

*Paths Out of Dixie:
The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944-1972*

(forthcoming, Princeton University Press)

This book seeks to explain why similar Deep South states navigated the turbulent 1960s in starkly different ways. In doing so, it frames the eleven southern states of the old Confederacy as subnational authoritarian enclaves undergoing transitions to democratic rule. In the 1890s, after securing a conditional autonomy from the central state and the national party, leaders of these states founded stable, one-party authoritarian enclaves under the “Democratic” banner. Far from being racially restricted democracies, these states curtailed electorates, harassed and repressed opposition parties, and constricted white and black civic spheres. State-sponsored violence enforced these elements in a system that ensured cheap, docile labor and white supremacy.

Drawing on comparative historical analysis, archival materials, and a range of other data, the study charts the ways in which three Deep South states—Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina—responded to democratization pressures from the federal government and, increasingly, from domestic insurgencies. The study considers such challenges as the abolition of the white primary in 1944, Truman’s liberalization of the national party on racial equality in the late 1940s, *Brown v. Board* and the college desegregation crises it engendered, and the Civil and Voting Rights acts.

The book finds that, over time, the degree of elite cohesion and the centralization of political authority in these states shaped the ways in which Democratic officeholders managed these transitions. South Carolina owed its much-ballyhooed “integration with dignity” to the effective centralization of the state’s coercive apparatus. The state’s rulers successfully harnessed the revolution, limiting black gains even while they quietly incorporated blacks into the state Democratic party. In Mississippi, the state’s highly decentralized nature stymied political reforms that might have avoided the disastrous desegregation of the University of Mississippi and the destructive protracted democratization that followed. Georgia’s county-unit system facilitated the decimation of statewide networks of black protest in the 1950s. Black Atlanta failed to galvanize black protest in the 1960s as it had done two decades earlier. By the early 1970s, the state Democratic party and state apparatus had effectively undergone a bifurcated democratization, as north Georgia smoothly accommodated to black protest and repaired relations with the national party, while south Georgia followed Mississippi’s transition.

The book closes with an account of how various paths out of Dixie have continued to shape these states’ partisan change and socioeconomic development. The book reorients the study of American Political Development to consider the country’s belated democratization and its implications for the study of contemporary politics. It also argues for the fruitfulness of placing the U.S. South in cross-national perspective. In particular, it points to possible comparisons of the region’s recent past with contemporary Latin America, where authoritarian enclaves persist in several federal polities.

Paths Out of Dixie may be of interest to scholars of American Political Development, political parties, and southern politics. It may also be of interest to comparative politics scholars of regime change and subnational politics.