the Civil War, during Andrew Jackson's second term. These French observers, who even met with the president who exemplified both the egalitarian and racially illiberal features of the still young republic, took stark measure of the country's racial order. Beaumont published the powerful *Marie; or, Slavery in the United States: A Novel of Jacksonian America* in 1835, and Tocqueville, in volume 1 of *Democracy in America*, also published that year, devoted one-quarter of the text to a concluding chapter, "Some Considerations Concerning the Present State and Probable Future of the Three Races That Inhabit the Territory of the United States."

"The Europeans," he wrote, "having scattered the Indian tribes far into the wilderness, condemned them to a wandering vagabond life full of inexpressible afflictions." And writing about the South, he took note of how "in one blow oppression has deprived the descendants of the Africans almost all the privileges of humanity." These "two unlucky races," Tocqueville observed, "have neither birth, physique, language, nor mores in common; only their misfortunes are alike. Both occupy an equally inferior position in the land where they dwell; both suffer the effects of tyranny, and though their afflictions are different, they have the same people to blame for them. . . . [The white man] makes them serve his convenience, and when he cannot bend them to his will he destroys them." In America, "slavery brutalizes" and produces a circumstance marked by "servile fear." White America, Tocqueville observed, presented blacks with no opportunity of integration, placing them in the impossible position of being unable either to separate from white America or to unite with it. But while Tocqueville reminded his readers that "there are other things in America besides an immense and complete democracy," he ultimately did not explicitly and thoroughly connect his passionate and systematic account of slavery and its consequences for the future of the country to his primary subject, the character of American democracy. Questions about the South, race, and slavery, he wrote, "are like tangents to my subject, being American, but not democratic, and my main business has been to describe democracy."¹⁰

In this respect, Tocqueville underplayed a key feature of his analysis that helped shape how we have proceeded here. Going beyond a multifaceted empirical description and ethical condemnation of American racism, he identified a crucial mechanism for the reproduction of racial hierarchy and subor-

dination within the crucial liberal tenet of the rule of law. Lawfulness and legislation, he stressed, were put in play in America not to negate racial exclusion and brutality but as their instruments. In that way, he invited the reader to consider how liberal values—based, as he wrote, on “natural right and reason”—could have been consistent with their decisive negation. Read this way, Tocqueville’s text is an anxiety-charged consideration of the borderland where egalitarian democracy and racial oppression overlap. It is thus an invitation to think hard about the mechanisms underlying this connection between democracy and oppression in the American context, and in particular to examine the role of the country’s lawmaking institutions in buttressing, as well as challenging, racial exclusion and domination.

Emancipation and Redemption

If before the Civil War the United States was “a slaveholding republic,” what was the standing of the South in the polity after the victory of the Union and the return of the South to the national political arena? Over the course of the long period from the close of Reconstruction to the start of the New Deal—and well beyond, at least to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act of 1965—the region remained a distinctive, albeit internally diverse, unit within the larger political, social, and economic order of the United States.

The South’s rebellion, against its very intention, “inspired the most sweeping revolution of the nineteenth century, and shifted the social and political course of the Atlantic world.” The Civil War became a revolution not just because President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation at the start of 1863, but also because hundreds of thousands of slaves rebelled against their masters, entering Union lines, while more than 140,000 blacks, the great majority former slaves, became Union soldiers, constituting about 10 percent of the U.S. military during the last year of the war. “The black military role in support of the Union,” Steven Hahn notes, “made possible a revolution in American civil and political society that was barely on the horizon of official imagination as late as the middle of 1864”—a revolution that potentially extended to the redistribution of confiscated white property and the guarantee of political and civil rights for free and freed blacks.¹¹

In the years immediately following the close of the Civil War, it appeared as if the degree of social transformation would be contained, as President Andrew Johnson sought to decide the terms of reconstructing the Union. It was Congress that acted to ensure that some of the more thoroughgoing transformative possibilities were realized. As secured by the Thirteenth Amendment of 1865, emancipation comprised a combination of human liberation and one of the most radical redistributions of property in history. Uniquely, American emancipation was both abrupt and uncompensated. Slavery, abolished with

the Thirteenth Amendment, was forever extinguished by the extension of citizenship and voting rights to the formerly enslaved, who, aligning with the Republican Party, burst into American public life. An immense amount of “capital” was lost to the southern economic elite, as was their hegemonic political position in the face of military occupation and the radical democratization of political participation and officeholding across racial lines. Southern blacks, now wage laborers, had become citizens, voters, and officeholders, their rights protected by the federal government.

Even as most southern blacks had no choice but to sign labor contracts to work the land once more, the transformation in their standing under the aegis of the Military Reconstruction Acts was sweeping. With the extension of the franchise to adult men without regard to race, southern blacks quickly registered to vote en masse. By late 1867, every former Confederate state had enrolled at least 90 percent of eligible blacks in the electorate; even in laggard Mississippi a remarkable 83 percent were on the rolls. Soon black representatives were helping to write new, more egalitarian state constitutions; notwithstanding persistent antagonism and complaints about black usurpation, these efforts were crosscut by some interracial collaboration.¹²

The result was a profound transformation of southern life. When journalist Edward King and artist J. Wells Chamney traveled some 25,000 miles at the behest of *Scribner's Monthly* to produce their 1875 book *The Great South*, what they wrote in the opening chapter on Louisiana might well have been said about the region as a whole. They observed, in “Paradise Lost,” that “a gigantic struggle is in progress. It is the battle of race with race, of the picturesque and unjust civilization of the past with the prosaic and leveling civilization of the present.” This leveling primarily took political form. When they visited the legislature in South Carolina, once the cockpit of secession, Edwards and Chamney noted with surprise the outcome of the era’s political transformation. The offices of the governor, treasurer, secretary of state, and superintendent of schools in the Columbia statehouse—a building “furnished with a richness and elegance,” they noted—were “usually filled with colored people, discussing the issues of the hour.” The speaker of the House and the president of the Senate were both black, and in total the South Carolina electorate was represented by forty-one white and eighty-three black members, the latter all Republican; the Senate contained fifteen black and ten white Republicans as well as eight white Democrats.¹³

Black representation rested on the remarkable political engagement of black citizens. In a comparative consideration of passages from slavery, Jürgen Osterhammel’s magisterial global history of the nineteenth century observes that “in no other country did the abolition of slavery expand the scope of action as dramatically as it did in the United States.” The uprising and participation of blacks during the Civil War was followed by a burst of citizen indepen-

dence and participation based on free association. “In the transition to freedom,” Osterhammel notes, African Americans were emplaced, if only for a time, within the fabric of free associational democratic citizenship that Tocqueville had so robustly described.

Former slaves gave themselves new names, moved into new homes, brought their scattered families together again, and looked for ways of becoming economically independent. Those whom a master had previously denied free speech could now openly express themselves in public; black community institutions that had been operating underground—from churches and schools to burial societies—found their way to the surface. As slaves, black women and men had been their master’s property and therefore not legal subjects in their own right. Now they could step out into the world, give testimony in court, conclude mutually binding contracts, sit on juries, cast their vote at elections, and stand for office.¹⁴

African Americans quickly used their new political power to bargain with other actors, impose restrictions on antiblack violence, and transform southern state governments and their policies, notably in education. Especially in the Deep South, where they often composed local or even statewide majorities, African Americans managed to radically invert older patterns of power. Congress protected these developments with laws to enforce voting rights and secure the new constitutional guarantees, and President Ulysses S. Grant and the new Department of Justice worked to implement these regulations in the courts.

But this was a world marked by fundamental, irreconcilable ambitions. Most land continued to be owned by white planters, who desperately sought to maintain black labor. Where they could, planters sought to secure control over this labor force “by intimidation; by vagrancy laws making idle Blacks susceptible to arrest and forced labor; by yearlong contracts restricting workers to the plantation under customary rules in return for a meager wage.” In turn, this effort to secure “labor from a controlled, subordinate caste” was resisted by freed blacks, who “wanted land, literacy, a secure family life, and basic social equity.”¹⁵

Quite soon, organized white supremacy made a comeback. Large numbers of southern whites fought back against the new conditions of freedom, often by extrapolitical means of intimidation and through the violence of the Ku Klux Klan, the Red Shirts, and the White Brotherhoods. By the early 1870s, the tide had begun to turn. By that decade’s close, most black gains were on the path to negation—even as former slaves continued to pursue electoral alliances with whites despite stunning and remarkably violent assaults, often led by the Klan and other private organized vigilante forces, on their new status as rights-bearing citizens.

Both as symbol and as cause, the massacre of 81 black militia members in April 1873, on Easter Sunday, at Colfax, Louisiana, by a white militia numbering some 300 proved a critical juncture. Most of those arrested were either released or acquitted, and in 1875 the Supreme Court in *United States v. Cruikshank* declared unconstitutional the federal Enforcement Act of 1870, under which the indictments had been brought. Ruling that the postwar constitutional amendments “only empowered the federal government to prohibit violations of black rights by *states*,” the Court concluded that “the responsibility for punishing crimes by individuals rested where it always had—with local and state authorities.”¹⁶

The Democratic Party gained control of the House of Representatives in the midterm elections of 1874 as a sustained economic depression cut deeply into Republican support across the country, signaling the likely end of Reconstruction. The new Democratic majority, the first since the start of the Civil War, and 50 percent of whom were from the South, soon acted to prevent enforcement of the Civil Rights Acts of 1875 and signaled that it would act to curtail the federal government’s military presence in the South. The stage was set for the formal ending of Reconstruction with the Compromise of 1877, which settled the contested presidential election. As the federal government withdrew from the enforcement of black rights, white southern lawmakers were increasingly free to shape the racial contours of citizenship, while white southern Democrats were reestablished in Washington as a key source of votes and lawmaking capability.

The Solid South and American History

From the end of Reconstruction until the New Deal, the South was repeatedly cast as a problem by northern elites and intellectuals—as an economic backwater in need of northern capital and expertise, ravaged by racism, by diseases such as hookworm and pellagra, and by seemingly unyielding poverty. Many southerners saw things from a different perspective and forcefully argued that the region’s poverty was the product of a national political economy that was rigged against the South, subsidizing northern industry on the back of southern agriculture and draining money from the rest of the country to the financial Northeast. Until the New Deal, argued one former southern member of Congress, “most government activity in economic affairs had worked against the economic interests of the South,” while the region’s foremost historians have characterized the relation between the South and the rest of the country in the decades after 1877 as “colonial.” Southerners would often complain that they were excluded from the halls of power, that “no man of discretion, North or South, would think of proposing a Southern man for President,” and they frequently suggested that this exclusion was the cause of the region’s economic underdevelopment.¹⁷

Southerners, it is true, had been out of power for a long time, their party a minority in Congress and the region denied what many saw as its fair share of offices in the executive and judicial branches. And yet the region's legislators were able to secure the borders of its "authoritarian enclave" even as they built episodic national majorities around progressive economic and political policy proposals. Southerners had taken a leading role in the Populist movement, and while the Populists were defeated for decades after the region was viewed as a hotbed of economic radicalism. It was the part of the country where the "Socialistic tendencies" of the period had gained widest favor. During the first presidential term of Woodrow Wilson, southern legislators helped frame much of the period's most important and far-reaching progressive legislation, and they did so while simultaneously ensuring that white supremacy was left not only undisturbed but strengthened. Nor was the region's influence exclusively domestic. In a reversal from the pattern of antebellum history, southern politicians helped curtail American imperialism (a sharp reversal of southern orientations during the antebellum period, when the South had spearheaded imperial expansion), strongly supported Wilsonian internationalism, and profoundly shaped the rise of the United States to a global power.¹⁸

Neither historians nor political scientists have sufficiently integrated the South and the complex relationship between white supremacy and liberal democracy into the larger American experience. The region, rather, has been absorbed into the significant literature on the impact of sectionalism on the national polity, too often as if the South were just one section among the others. This analytical placement diminishes the South's special qualities and its deeply uncommon role within the national polity. Neither racism nor a racial ordering of citizenship was ever confined to the South. But the region was exceptional in the pervasiveness, centrality, and elaborateness of its racial regime, which left its imprint on nearly every feature of southern life, including its low-wage and underdeveloped political economy and its unusual political system. Rendering the South as peripheral to the history of the United States minimizes the extent to which the South was a "co-creator of the nation's history" and obscures the ways in which the ideas and practices underpinning this racial order were projected across the United States.¹⁹

Notwithstanding Key's *Southern Politics*, scholarship on the politics of race in the region, and the recent recrudescence of interest in sectionalism by historians and political scientists, the place of the South in national state-making and the region's connections to the American liberal tradition have proved elusive. Following Key's insight that the hub of the relationship between southern and national politics lies in Congress, the point where constituency representation and national participation join, we aim to bring the South from the periphery to the center by emphasizing the region's lawmaking role in the House and Senate and its impact on American politics and policy, the organization of Congress, and the character of the region itself.²⁰

Throughout the long period we consider, anxiety about potential federal action to curb the region's freedom of action often led the white South to rely on its congressional representatives to secure the long-term viability of what euphemistically was called "the southern way of life." White supremacy, they came to understand, was fraught and fragile, a view that was manifested in fact in the great fight over, and near-passage of, a federal elections bill in 1890. Only after this legislation had been thoroughly defeated, as evidenced by a declining interest among northern politicians about southern racial practices, did southern members become less anxious that they would be outmaneuvered on matters of race. In this changed situation, the South in Congress was able to move from confronting hard choices to being better able to control the character and terms of those choices.

With full-blown white supremacy encountering no resistance by other national political forces, the South could unleash efforts to advance black disfranchisement, secure control of black labor, and promote progressive policies to curb the excesses of the country's political-economic order. In turn, progressives from other regions proved quite willing to accommodate southern demands that progressive legislation be designed to accommodate white southern control over racial hierarchy. Southern priorities thus could triumph both within the region and in the framing of national policy.

Patterns of apportionment enhanced the ranks of southerners in the nation's legislature, insofar as the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment ensured that the region's entire population would count toward its share of seats despite the mass disfranchisement of southern blacks. Coming almost exclusively from one-party constituencies, southern representatives were in turn more likely to get reelected and accumulate seniority. But southern legislative influence fluctuated with institutional rules, with the size of the Democratic Party, and with the degree to which southerners' votes were needed for legislative action.

Flanked by regional apartheid and national liberalism, southern members nervously justified their racial society in terms that ranged from naked racism to a language of regret about the constraints imposed by black "backwardness." Their anxieties crested and ebbed as they interpreted national and international trends and as they pored over events and policies as diverse as Booker T. Washington's 1901 invitation to the White House by Theodore Roosevelt, the northern reaction to the 1906 Brownsville Affair, and even the official embrace of white supremacy by the British government in South Africa in 1909 for evidence of any "change of view" that might either secure or threaten the South.²¹

Some southern observers sought to convince their compatriots that "in its main purpose the South has been and is triumphant," that "nothing that will endanger [the South's] control of the situation . . . is any longer likely to

be done by the North, or by the nation, against the will of the southern people.” At the time, this was hardly an unreasonable position. Black citizens—especially in the South but in the North as well—lived in “the shadow of a vast despair” all through the era we consider. The southern system of organized humiliation was not considered to be a national problem, except perhaps when expressed in lynching, and few northern politicians desired any agitation on this issue.²²

Still, most white southern Democrats did not believe that the question was permanently settled. Many believed that the nation could not be trusted for anything more than a “tacit acquiescence in what [southern] state governments may do.” But “acquiescence does not evoke enthusiasm,” and most of the political leadership of the white South believed that foreign interference in the region’s racial hierarchy could again become a possibility.²³

Despite a national indifference that set black rights aside, southern fears that potentially effective external pressure might be brought to bear were not easily allayed. The result was an unrelenting southern exaggeration of threat, one that ultimately made it difficult for Jim Crow and massive southern influence over most spheres of national public policy to persist. For most of the era we consider, these incongruities were masked and national politics proceeded as if nothing were more normal for a liberal regime than to have one very large and uncommonly powerful section constituted by an illiberal order based on the racial regulation of civil society, economic exploitation, and political repression; the South was different to be sure, but seemingly only one region among many in the national political order.

Notwithstanding the long-term play of this double-edged reality, the decades we are exploring were not all of one piece. Even before the New Deal and the civil rights eras, there was a good deal of variation in the preferences, behavior, and effects of the southern presence in Congress. This was a region of both factions and overarching consensus, depending on the moment, the issue, and the stakes. The core of *Southern Nation* traces these developments in two periods: after Reconstruction, when the three branches of the federal government wrestled with and ultimately failed to restrain a return to authorized racism; and the high moment of Jim Crow when the white South came to be the dominant force in the Democratic Party and the Republican Party conceded southern autonomy.

Throughout the period, southern anxieties played a key constitutive role. Shifts in the character and intensity of southern congressional members’ apprehension for the security and persistence of the racial order powerfully affected their assessments of public policy options. It is impossible to understand how and by what means southern decision-making in Congress proceeded in each of these moments in diverse areas of public policy without taking these qualms about a potential federal role into account.

Our analysis begins with the great paradox at the core of V. O. Key's *Southern Politics*. Like Key, we are concerned to understand southern political behavior, especially how southern members of Congress fashioned a two-way relationship between that region and the country as a whole. We thus begin by identifying the propositions he placed at the heart of his study, then explain how we have sought to extend his reach geographically, temporally, and substantively.

Key advanced two principal analytical claims. With a stunted franchise and no party competition at home, the South entered the national scene with a constellation of Democrats who, however different, shared in the wish to preserve the region's capacity to decide its racial future on its own. Through the instrument of the Democratic Party, southerners were able to transform their diversity within Congress into a "Solid South," to act as a large and cohesive force within the national party and thereby bring to the region a long period of racial security.

Key's report on the status of the South detailed a region united by the race question and precious little else. "We ought to be both specific and candid about the regional interest that the Democratic party of the South has represented in national affairs," he wrote. "It must be conceded that there is one, and only one, real basis for southern unity: the Negro." Famously observing that "the politics of the South revolves around the position of the Negro," he argued that this matter alone—as a determinant of preferences, as a disciplining feature of imprisoned political discourse, as the controlling influence on institutional design, as the mold of public policies, and as the producer of public opinion and electoral participation—united an otherwise heterogeneous region.²⁴

Focusing on the states that had composed the Confederacy, Key defined the South not in terms of secession as such but in terms of electoral behavior. The "critical" feature of southern politics was its solidarity, and there were "eleven states and only eleven [that] did not go Republican more than twice in the presidential elections from 1876 to 1944." He added, "not without importance," that "the eleven states that meet the test of partisan consistency also are the eleven states that seceded to form the Confederacy." Not without importance, one surmises, because these states, more than the six others that were practicing legally mandated racial segregation at the time he wrote, were caught up in collective memories of secession, war, occupation, and reintegration into the Union. But also because located within these states were the "Black Belt" counties, dominated by plantation agriculture and characterized by high proportions of African American residents, whose culture, economics, and politics set the tone and terms for southern political life as a whole. For it was the white elite in these areas of the South that had the strongest, least mediated, and least conflicted interest in upholding white supremacy.²⁵

Nevertheless, as Key reminds us, these Black Belt counties were not characteristic of the region. As a southern liberal who hoped that social change could come from within the South, Key was deeply committed to informing the rest of the country about what every southerner knew: the region was complex. Southern economic, geographic, demographic, social, and political variety was quite remarkable—as Key showed in pointillist state-by-state descriptions. The region’s politics were fragmented, local, face-to-face, often demagogic. Personalities frequently trumped issues, while the near total control of the Democratic Party effectively erased party as a force in state and local politics. The result, from a party vantage, was a politics of chaotic disorganization, with patterns that were quite dissimilar from state to state, or within various states over time.²⁶

But this diversity not only was contained within but assumed as its background condition a broadly common racial order marked by official segregation, legal imposition, restricted voting, police repression, tolerated private violence, and national permissiveness—in all, a system of racial totalitarianism embedded inside a wider democracy. With race kept to the side of political conflict, and with race also serving as the implicit instrument defining the boundaries of political debate, southern politics could often appear overtly issue-less. Issues that defined political competition in other places were downplayed, and highly distinctive political cultures that other Americans often viewed as alien and odd, even primitive, dominated southern localities and states.²⁷

Once Reconstruction ended and the potentialities of biracial class politics had been tamed, and once southern legality was altered to secure Jim Crow in terms that the nation’s courts tolerated as somehow consistent with the Reconstruction Amendments, the race question was settled at the state level. In these circumstances, Key noted, “on the fundamental issue, only the Federal Government was to be feared” as a potential source of intervention. Thus, “unity on the national scene was essential” for the white South “in order that the largest possible bloc could be mobilized to resist any national move toward interference with southern authority to deal with the race question as was desired locally.”²⁸

Focusing on the 1930s and 1940s, Key argued that in Washington the South’s great diversity and remoteness ceased to matter much. There, he stressed, southern fractionalization converted into southern solidarity. Within the South itself, race constituted the conditions in which factionalism prospered. The very same factor, he explained, especially as filtered through the preferences of its leading political voices on the national scene, advanced southern cohesion. “The maintenance of southern Democratic solidarity,” he wrote, “has depended fundamentally on a willingness to subordinate to the race question all great social and economic issues that tend to divide people

into opposing parties.” The full range of the region’s disparate interests and preferences was tamed, limited, and ordered by the paramount preference of southerners—as individual members, as constituency representatives, and as members of the Democratic Party—to defend the contours of the section’s racial rules. Because the South lacked meaningful party competition, the region’s representatives in the House and Senate were free to join together despite all their differences to preserve white supremacy whenever it was threatened. The responsibility of southerners to guard the region’s autonomous capacity to regulate its internal affairs demanded cohesion despite divisions of style, political practice, and ideology. It was on those issues evaluated by southern members to be impinging on their section’s core priorities that the South acted as a self-conscious and cohesive actor in national politics. The South, in short, converted multiplicity to singularity when its representatives converged on Washington. The section, as Key showed, acted in Congress as a “southern nation.”²⁹

To probe the frequency and conditions of southern cohesion in the House and Senate and to identify when and how southern legislative power shaped the character of the United States as a whole, *Southern Nation* extends and elaborates Key’s brilliant account. By contrast to his historical snapshot of the 1930s and 1940s, we present a moving picture. While featuring issues and mechanisms that Key placed front and center, we undertake a systematic analysis of congressional behavior over an earlier and longer time span, focusing primarily on the five and a half decades spanning from the end of Reconstruction to the election of Franklin Roosevelt to the presidency. We thus begin in 1877, at a moment of economic depression and electoral crisis, and as some Republicans wagered that in giving up on more racially egalitarian aims they could protect the rules “regarding money, banks, tariffs, land, railroad, [and] subsidies” that favored the new type of capitalism that had been “placed on the lawbooks while the South was out of the Union.” With Rutherford B. Hayes taking the presidency only with the contested votes of Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana, the president, in turn, promoted a program of internal improvements in the region and presided over a policy of non-interference in the affairs of the South.³⁰

The two core sections of the book grapple with the South in Congress during the region’s return to the Union and during the Progressive era. We close with the 1932 election of Franklin Roosevelt, which inaugurated a reorganization of economic and political life that would both reflect southern priorities and foster new threats to the region’s racial hierarchy. In all, we aim to apprehend the frequency and ways in which the South became a united nation in Washington and the consequences of this solidarity for the country. We trace the shifts in these patterns over time and identify the contextual and party-specific mechanisms that put stress on prevailing models of congressional

behavior. We wish to better understand both how large-scale developments, including economic crises and wartime emergencies, pressured existing arrangements and how shifts in congressional practices and party rule affected southern unity and effectiveness by moving the South from majority status in a minority party to minority status in a majority party. These matters require a historical span a good deal longer than the one Key considered.

While we extend the time period under consideration, we also use a more expansive definition of the South than that used by Key, who focused on the eleven states that had most persistently voted for the Democratic presidential candidate and that, not incidentally, had also been the states that seceded to join the Confederacy. Our legal and institutional approach defines the region not in terms of the history of secession or patterns of electoral behavior but rather in terms of the distinctiveness of its racial order. We include all seventeen states in which racial segregation in schools was mandated by law before *Brown v. Board of Education* was adjudicated by the Supreme Court in 1954. Only these same seventeen still outlawed interracial marriage thirteen years after *Brown*, at the start of 1967, just as the Supreme Court was getting ready to rule in *Loving v. Virginia* that such laws were not constitutional.

Though our definition is institutional, it is not without broader historical, cultural, and political significance. For much of the period with which we are concerned, the South was not solely “the territory east of the Mississippi and south of the Ohio and Potomac Rivers, but a vast and varied empire reaching from the upper waters of the Chesapeake Bay or the desert land where New Mexico joins Texas, comprising one-third of all the States of the Union.” For many, if not most, southern and northern writers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the South included those fifteen states that still practiced slavery when the Civil War began, plus West Virginia, which broke away during the war, and later Oklahoma, which in 1860 was Indian Territory.³¹ As late as 1964, “southern” meant “more than the former states of the Confederacy” to Frank Smith, congressman from Mississippi. “It includes border states like Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Oklahoma, and parts of states like Missouri and New Mexico.”³²

To be sure, these boundaries encompass great variation and invite debate about commonalities and differences. Thus, Albert Bushnell Hart, writing in 1910, argued that Maryland had become more “a middle state than a Southern,” that West Virginia “has been cut off from the South, and is now essentially Western,” and that the same was true for Missouri, but that Oklahoma was “a community imbued with a distinct Southern spirit.” Even Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Tennessee were, in Bushnell’s telling, outside the “true Southland.”³³

As David Carlton has noted, “much sterile debate about the region’s character has arisen out of differences over which places qualify as ‘southern’ and

which do not.” We do not propose to resolve such debates. No definition of “the South” can satisfy all metrics and considerations across all periods. Rather, the approach we utilize permits us to take variation in time and space into account. As we hunt for southern cohesion, we have opted for the most expansive definition of the region, erring on the side of diversity and thus biasing against a finding of southern unity. Moreover, we do not presuppose fixed or singular answers to questions concerning the scope and content of the issues that motivated the region’s representatives. The larger the region, the more diverse the economy, civil society, demography, built environment, and political interests. Our enlarged definition of the South thus introduces a bias against excessively swift or sure findings of southern unity and collective power. And with a wider South, we can better identify when the South’s different kinds of heterogeneity actually shaped diversity in roll call behavior, and when they did not. In short, the way the South is defined, here and in other scholarship about the politics of the region, is not innocent with respect to models, mechanisms, and findings.³⁴

We probe the role of the South in American lawmaking by developing a more systematic account of the role of southern legislators in Congress than previously has been possible, drawing on a range of new measures and data in tandem with an immersion in congressional debates and newspaper coverage and various primary sources, while also relying on a plethora of secondary scholarship. Rather than focus on a narrow set of policies over time or take a cross-sectional approach at key moments, we examine patterns of behavior regarding classes of public policies over a long swath of time. We hypothesize a lexical ordering to southern preferences that placed the region’s distinct and racialized “way of life” first, so that this concern for preserving the social and racial hierarchies of the South would trump party cues and pressures when a given policy was thought to conflict with this primary consideration. Within this frame, southern representatives possessed a second key preference: to gain both relief and advantages from the new finance- and corporation-oriented political economy that the Republican Party was advancing for the country as a whole, but only if such economic goals could be secured without forfeiting local control over race. This consideration was deeply connected to a range of tasks that southern members had to carry out as they defended home rule and pursued national policy goals. These tasks included dealing with northern Democrats, cultivating occasional support among some Republicans, defeating third parties, and controlling black labor as they managed the stresses and realities of black politics.

By identifying the substance of roll calls and matching these to voting patterns in Congress, the set of policies that southern legislators perceived to most threaten the status quo can be more precisely identified. Readers will discern how southern Democrats were constantly seeking allies not only

among other Democrats but among Republicans, especially progressive Republicans from the West and Midwest, on issues such as revenue policy, tobacco taxation, tariff rates, railroad regulation, currency matters, labor policy, war pensions, and educational investments to combat illiteracy, provided such policy activism could be shaped to be consonant with the region's racial order.

Pursuing this analysis, we not only confirm the arguments that have been made by historians and political scientists about the special importance of specific policies, including civil rights, but also identify other policies that southern members of Congress thought fundamental to their region's social, economic, and political arrangements, as well as policies that they believed would upset racial arrangements. We observe a very active federal government in matters of economic and educational policy, more so than most considerations to date. What southerners sought to do was bend this activism toward their needs and protect regional red lines, including respect for the emerging system of segregation.

Additionally, we apply a southern lens to the story of congressional development by identifying the elaboration of southern mastery over congressional procedures and examining how the institutional changes its representatives crucially crafted affected the way Congress legislated. We examine how these developments within the legislature increasingly made Congress into a southern institution as the region's representatives not only helped lead rules changes but took advantage of congressional reorganization.

Our analysis also raises some significant analytical questions about southern regional influence. Overall, the South had much success in advancing or blocking legislation, even at moments when its representatives lacked what congressional scholars identify as pivotal status—that is, when majorities could have been assembled without their consent—at least in part because many members from the rest of the country were situationally happy to go along with the South or were quite content for the United States to become a southern nation.

Overview

We begin with “Southern Lawmaking,” a chapter that conceptualizes the potential for southern influence. Outlining measures that allow us to map regional preferences about specific policies onto legislative behavior and performance, we consider how the quasi-party status fashioned by southerners inside the Democratic Party intersects with prominent concepts and models in the political science of congressional lawmaking. We detail southern influence as rooted in these theories, which we reconstitute to accommodate southern distinctiveness. We also underscore the importance of the content of public policy as a causal factor, showing how shifts in the character and

intensity of southern preferences for the security of racial arrangements at distinctive historical periods affected decision-making differently in diverse areas of public policy.

With these analytical tools in hand, we turn to the heart of the matter in the two core sections of *Southern Nation*. Part II, “Union Restored,” presents an account of congressional behavior in the decades following the reintegration of the South into the Union. In 1877, the terms of the South’s return remained to be negotiated, but were ultimately settled with the repeal of the Federal Elections Laws in 1894, the 1896 holding in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and the refusal of President McKinley to intervene to halt the violent white supremacist campaigns at the end of the century.

Chapter 3 visits the internal tensions within the various southern Democratic parties, which successfully united competing factions around the cause of white supremacy but whose unity was always tense and insecure. Here we outline how southern legislators evaluated and voted across distinctive policy areas and offer close analysis of this crucial issue.

Chapter 4 explores this period’s central southern lawmaking dilemma: the perennial necessity to weigh hopes for federal investment, regulation, and a reconfiguration of the national economy against the priority of preserving white supremacy. The white South’s fears about the prospect of national intervention, we show, were key to the behavior of its representatives, who often made choices that strengthened regional autonomy at the expense of the standing and prosperity of the South. This combination proved fateful to the subsequent course of American political development.

Chapter 5 turns to home rule, in particular southern evaluations of prospects for a new national labor policy and attention to voting rights protections. Southern success in defeating a renewed consideration of the franchise established the terms of the broad national accommodation that came to characterize American policy and politics for the first half of the twentieth century. The South would be left alone to determine the contours of black citizenship, while the economic program of the Republican Party would be placed on a stable political foundation.

Part III, “Egalitarian Whiteness,” charts the dramatic transformation of southern politics that accompanied black disfranchisement and the ascendancy of the Republican Party in national politics during the early twentieth century.

Chapter 6 identifies the issues and policy debates that underlay distinctive southern preferences and choices as national progressivism increasingly came to be shaped by the region’s representatives. We underscore the transformations to southern politics in the first three decades of the century as southern legislators increasingly drove an economic program, much of it progressive, that ultimately would define the era’s legislative accomplishments. The eco-

conomic agenda of southern agrarians and populists had buffeted the region since the Civil War, but was now both tamed and channeled into the mainstream of southern political life, enabled by the successful suppression of black electoral politics and the rise of systematic racial segregation grounded in law.

Chapter 7 focuses on the period from 1900 to 1915, when an increasingly cohesive congressional bloc from the South remade the American state in its image. At first, these representatives participated in carefully crafted legislative coalitions as the weaker but often more engaged partner, a prolegomenon to the rush of Wilson presidency activism. In the process, the white South fashioned the type of regulatory regime it long had sought to achieve: relatively little bureaucracy in Washington combined with much implementation delegated either to the states or to public-private entities like farm credit boards. Utilizing a congressional capacity based on numbers, longevity, committee control, and support from the speaker, southern legislators imposed new restraints on northern capital while not allowing the South's racial order to be called into question.

Chapter 8 attends to the long moment when southern Democrats came to dominate their party in Congress, just as Republicans were gaining governing capacity after the war years. Here we are particularly concerned with highlighting how the South ever more successfully remade congressional institutions and practices to accommodate the peculiar fact that the region's heterogeneity and range of preferences were contained within a single political party. This achievement complemented the earlier era's policy outcomes, for it reshaped Congress for the long haul. Southern legislators designed and implemented the radical diffusion of authority in the House of Representatives, enabling the diversity of southern policy priorities to be worked out and advanced in the critical legislative committees. Through compromise, they also ensured that the creation in the Senate of a cloture mechanism that could end a filibuster would only further institutionalize their ability to obstruct legislation that called their region's racial hierarchy into question. What emerged overall, thanks to southern influence, was a pattern of national lawmaking that endured for decades, marked by arrangements in which coalitions were forged less by party than by lines of constituency interest and issue-specific policy preferences, with committees coming to serve as key sites of negotiation and brokerage.

These chapters invite a reconsideration of how scholars treat divisions in time during the pre-New Deal twentieth century. A key decision in that regard is our choice to divide the Wilson years, joining his administration's war-time period to the 1920s. Of course, any periodization is a simplification. We know, of course, that many of President Wilson's progressive initiatives were framed as preparedness measures, and that the Republican Party sought, in the 1920s, to restrain and reverse federal activism.

Notwithstanding, these familiar story lines, we argue, are not so much wrong as incomplete. The guiding logic behind the chronological breakpoint we have adopted is the history of movement within the Democratic Party. We show, in chapter 7, that in the early Wilson years Democrats across regions were able to maintain cohesion on core priorities and work out compromises as necessary, but generally achieved reforms that had been long-standing demands of the South with the backing of the entire party.

Lawmaking during Woodrow Wilson's first term was the culmination of southern ambitions during the century's first decade. The later Wilson years, however, witnessed moments during which party lines totally collapsed as progressive and conservative southern Democrats were in much less agreement about what should be done. The party caucus ceased to function as an effective coordinating mechanism, and western Republicans and progressive southerners often allied against northeastern Republicans and conservative southerners. This is a story of fragmentation within the Democratic Party once its priorities had been achieved and once the war had upended expectations about what Washington could, and ought, do.

With the end of the war and the Paris Peace, party lines were reestablished, especially after nearly all northern Democrats were defeated. But this emergent renewal was attenuated, with legislative coalitions forming that were more like those of the unstable war years than the prewar period early in the century. There was no return to political "normalcy." Rather, something significant and new developed as features of lawmaking that first were exhibited during World War I took a more settled form. During Wilson's second term, and more fully in the 1920s, the South as a cohesive actor started to give way to something more heterogeneous and situational as its legislators took advantage of the institutional reforms that created conditions for more policy-oriented political coalitions that crossed regional and party lines.

Southern Nation's historical account ends at a moment marked by the catastrophic collapse of global capitalism, the rise of totalitarianism, and the acceleration of fear, each a characteristic at the start of the New Deal and its governing capacity that was based on the astonishing Democratic Party land-slides of 1932, 1934, and 1936.

Part IV locates this extraordinary moment of party hegemony as well as subsequent trends by showing how the period *Southern Nation* considers provided significant bases for future developments. We thus conclude the book with two sets of claims. First is a discussion of the Roosevelt and Truman years, during which the shift of southern Democrats from a majority of the minority party to a minority of the majority party temporarily overrode the lawmaking features that were fashioned after 1915. However, by the late 1930s, when Jim Crow Democrats came again to constitute more than half of the members of the House and Senate, and on into the conflict-charged civil rights

era, southern influence over national policymaking reached its apex in ways that extended the pattern that had emerged in previous decades including support for a particular kind of hands-off progressivism, protection for southern racial autonomy, and cross-party coalitions on such key issues as labor policy and national security. These features of congressional behavior—in which political parties were, for a time, diminished as vehicles for collective government—were made possible both by southern members' substantive choices as they perceived their system of race relations to be increasingly fragile and by their ability to operate the institutional rules, practices, and expectations that had been molded in part to respond to the particular conditions of southern politics before the New Deal.³⁵

The second question we address is whether, notwithstanding a remarkable array of changes in the postwar years, not least the civil rights revolution, the United States again has become defined by the preferences and priorities of the South. The era of post-1938 southern effectiveness in the last years of regional segregation went hand in hand with historically low rates of congressional polarization. With the passage of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts in the mid-1960s, a once durably and overwhelmingly Democratic region became durably and overwhelmingly Republican. The result was a renewal of party polarization characterized by the effective growth of a conservatism that combined a preference for strong federalism with foreign policy assertiveness and traditional cultural priorities. Once again, the South dominated a significant ideological trend lodged within the region's dominant political party. As a result, Congress came to be characterized by cohesive political parties that are organized and mobilized to advance competing, indeed sharply diverging, legislative agendas. Now in the majority, one of these parties has advanced the cause of making the United States, yet again, a southern nation.

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