
The Beginning of the End for Authoritarian Rule in America: *Smith v. Allwright* and the Abolition of the White Primary in the Deep South, 1944–1948

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In 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court in Smith v. Allwright shocked the southern body politic by invalidating the white-only Democratic primary. Interpreting the eleven states of the old Confederacy as enclaves of authoritarian rule, this article views Smith as beginning a long process that culminated in the early 1970s with the consolidation of democratic rule in America. Smith v. Allwright transformed the politics of all eleven enclaves, challenging rulers in their roles both as party officials and as lawmakers. Filtered through various configurations of intraparty conflict, political institutions, and black insurgency, however, the ruling shaped the politics of each enclave differently. This article compares the ruling's effects on three similarly-situated enclaves—Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina. It suggests how Smith v. Allwright positioned these enclaves differently as they faced several other democratization challenges over the next three decades. The article closes with a discussion of how southern enclaves ultimately took divergent paths out of Dixie, why these different modes of democratization matter today, and how the reframing of southern political history developed here engages with recent research on America's distinctive democratic development.

What is the State? It is the Democratic party . . . Whenever there were political questions involved, . . . we looked to the interests of the party, because they are the interests of the State.

—Judge Thomas J. Semmes, delegate at Louisiana's constitutional convention, 1898¹

[T]he conversion of the South into a democracy in the sense that the mass of people vote and have a hand in their governance poses one of the most staggering tasks for statesmanship in the modern world.

—Valdimer Orlando Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, 1949²

I tried to be a Democrat, but they wouldn't let me.

—Black activist Reverend William A. Bender, after attempting to vote in Mississippi's primary, 1946³

In April 1944, culminating more than two decades of struggle by black litigants in Texas, the U.S. Supreme

Court in *Smith v. Allwright* struck down the all-white state Democratic primary, the South's most effective device for maintaining one-party politics. The ruling

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1. J. Morgan Kousser, *The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restriction and the Establishment of the One-Party South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 8.

2. Valdimer Orlando Key, Jr. with Alexander Heard, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (hereafter *SP*) (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 661.

3. U.S. Congress, Senate, *Hearings Before the Special Committee to Investigate Senatorial Campaign Expenditures*, 79th Cong., 1st sess., 2–5 December 1946, 90.

presented southern politicians with some big decisions. Should they simply acquiesce and incorporate blacks into their parties? Should they risk defying the federal government and continue to prevent blacks from voting in these primaries, the only game in town when it came to electoral politics? Could they shore up existing devices to suppress black voter registration (or develop new ones)? Were their career and policy goals more effectively pursued through a different party? The region's black activists—most of them registered Republicans, if registered to vote at all—had choices to make, too. Should they launch registration drives and try to join the party, or should they organize politically outside the “The Democracy”? Across the region, the ruling triggered a fascinating and complex burst of grassroots mobilization and repression, party building and party privatization, tumultuous floor fights and dramatic courtroom scenes, and peaceful rallies and electoral violence. A range of actors had their say: black activists of all stripes, white “good government” advocates in the region's cities, the county courthouse gangs in its hinterlands, assassins, brave federal judges, night-riders, and, of course, state Democratic politicians.

Smith and the politics it sparked were soon eclipsed by the “Dixiecrat” revolt in 1948, *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 and the “massive resistance” that followed, the direct action of the early 1960s, and the landmark federal civil and voting rights legislation of the mid-1960s. Today, the decision does not much register in the public memory. However, despite most scholars' inattention to *Smith*, we have learned a good deal about the period.⁴ From Darlene Clark Hine's *Black Victory* to more recent treatments, historians and legal scholars have begun to excavate the black grassroots effort to topple the white primary and capitalize upon its demise. Charles Zelden has brought into focus the long struggle by local and national NAACP litigants. Michael J. Klarman has highlighted the important role of federal district judges in implementing the decision and the ruling's impact on black voting in urban areas. Political scientists Kevin McMahon and Richard Valelly have argued that the Roosevelt administration, usually framed as unwilling or unable to assist black activists, actually prodded the Court to abolish the white primary and the Justice Department to enforce the ruling.⁵ Scholars have disentangled the

4. The dean of historians of the South, C. Vann Woodward, did not mention the ruling in his important essay, “The ‘New Reconstruction’ in the South,” *Commentary* 21 (1956): 501–508. Since 1963, the *American Political Science Review* (hereafter *APSR*) has not referred to it. Eight articles in the *Journal of American History* since 1968 have mentioned *Smith*; the *American Historical Review* has yet to do so.

5. Darlene Clark Hine, *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas* (New York: Kraus-Thomson, 1979); Charles L. Zelden, *The Battle for the Black Ballot: Smith v. Allwright and the Defeat of the Texas All-White Primary* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights:*

complex jurisprudence of the attack on the white primary and asserted the decision's consequences for black mobilization, but they have not connected the politics of the white primary's abolition to subsequent events, outcomes, and processes. How does the ruling fit into our larger narratives of the black freedom struggle, of southern politics, and of American political development?

I argue that *Smith v. Allwright* marked the beginning of a long process that ended, in the early 1970s, with the consolidation of democracy in America.⁶ During the 1890s, determined politicians in the former states of the old Confederacy used state Democratic Parties to construct not only “Jim Crow” white supremacy and one-party politics, but eleven remarkably durable enclaves of authoritarian rule.⁷ Southern Democrats—jealously guarding their historic project of cheap, docile labor and white supremacy—governed these enclaves by *party-states*—conflations of the state apparatus with those institutions regulating political ambition. They maintained these enclaves for one-half century by capitalizing on their influence in the federal government and the national party. But from *Smith* until the early 1970s, these enclaves were battered by a succession of challenges from within and without and were ultimately destroyed. The region's democratization—a complex macrohistorical process occurring amidst great social, cultural, and economic change—is the most important development in American politics since World War II. It re-enfranchised millions of Americans, now able to practice a new mode of politics; it reconfigured Congress and remapped presidential elections; and it accelerated elite polarization, among many other things.⁸

Smith v. Allwright transformed the politics of all eleven enclaves, invoking rulers in their roles as party officials and as lawmakers. However, filtered through various configurations of intraparty conflict, political institutions, and black insurgency, the ruling shaped the politics of each enclave differently and positioned

The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), chaps. 4–5; Kevin J. McMahon, *Reconsidering Roosevelt on Race: How the Presidency Paved the Road to Brown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004): 150–156; Richard M. Valelly, *The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Empowerment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 159–161. Key state-specific works are cited below.

6. Some surmised as much. W. E. B. Du Bois called it as “an extraordinary victory, not only for black America but for white democracy in the United States and in the world.” In the eyes of *Time* magazine, the decision activated a “ticking time bomb” for the South. Du Bois, “A Chronicle of Race Relations,” *Phylon* 5 (1944): 166; *Time*, “The South: Time Bomb,” 17 Apr. 1944, 20–21.

7. Following Key, I define the political South as the eleven states that joined the Confederacy. I defend this decision in *Paths Out of Dixie: The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944–1972* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, forthcoming).

8. These consequences are reviewed in more detail in Mickey, *Paths Out of Dixie*.

them in different ways to absorb the next shock to the southern body politic: President Truman's commitment of the national Democratic Party to racial equality in 1947 and 1948. Facing several other democratization challenges over the next three decades, southern enclaves ultimately took divergent paths out of Dixie. Different democratization trajectories matter. They are critical for understanding why southern states since the 1970s have varied in their pace of Republican Party advancement, economic development, and racial politics. Understanding the South today means grappling with the different ways in which these states navigated the transition to democratic rule.

Viewing southern states as authoritarian enclaves improves our understanding of *Smith* in three main respects. First, by acknowledging that these enclaves were governed by party-states, we can fully appreciate the ruling's significance. In a broad sense, an attack on the party was an attack on the state. Southern rulers would have to retool not only the party but also state institutions if they wanted to maintain power over their polities. Thus, while the aspects of the white primary's abolition emphasized in the literature—jurisprudence and black mobilization—are critical (and discussed in detail below), the perspective developed here highlights *Smith's* importance for these states' governance more broadly. Second, a careful consideration of the institutional configurations of party and state helps explain the often puzzling cross-state variation in both rulers' responses to *Smith* and in the decision's effects. Third, by coming to grips with the South's authoritarian politics, we can appreciate the central role of *Smith* in initiating the region's long democratization process.

In this article, I compare the ruling's effects on three similarly situated enclaves—Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Almost all enclave rulers preferred to retain the white-only primary. In South Carolina and Mississippi, there was a general consensus on defiance, evasion, and then adjustment. But South Carolina took the radical step of *privatizing* their ruling party, whereas Mississippi politicians attempted but failed a comprehensive policy reform to shore up one-party rule. In Georgia, the ruling struck the state during a period of bitter factional conflict. In the process, one-party rule was almost destroyed. However, skillful political repression by the ruling party's strongly white supremacist faction won out, and broke the back of the progressive faction for almost two decades. In all three enclaves, *Smith* sparked efforts by black activists to draw on and expand existing protest networks, but they differed in the initiatives they undertook. In each enclave, rulers' responses to Truman's challenge in 1947 and 1948 would be shaped by the politics wrought by *Smith*. What explains the different white primary politics that unfolded in each state? Why did enclave rulers make the choices they did, and with what consequences for the future?

Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina are well suited for comparison. Relative to those in the Peripheral South, these Deep South states began the transition poorer and less urbanized. They had economies more deeply rooted in what Barrington Moore termed "labor-repressive agriculture," and had populations with a greater share of blacks.⁹ Ruling Democratic Parties in these enclaves faced effectively no opposition and highly demobilized white electorates. These commonalities make it more difficult to attribute differences in responses to *Smith* to structural features, such as demographics, culture, opposition party development, or levels of economic development. Conversely, they make it easier to highlight the agency of enclave rulers and the institutions that constrained and enabled them.¹⁰

First, I characterize the eleven southern states as authoritarian enclaves and situate the abolition of the white primary in the long transition to democracy. Second, I describe the emergence of the Supreme Court's ruling. Third, I present narratives of white primary politics in each of these three enclaves. The narratives are based on archival research, as well as newspaper accounts, contemporaneous interviews, elections data, and a large and often unheralded secondary literature on southern political history.¹¹ I close with a discussion of how *Smith* helped produce different modes of democratization and how the reframing of southern political history developed here engages with recent research on America's distinctive democratic development.¹²

9. Mississippi and South Carolina remained majority-black into the 1920s. "Peripheral South" refers to Arkansas, Florida, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia; the "Deep South" covers Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. This case selection is discussed further in Mickey, *Paths Out of Dixie*, chap. 1.

10. My goal in this article is to explore variation in rulers' responses to *Smith*. Detailed analyses of black insurgencies are excluded, partly due to space limitations, but also for substantive reasons. I pursue this issue in the conclusion. Several excellent state-level accounts have appeared recently, including: John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1994); Adam Fairclough, *Race & Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 1915–1972* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995); Stephen G. N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940–1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); and Peter F. Lau, *Democracy Rising: South Carolina and the Fight for Black Equality Since 1865* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006).

11. I draw on transcripts of more than one hundred interviews conducted from 1947 to 1948 by Alexander Heard. These and other research materials gathered for the writing of *Southern Politics* are housed in the Alexander Heard Papers, Special Collections, The Jane and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University (hereafter "Heard Papers"). Also invaluable are scores of confidential interviews with Georgia politicians conducted from 1946 to 1947. Calvin Kytte and James A. Mackay, *Who Runs Georgia?* (hereafter *WRG*) (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1998 [1947]).

12. Fuller argumentation, evidence, and citations appear in Mickey, *Paths Out of Dixie*, chaps. 2–4 and 11.

Southern States as Authoritarian Enclaves

Here, I employ a proceduralist and dichotomous definition of democracy; democracies feature “fully contested elections with full suffrage and the absence of massive fraud, combined with effective guarantees of civil liberties, including freedom of speech, assembly, and association.” Moreover, political institutions must be sufficiently autonomous from social and economic power such that these elections are meaningful.¹³ After democratic polities are constructed, there often remains substantial variation subnationally in political practices. *Authoritarian enclaves are areas—usually states or provinces in a federal polity—in democratic polities marked by the absence, or unreliability, of the components of democracy.*

The developing literature points to some important regularities about subnational authoritarian enclaves.¹⁴ First, embedded in democratic polities—usually federal ones—they are governed by hegemonic state- (or province-) level parties.¹⁵ This is because they cannot openly disavow mass political participation—citizens and elites outside these enclaves would not countenance a blanket rejection of democracy. Thus, enclave rulers must pursue their goals within a polity featuring substantial popular control of office holding in the form of one-party rule. Second, their survival depends on the inability or unwillingness of the central state or the national party to intervene against them. To this end, they must project their power effectively in national institutions and the national party in order to maintain a protective wall around their borders.¹⁶ Third, once established, they are difficult to topple; domestic insurgencies likely will not defeat them on their own. Their opponents must reach beyond enclave boundaries for assistance from central state officials, politicians, and “outside agitators” to weaken the regime.

13. David Collier and Steven Levitsky, “Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research,” *World Politics* 49 (1997): 434, and *passim*.

14. They are prevalent today in Latin America. The most important analysis of the phenomenon is Edward L. Gibson, “Boundary Control: Subnational Authoritarianism in Democratic Countries,” *World Politics* 58 (2005): 101–132; Gibson, “The Populist Road to Market Reform,” *World Politics* 49 (1997): 339–370; and chapters by Wayne A. Cornelius and Richard Snyder in *Subnational Politics and Democratization in Mexico*, ed. Todd A. Eisenstadt, Wayne Cornelius, and Jane Hindley (La Jolla: UCSD Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1999), 3–16 and 295–341.

15. Universal suffrage is now normative worldwide, and authoritarians often hold something like “elections.” Lucan Way and Steven Levitsky, “The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 13 (2002): 51–65.

16. Federal politicians, from Perón to Roosevelt, have long turned to enclave rulers for votes they control in the national legislature or their help within the national party. In exchange, they offer warrants of autonomy over province-level politics, greater party influence, and other goods. Gibson, “The Populist Road to Reform.”

The Founding of Southern Enclaves

Before the 1890s, southern Democrats had not yet established what would become the pillars of enclave rule: one-party politics, racially segregated public spheres, and the political exclusion of blacks. Southern authoritarianism emerged from a coordinated, region-wide movement by Democratic Party leaders in the 1890s to develop institutions that could safeguard their attainment of policy and career goals. These leaders would come to construct enclaves governed by *party-states*—conflations of the state apparatus with those institutions regulating political ambition. The state apparatus oversaw the hegemonic Democratic Party, while the Party staffed, guided, and exploited local, county, and state governments.¹⁷

During Reconstruction, emancipated blacks, indigenous southern Republicans, and federal administrators worked to construct robust, democratic polities that could guarantee order after federal troops withdrew from the region. But, often riven by conflicts between progressive and conservative factions, southern Republican Parties remained fragile throughout Reconstruction. Democratic Party elites sanctioned waves of electoral violence that severely reduced turnout by their opponents and helped them recapture most southern statehouses and congressional seats. In doing so, they signaled to national Republicans, federal authorities, and non-southern publics that the costs of reconstructing the South were prohibitively high. The infamous Hays-Tilden Compromise of 1877 ratified, rather than precipitated, declining Republican and northern support for freedmen and white loyalists. Southern Democrats seemed safely entrenched.¹⁸

But they were not. Despite massive electoral fraud and violence, blacks and anti-Democratic whites continued to organize, and vote, in large numbers. Conservative Democrats perceived a future marked by substantial electoral volatility; moreover, the costs of intermittent electoral violence were increasingly at odds with the efforts of “New South” boosters to attract capital investment from outside the region. In the 1880s and 1890s, agrarian movements challenged conservatives’ control of state Democratic Parties from inside and out, and politics grew more chaotic. Republicans, Populists, other third parties and fusion movements experimented with different coalitions of partially incorporated freedmen and

17. I owe the term “party-state” to Richard F. Bensel who used it to describe the Republican Party’s control of the central state apparatus during Reconstruction in his book, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859–1877* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

18. By 1876, fewer than 1,000 federal troops remained in the South (excluding those garrisoned in West Texas to suppress Indian threats). Bensel, *Yankee Leviathan*, 388; Vally, *Two Reconstructions*, 91–96.

agrarian radicals while often using white supremacist rhetoric to attract other voters.

With their interests persistently endangered by this uncertain electoral environment, planters and a growing number of urban boosters, merchants, and “New South” industrialists in each state organized through Democratic channels what amounted to a “public conspiracy.” They alternately co-opted and repressed Populists, seized control of the state apparatus, redesigned political institutions, and effectively ended credible partisan competition. From 1890 to 1908—usually after defusing partisan threats—Democrats in eight states rewrote state constitutions via Democrat-dominated conventions or popular referenda on constitutional amendments. Republicans, third-party politicians, and black leaders often opposed these changes. In *no* state did a majority of Populist voters back disenfranchisement referenda.¹⁹

In these moments, new regimes were founded. Southern states disenfranchised black citizens and many whites through several innovative techniques.²⁰ All of these devices—in addition to several others secured by statute—delegated substantial discretion to local officials who could choose whether to disenfranchise potential voters because of race, faction, or other criteria. These constitutions also weakened local governments, converted many elective offices into appointive positions, and further insulated state judiciaries from popular input. In establishing these regimes, this generation of southern Democrats “laid the lasting foundations in matters of race, politics, economy, and laws for the modern South.”²¹

Dominating office-holding channels and policy-making required some unity of purpose. Until 1966, the seal on the ballot of the Democratic Party of South Carolina offered one such purpose: “White Supremacy—For the Right.” Asking “*which* whites’ supremacy?”, Key answered, that by the 1940s “the Black Belt counties . . . ha[d] . . . managed to subordinate the entire South to the service of their particular needs.”²² For large landowners, merchants, and their economic and political dependents, white supremacy and political repression were inextricably bound up with concerns about guaranteeing a steady supply of cheap and reliable black labor and a favorable

distribution of landownership. Southern rulers resembled oligarchs in other agrarian polities by relying on “extra-economic coercion of labor by the state for [securing] income superior to that possible under more liberal, market-based arrangements.”²³ Black Belt elites and emerging New South boosters developed and maintained mutually beneficial policies in a wide range of areas, such as state subsidies for attracting low-wage manufacturing. Indeed, over the coming decades, white southern progressives accepted wage discrimination, anti-unionism, and Jim Crow in the service of industrial and capital recruitment.²⁴

Protecting Enclave Rule from External Attacks

The founding of enclave rule was possible only because of propitious national conditions, especially a favorable federalism—defined as a particular distribution of warrants of authority and responsibility across levels of the polity. Only conditionally independent of federal oversight, however, rulers had to design regime features—most especially, suffrage restriction and Jim Crow—within the parameters of the region’s “special constitutional status.” A key element of this status was a judicial innovation known as the state action doctrine. It held that the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments only served to ban racially discriminatory action by the state; private individuals and organizations were not subject to these amendments. This doctrine would be critical for providing constitutional protection to the white primary.²⁵

Two other tools helped build fences around southern enclaves. Southern federal officeholders developed extraordinary influence in Congress through seniority, control of committees, and usually unified voting. The Senate’s more elaborate arsenal of weapons available for motivated minorities, including the filibuster, further enhanced their power.²⁶ They traded their support for Roosevelt’s New Deal

23. This coercion “entails gross violations” of fundamental rights. Elisabeth Jean Wood, *Forging Democracy From Below: Insurgent Transitions in South Africa and El Salvador* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 6–8.

24. George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913–1945* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1967), 106. Rural elites secured manufacturing plants in non-farm rural areas and small towns. James C. Cobb, “Beyond Planters and Industrialists: A New Perspective on the New South,” *Journal of Southern History* (JSH) 54 (1988): 56–59, 64–65.

25. William Forbath, “Constitutional Change and the Politics of History,” *Yale Law Journal* 108 (1998–1999): 1924; Pamela Brandwein, “The *Civil Rights Cases* and the Lost Language of State Neglect,” in *The Supreme Court and American Political Development*, ed. Ronald Kahn and Ken I. Kersch (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 275–325; Valelly, *Two Reconstructions*, chaps. 5–6.

26. See, e.g., *SP*, chaps. 16–17; Sean Farhang and Ira Katznelson, “The Southern Imposition: Congress and Labor in the New Deal and Fair Deal,” *Studies in American Political Development* 19 (2005): 1–30.

19. Kousser, *Shaping of Southern Politics*, 11, 39, 246. White Populists and other anti-Democrats differed on how best to counter planters and nascent industrialists. Some backed black disenfranchisement as the only way to remove the “race issue” from electoral politics and thus structure conflict along class and cultural lines.

20. All states adopted the poll tax, which dampened poor whites’ political participation, as well as that of blacks. Eight adopted literacy requirements, and four used property qualifications.

21. Kousser, *Shaping of Southern Politics*, 40; quotation from Woodward, *Origins*, 22.

22. Bruce H. Kalk, *The Origins of the Southern Strategy: Two-Party Competition in South Carolina, 1950–1972* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 2001), xix; *SP* 646 and 666.

measures for his noninterference in enclave rule and for financial assistance for their benighted region. They modified federal social and labor policy in order to maintain control over black agricultural labor and labor markets more generally, and they stifled serious consideration of civil rights legislation for decades.

Additionally, southern Democrats exploited their position in the national party to protect enclave rule. In the confederally structured Democratic Party, state parties delivered electoral votes in exchange for substantial autonomy over their own affairs.²⁷ The “national party”—as a distinct institution at least partially independent of state parties—lacked the capacity to do much more than service states’ patronage requests. State parties were thus free to oversee their primaries, conventions, and delegate selection. Moreover, during the “System of 1896,” they contributed a large share of the party’s Electoral College vote. This influence and the party’s long-standing “two-thirds” rule provided a southern veto over presidential nominations.²⁸ Enclave rulers skillfully protected their prerogatives in the face of potential outside interference, but they also relied on lucky timing and the kindness—and timorousness—of strangers.

Internal Pillars of Enclave Rule

Enclave rulers limited the dangers of domestic insurgencies and intraelite conflict with six institutions and practices. These were largely institutional means to materialist ends.²⁹ First, *suffrage restriction* of blacks and poorer whites was central to ruling party stability. Targeting voter registration, black participation in state Democratic Parties, and turnout, enclave rulers accomplished suffrage restriction through constitutional provisions, statutes, party procedures—such as the white primary—and informal practices.³⁰ Suffrage restriction had partisan aims and consequences. It deterred party building, especially by eliminating the plausibility of building opposition parties through appeals to blacks and many of the poorest whites. Turnout and partisanship rates for opposition forces were high before, and declined precipitously after, the turn-of-the-century constitutional

conventions that codified enclave rule.³¹ Following suffrage restriction, southern Democrats adopted the direct, and white-only, primary, which reduced further the possibility of interparty competition.³² In turn, one-party rule fashioned a political environment most favorable for producing their preferred policies. Just as voting rights are fundamental to securing and safeguarding other rights and goods, suffrage restriction was fundamental to safeguarding authoritarian rule.³³ Neither Jim Crow nor one-party rule would survive long without suffrage restriction. Worse still, the loss of one-party rule would mean the loss of influence in the federal government and the national party.

Second, *Jim Crow*—the formal and informal regulation of interracial contact in bedrooms, schools, public accommodations, and the workplace—greatly facilitated enclave rule. It demarcated territories and jurisdictions over which rulers exercised authority, stabilized until-then shaky racial categories, and ordered much of the daily contact between the races.³⁴ It also greatly reduced the prospects for organized dissent for individuals of all races. A version of white supremacist ideology was certainly embraced by enclave founders and most of their white subjects, but it is important to understand Jim Crow’s instrumental dimension.³⁵ Although racist attitudes were most strongly held in the South, it was the region’s authoritarian politics that differentiated it from the rest of the country.³⁶

31. See, e.g., Kent Redding and David R. James, “Estimating Levels and Modeling Determinants of Black and White Voter Turnout in the South, 1880 to 1912,” *Historical Methods* 34 (2001): 141–158.

32. *SP* 20. By 1903, most southern states used the primary; by 1915, all did. Kousser, *Shaping of Southern Politics*, 72–82; Scott C. James and Brian L. Lawson, “The Political Economy of Voting Rights Enforcement in America’s Gilded Age: Electoral College Competition, Partisan Commitment, and the Federal Election Law,” *APSR* 93 (1999): 115–31; Valelly, *Two Reconstructions*, chap. 6; Woodward, *Origins*, chap. 12.

33. Without it, malapportionment could transform the Black Belt from the heart of enclave rule to its greatest threat.

34. The fact that Democratic politicians themselves codified interracial contact in municipal ordinances and state statutes belied their claim that “you can’t legislate morality,” which they invoked for generations to rationalize their opposition to anti-discrimination statutes.

35. See Barbara Jeanne Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America,” *New Left Review* 181 (1990): 95–118. Jim Crow came to be strongly rooted in mass white attitudes, but was in part a contingent outcome of the establishment of enclave rule, not something emerging organically from southern soil. Its rapid collapse in the 1960s was peaceful in part because preferences for white supremacy ranked below those for life, limb, and treasure.

36. In contrast to the interpretation developed here, some have termed the South a “*herrenvolk* democracy.” Pierre van den Berghe developed the idea with reference to South Africa to capture the coexistence of an egalitarian, democratic polity for a master race with the exclusion of another group from the civic and political spheres. See, e.g., George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 43–64, 90–96.

27. John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origins and Transformation of Party Politics in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), chap. 4.

28. The rule required that the presidential nominee win the support of two-thirds of national convention delegates.

29. Enclaves were certainly sustained by much more than the institutions described below. Many cultural and social resources were important, both on their own accord and to the degree that they helped actors self-consciously construct these institutions (which themselves transformed culture and society). See, e.g., Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1940* (New York: Pantheon, 1998).

30. Literacy and residential requirements and the surprisingly burdensome poll tax were only some of the tools crafted by southern rulers. Kousser, *Shaping of Southern Politics*, 238–265.

Third, *legislative malapportionment* provided Black Belt whites and their clients with a commanding presence in state legislatures, which controlled many more political resources than did executives. Enclaves failed to update 1890s apportionments for seven decades. Thus, as urban business interests grew in importance and embarked on political and economic modernization projects that impinged on the interests of rural elites, malapportionment provided a veto against these projects. By 1940, it was the most important source of the Black Belt's domination of southern enclaves. Furthermore, the apportionment of other key institutions—such as the party's executive committee and party conventions—was often based on that of the legislature. The effects of malapportionment reverberated through the party-state.

Fourth, and least appreciated, enclaves used *restrictions on free and fair political contestation* to disadvantage opposition party builders.³⁷ Several states, by party rule or statute, barred previously “disloyal” candidates, or those who failed to pledge themselves to the values of the Democratic Party, from running for office—even as independents. In seven of the eleven southern states, statutes forced parties to nominate statewide candidates by primary, thus making Republican Party building very expensive.³⁸ Moreover, in a region where several states did not use secret ballots until after World War II, individuals attempting to vote Republican risked jobs, clients, positions in valuable social networks, and even life and limb.³⁹ In preventing free and fair elections, southern states were authoritarian.

Fifth, like authoritarian polities everywhere, enclave rulers *constricted civil society*. Public authorities conducted propaganda campaigns, surveillance, investigations, and legal attacks on the activities of scores of groups, such as the NAACP, biracial discussion groups, labor organizers, liberal and popular front associations, and even black fraternal orders. The threat of such harassment deterred countless other efforts. In preventing public manifestations of biracial civil society, enclave rule substantially curtailed the associational freedoms of whites, as well as blacks.

Similarly, Robert Dahl saw the South as a “kind of polyarchy for whites and hegemony for blacks.” *Polyarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 28.

37. Of course, white voters' loyalty greatly advantaged Democrats, but hatred of the “Republican” label was itself the outcome of political conflict and a related victory in the battle over historical memory. Woodward, *Origins*.

38. In three southern states, the state paid only for the Democrats' primary. SP, 432, 438–442, 446; Alexander Heard, *A Two-Party South?* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), 76. Republican politicians traded convention votes for federal patronage; they rarely attempted to win offices. Neil R. McMillen, “Perry Howard, Boss of Black-and-Tan Republicanism in Mississippi, 1924–1960,” *JSH* 48 (1982): 205–224.

39. As in other authoritarian polities, ruling party control of electoral administration made other techniques available.

Before the onset of the transition to democracy, there was, of course, organized white and biracial reformist activity in all southern states.⁴⁰ These provided important talking shops for those dissatisfied with some (or all) elements of enclave governance, as well as networks for becoming involved with the Roosevelt administration. As incubators of minor reform initiatives, however, they rarely challenged the central pillars of enclave rule before *Smith*.⁴¹

Sixth, rulers supplemented restrictions on civil liberties by directing, endorsing, or acquiescing in the *physical coercion* of their subjects. All modern regimes construct and rely upon coercive institutions to maintain order, but authoritarians—usually suffering from a more serious legitimacy deficit—are especially dependent on an effective (if rarely employed) coercive apparatus. In the South, coercion took many forms, from imprisonment, expulsion, and destruction of property to torture, murder, and state execution. Rulers relied on (threatened) violence to deter and repress opposition movements, black protest and political mobilization, unions, and others challenging the party project. Public authorities and organized white supremacists threatened violence in many ways, from whisper campaigns to signs posted in cotton fields to stump speeches. Partisan and later “establishment” violence stabilized enclaves at key moments; some violence, such as carefully planned public lynchings in front of massive crowds, served civic-educative functions for black and white audiences.

Parties or “No-Parties” of One-Party Rule?

After vibrant, chaotic, often violent, but hotly contested electoral politics, popular participation under enclave rule sank to abysmal levels. Deep South voter turnout in presidential elections remained below 20 percent for five decades; in South Carolina it sometimes dipped below one in ten voting-age adults.⁴² Lacking interparty competition, general elections were little more than formalities. Party nominations—effectively elections—were often issueless affairs that turned on “friends-and-neighbors” voting patterns and colorful personalities. Enclave founders had been successful in removing many major questions from the political agenda; when issues arose, they were often cultural in nature (such as prohibition).⁴³ At the height of stable enclave rule in the

40. The leftist Southern Conference for Human Welfare did support the attack on the white primary. Thomas A. Krueger, *And Promises to Keep* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), 128.

41. See Kimberley Johnson's forthcoming book, *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Age Before Brown*. She argues that many white reformers sought to make what I call enclave rule more effective.

42. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, Part Two (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976), Series Y 27–28, 1072.

43. Populists called for free textbooks, a less expensive auto license fee, and pensions for state employees.

1920s and 1930s, full-throated electoral appeals to defend white supremacy subsided, given the implausibility of black insurgency.

Democrats did not develop partisan, vote-seeking operations; usually failed to hold issue-oriented campaigns; and often lacked durable factions. State party machinery rarely mattered in channeling resources among primary nominees. Given the absence of anything like “responsible party government” and the weakness of factions, Key concluded that the South “really ha[d] no political parties.”⁴⁴ These parties, however, regulated political ambition. They constrained the position taking of all contestants through the party label of “White Supremacy.” They breathed life into this label by conflating the state with the party, and party disloyalty with state treason. These parties were very powerful institutions, no matter how little they resembled the textbook party.

For about one-half century, external and internal regime supports combined to sustain the South’s authoritarian enclaves. Easily caricatured as demagogic rubes, southern politicians have long provided targets for lampooning.⁴⁵ Indeed, Deep South elites occasionally threatened to settle political disputes with one another physically.⁴⁶ However, beyond lacking features of democratic polities, southern enclaves—like all stable, authoritarian polities—constituted governance achievements. They reconciled the interests of urban elites, New South boosters, industrialists, and large landowners into a single regime and equipped it with institutions to demobilize white electorates, stifle black political engagement, and forestall workers’ challenges to state institutions and policies. Enclave rulers managed warrants of conditional autonomy and skillfully deployed federal officeholders to block potential interference, especially concerning voting rights and state-sponsored violence. Put differently, these politicians successfully completed key tasks required of modern polities, including maintaining order, regulating

political ambition, delivering minimal economic performance, and balancing diverse interests. Acknowledging this trains our gaze on the *governance* challenges faced by rulers as they defended suffrage restriction and Jim Crow. Although whites outside the South could afford to view southern politics as comic opera, it was, in Key’s words, “deadly serious business.”⁴⁷

Enclaves and Democratization Challenges

Like enclaves elsewhere, those in the U.S. South were secure enough, and productive enough for their main clients, that elite-driven reform or domestic insurgencies were highly unlikely to upend them. Because of their lack of resources and their weak connections to allies “abroad,” dissidents on the ground were in all likelihood necessary but not sufficient for toppling enclaves. Rather, a combination of external interventions and insurgencies would be needed to dismantle them. Moreover, the fact that enclaves were governed by party-states meant that democratizing them required dismantling *both* components: the ruling party *and* state institutions. Of course, the transition was a highly complex period that featured many acute challenges from “abroad”—important “exogenous” shocks such as World War II, as well as important secular change, such as urbanization and the mechanization of agriculture, altered the influence of different ruling interests.

At the onset of external challenges to enclave rule, the ruling party has a strong disposition toward the status quo, despite the potential diversity of interests within a ruling party. Rulers seek to deter, or at least defer, these challenges. Over time, democratization challenges and responses to them may shift the factional balance and alter rulers’ capacities to implement preferred strategies. And individuals may conclude that the ruling party is no longer the most effective means to advance their careers and policy goals. One faction’s dominance may enable a more cohesive response to a democratization challenge, whereas a severe split may frustrate the implementation of rulers’ strategies.⁴⁸ The shape of party institutions could do so, as well.⁴⁹

Besides elite conflict and party institutions, the fit between rulers’ preferred responses to democratization challenges and state institutions affects their

44. Only in those states where there was a durable Republican Party did Democratic Parties acknowledge, and reduce, the electoral costs of factionalism. *SP*, 298–311, 387, 16, 4, chap. 19.

45. The 1940s Fred Allen radio show gave voice to this perspective in the form of folksy, “unreconstructed” Senator Claghorn (who once complained that “I had a cold last week ruin mah filibuster”). The caricature reflected the white North’s sense of superiority toward, naiveté about, and indifference to southern politics. Claghorn metamorphosed into a rooster as the beloved Warner Bros. cartoon character Foghorn Leghorn.

46. In the enclaves under study, several standoffs among governors, legislators, and highway departments in the 1930s featured troopers with Tommy guns, the deployment of National Guards, the imposition of martial law, and even the beatings of political opponents by governors’ plainclothes thugs. Further afield, see Garry Boulard, *Huey Long Invades New Orleans: The Siege of a City, 1934–36* (Gretna, L.A.: Pelican Publishing Co., 1998). Key likened the behavior of these politicians to the “erraticism of Mexican generals of an earlier day.” *SP*, 305.

47. *SP*, 4.

48. The “party” might respond by making a clear, collective choice, whether through established procedures or by granting authority to particular actors. Alternatively, its response might be the aggregation of many individuals’ choices, such as an uncoordinated mass exodus from the party. Finally, the party’s response may be an utter cacophony of conflicting behaviors by numerous individuals acting in the name of the party.

49. Generally, the shape of party institutions may affect a party’s flexibility to plan, act quickly and decisively, and discipline those who wield its label as officeholders, officeseekers, and activists.

ability to adjust to serious pressures. Important features may include the degree to which public authority is centralized, the quality of the coercive apparatus, and fiscal and administrative capacities needed for developing and implementing programs to co-opt opponents or develop new bases of support.⁵⁰

After *Smith*, five highly similar and simultaneous external interventions challenged the South's eleven enclaves. These were not purely exogenous "shocks" to the southern body politic. Southern blacks and their white allies both inspired and compelled outside actors to pose these challenges. Conversely, enclaves' responses to previous challenges and the degree of anticipated enclave resistance shaped their timing and content. Still, framing the transition as a series of external shocks facilitates comparisons across enclaves. More important, the periodization developed here is theoretically consistent with the enclaves framework. By emphasizing party-states, I am approaching democratization narrowly in institutional terms: as a period of attacks on, and ultimately the destruction of, the institutions propping up authoritarian politics. Thus, while *Smith* did not cause the process to begin—as I suggest below, the effects of the war are perhaps paramount here—the ruling is usefully seen as the beginning of the process.⁵¹

Smith v. Allwright Strikes the Deep South

On the eve of *Smith*, southern authoritarians had reason to be concerned about the stability of enclave rule. Over the preceding decade, they witnessed the Great Textile Strike of 1934 and other workers' protests, the emergence of the radical Huey Long in Louisiana, and the coddling of white southern liberals by an increasingly unreliable Roosevelt administration.⁵² In 1936, the national party repealed the "two-thirds" rule.⁵³ Moreover, in 1938

Roosevelt attempted to "purge" a few conservative Democratic incumbents in House and Senate primaries, including two Deep South senators.⁵⁴ The onset of war sparked further concern among enclave rulers, especially about federal interference in southern labor markets. The Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) threatened, albeit unsuccessfully, to monitor "fairness" in employment. Moreover, it symbolized and further encouraged the influence of national black protest organizations in national policymaking and the national party.

The war brought additional problems; most important were increasingly assertive southern black publics and the growing discomfort of nonsouthern elites facing the ideological contradiction of their longstanding coddling of enclave rule with a war to preserve democracy.⁵⁵ This discomfort helped bring about congressional attempts (which were ultimately unsuccessful) to interfere with southern suffrage restriction.⁵⁶ Still, as their private papers suggest, in the early 1940s, most southern politicians were confident in enclave defenses and did not perceive enclave rule under serious threat, either from within or without.

But in just a few years, two external challenges battered these enclaves. First, the Supreme Court's 1944 ruling in *Smith* struck at suffrage restriction and one-party rule. Second, the national Democratic Party's turn toward racial equality in 1948 challenged local rulers. Truman's suggested use of the central state

marching out of the convention, he muttered, "I'm sick and tired of the whole damn thing. That ain't my kind of democracy." Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina in the Modern Age* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 148.

54. These were the highly esteemed, conservative Walter George (Georgia) and the not-so-esteemed, unreconstructed "Cotton Ed" Smith (South Carolina). Roosevelt's active campaigning against them violated a long-held taboo, and his highly critical rhetoric about the South's politics and economics was consistent with a report written by white liberals with ties to the administration, many of them southern. David L. Carlton and Peter A. Coclanis, eds., *Confronting Southern Poverty in the Great Depression: The Report on Economic Conditions of the South with Related Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1996).

55. See Christopher S. Parker, *Fighting for Democracy: African American Military Service and the Contestation of White Supremacy in the Postwar South* (forthcoming, Princeton University Press). For the partisan and statist consequences of racial division—including racial violence and social unrest—during the war, see Daniel T. Kryder, *Divided Arsenal: Race and the American State During World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Also see Philip A. Klinkner with Rogers M. Smith, *The Unsteady March* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

56. Southern influence in the Senate had to be used to block attacks on the poll tax, which was increasingly unpopular with whites. Additionally, Congress passed legislation meant to facilitate voting by armed services personnel—of any race—in federal and state elections. Southern lawmakers designed highly cumbersome procedures by which soldiers could apply for, receive, and file ballots. The law resulted in so little voting that an embarrassed Roosevelt sought to reform it. While southern members gutted further legislative efforts, southern solons were both outraged and worried. See Mickey, *Paths Out of Dixie*, chap. 5.

50. State authorities may be unable to wrest necessary authority from empowered officials at lower levels.

51. My forthcoming book, *Paths Out of Dixie*, examines Truman's 1947–48 commitment of the national party to racial equality; *Brown v. Board of Education* and college desegregation crises; Supreme Court rulings invalidating malapportionment; black direct action; the Civil and Voting Rights Acts; and national Democratic Party reforms of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

52. In *Reconsidering Roosevelt on Race*, Kevin McMahon has argued that a sharp contrast marked the administration's acquiescence in its dealings with Congress compared to its increasingly assertive use of the Justice Department and judicial nominations to challenge enclave rulers' prerogatives.

53. This change, while seemingly weakening the South's hold on the party's presidential nominations, did not constitute a frontal assault on southern prerogatives. Rather, the repeal codified a new reality: the declining importance of the region's share of the party's Electoral College totals. Roosevelt would have won reelection in 1936 without winning any southern states. The loss of the two-thirds rule would gain significance only when combined with delegate hostility to the pillars of enclave rule. The convention did feature one troubling portent; for the first time, a black minister delivered the invocation. Sen. "Cotton" Ed Smith (D-SC) was shocked. Before

apparatus to dismantle white privilege threatened rulers' ability to dominate labor relations, interracial social contact, and law enforcement. Most important, it called into question—for the first time in fifty years—the national party's status as the most suitable vehicle for pursuing career and policy goals. Viewing this federal interference as eminently reversible, Deep South enclaves sought to defy it.⁵⁷

The Prelude to Smith v. Allwright

By the 1930s, the white-only primary was Dixie's most powerful legal tool for preserving one-party rule. Deep South politicians revered the institution. In the absence of black participation, party factions had no incentive to court black votes and thereby endanger white supremacy. Furthermore, blacks had little incentive to run the gauntlet of institutional devices and coercion to register and vote for a hapless Republican Party. By the early 1900s, the white primary appeared in most party rules, having emerged usually at the local level in the 1870s. There was never full compliance with white primary rules.⁵⁸ Black voter registration, however, remained below five percent of the voting-age population across the region, and below two percent in the Deep South. Thus, black participation in primaries was effectively non-existent.⁵⁹

Perhaps reflecting the seeming impregnability of the institution, neither southern white progressives nor national black protest organizations considered the abolition of the white-only primary a high priority. However, black activists on the ground resisted the white primary for decades; Texas NAACP activists led the way. Texas law allowed county parties to determine whether to require qualifications for primary voting in addition to those required by statute for general elections.⁶⁰ In 1923, amidst factional conflict in San Antonio politics, the state legislature passed

57. Also, in 1946, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) began "Operation Dixie," a large drive to unionize southern workers. Robert H. Zieger, *The CIO, 1935–1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 227–241.

58. Some courthouse elites allowed "their" blacks to vote occasionally when this very small black vote posed no threat to outcomes or when an election was thought to be particularly close.

59. *SP* 620; David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 6–7. In the early 1930s, federal district courts in Florida and Virginia struck down these states' white primaries because the states financed them. But the rulings were often ignored, and black voter registration hardly rose. A few times, the Justice Department investigated election boards for refusing to register black voters. Michael J. Klarman, "The White Primary Rulings: A Case Study in the Consequences of Supreme Court Decisionmaking," *Florida State University Law Review* 29 (2001): 60.

60. In 1921, Houston blacks had sued the local party's white primary on Fifteenth Amendment grounds. They lost on appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court in *Love v. Griffith*, 266 U.S. 32 (1924); Donald S. Strong, "The Rise of Negro Voting in Texas," *APSR* 42 (1948): 511; Lawson, *Black Ballots*, 25; *Nixon v. Herndon*, 273 U.S. 536 (1927).

a law forbidding blacks from voting in the state's Democratic primaries. El Paso's NAACP branch quickly filed suit, and in 1927 the Supreme Court struck down the statute on equal protection grounds. Here, state action—a statute—was unquestionably present. However, because the case dealt with a state statute, rather than the party's regulations, the Court did not have to consider a much more vexing issue: whether a state—in which a political party that by its own rules restricted its membership on a racial basis—violated the constitution.

The Texas legislature quickly passed a statute allowing executive committees of political parties to determine their own membership qualifications. The state party's executive committee quickly forbade blacks from participating in party affairs, including primary voting. Texas NAACP activists filed suit challenging this arrangement, and in 1932, the Supreme Court struck down the statute on the grounds that the state improperly involved itself in parties' internal affairs. Again, the Court punted on the much more difficult issue.⁶¹ The cat-and-mouse game between black litigants, the Texas party-state, and the federal courts continued. The state party, meeting in convention, quickly barred blacks from membership. For the Court, the role of the state could no longer be found in this membership choice; thus, still drawing on the state action doctrine, this version of the white primary passed constitutional muster in *Grovey v. Townsend*.⁶²

Soon, a new opening emerged. In 1921, the U.S. Supreme Court had limited Congress' power to regulate the general elections component of congressional races on the view that primaries were not "elections." But in 1941, the Court—now dominated by Roosevelt appointees—reversed itself. Without confronting *Grovey*, it ruled in *U.S. v. Classic* that primaries implicated Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment rights if state law had made the primary "an integral part of the procedure of choice," or if "the primary effectively [controlled] the choice."⁶³ Given that white-only primaries satisfied both criteria, some commentators concluded that *Grovey* would soon be overturned and invalidated.⁶⁴

61. Klarman, "The White Primary Rulings," 58. *Nixon v. Condon*, 286 U.S. 73 (1932).

62. 295 U.S. 45 (1935); *SP* 290. The Court approved the statute even though the state's regulation of the primary clearly implicated state action. While the state mandated Texas' primaries, the party financed them privately and furnished and counted ballots, thus remaining, in the Court's view, private affairs.

63. *Newberry v. United States*, 256 U.S. 232 (1921); *U.S. v. Classic* 313 U.S. 299 (1941). The case considered whether the federal government was authorized to punish fraud committed in a Louisiana congressional election.

64. Klarman, "The White Primary Rulings," 63, quoting *U.S. v. Classic* (1941), 318. Others disagreed, or surmised that even if jurists employed *Classic* to overturn *Grovey*, it would apply only to Texas' white primary. After all, while the Justice Department supported the plaintiffs in *Classic*, its brief argued that the case did not implicate *Grovey*. Justice Owen Roberts would make this

After an election official denied a Houston NAACP activist a ballot in the 1940 congressional primary, the national NAACP—prodded by its state branches—helped with a new suit that capitalized on *Classic*. In June 1943, the U.S. Supreme Court granted *certiorari*, thus alerting southern enclaves to a new challenge to the white primary. In oral argument, NAACP litigators Thurgood Marshall and William H. Hastie claimed that the results of the Texas primary effectively determined the outcome of the general election—that election officials operated under color of law and that in previous rulings, the Court’s conception of party was wrong. They wrote that Texas party should be treated not as a voluntary association but as a “loose-jointed organization” with no clear membership; “state election laws provided the only rules that governed the party and its elections.”⁶⁵

On 3 April 1944, the Court announced its 8-1 ruling in *Smith v. Allwright*. By excluding losing primary candidates from general elections, and by requiring election officials to withhold ballots from those not qualified by party conventions, Texas had designated the party primary an integral feature of its elections. “State action” was discovered; the Texas government was found to have participated in disenfranchisement, and thus the all-white primary was invalidated. Blacks and Hispanics in Texas could now participate as Democrats. The Court also warned that new versions of the white primary would be struck down.

Black groups and opinion leaders hailed the ruling, whereas the Roosevelt Administration had little public reaction.⁶⁶ “South’s Devices Run Thin,” declared the *New York Times*’s Arthur Krock who noted that southern congressional leaders were pessimistic about the prospects of evading *Smith* legally. Southern politicians’ reactions ranged from mild concern to outrage and declarations of defiance. Many sincerely doubted that the decision applied beyond the borders of Texas. Several papers in the Peripheral South supported the decision. Other

southern white observers were anxious, especially insofar as it seemed to be part of a broader attack on southern suffrage restriction, given indigenous campaigns against the poll tax.⁶⁷ Some suggested that parties return to the nomination of candidates by convention (which, presumably, could remain white-only). Alabama Governor Chauncey Sparks suggested that, instead of openly defying the court’s ruling, states could “adapt” by determining voter qualifications.⁶⁸ Generally, Deep South party leaders announced their opposition to Court interference and their determination to maintain the status quo. Several state parties—all five in the Deep South and Florida—stated that their 1944 primaries would remain white-only.⁶⁹

In the short term, *Smith v. Allwright* raised the possibility that parties would have to allow blacks to vote in the summer’s primaries. Also, depending upon candidates’ preferences, backgrounds, and campaign styles, it spelled more trouble for some office-seekers than others. Some could easily out-flank opponents on white supremacy; others would need to articulate immediate policy responses to the ruling. Most important, black activists would likely seek to exploit the ruling through voter registration and turnout campaigns and might be met by white supremacist counter-mobilizations and violence. Increasing racial tensions during the war had already put authorities in many southern states on alert, as the narratives below indicate.⁷⁰

Enclave rulers could acquiesce and allow blacks to vote as members in good standing of their party, as Texas and some Peripheral South states did.⁷¹ On the other hand, they could evade the ruling and continue to prevent black participation in party affairs, or they could concede the death of the white primary and work instead to buttress their devices to prevent black registration and turnout. As would be true of responses

point in his angry, lone dissent just nine years later in *Smith*, 321 U.S. 670 (1944).

65. Staffers in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department sympathized with the NAACP’s position, but the perceived political costs of supporting it were too high. Lawson, *Black Ballots*, 42–43 and 363, fn. 81; Fred G. Folsom, Jr., “Federal Elections and the ‘White Primary,’” *Columbia Law Review* 43 (1943): 1026–1035.

66. U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle asked his staff to explore the ruling’s implications, and NAACP attorneys prompted him to consider a federal role in enforcing it. Justice Department staffers concluded that the ruling would apply to any cases of racial discrimination in any primary. *Washington Post (WP)*, 5 Apr. 1944. However, Jonathan Daniels, Roosevelt’s point man on race relations, concluded that doing so “would translate impotent rumblings against the New Deal into actual revolt at the polls.” Lawson, *Black Ballots*, 47; Robert A. Garson, *The Democratic Party and the Politics of Sectionalism, 1941–1948* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 127.

67. North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia lacked statewide white primaries. *NYT*, 4 and 9 Apr. 1944; and 13 June 1944.

68. *WP*, 5 Apr. 1944; *NYT*, 5 Apr. 1944, and 25 July 1944; James O. Farmer, Jr., “The End of the White Primary in South Carolina” (master’s thesis, University of South Carolina, 1969), 10; *SP*, 644; Valelly, *Two Reconstructions*, chaps. 5–6.

69. Liberal Sen. Claude Pepper (D-FL) expressed anger and dismay at the ruling during his renomination campaign.

70. Generally, see Kryder, *Divided Arsenal*. Also see Robert A. Hill, ed., *The FBI’s RACON: Racial Conditions in the United States During World War II* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995); Howard W. Odum, *Race and Rumors of Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1943).

71. In Texas, factional conflict foundered on efforts to maneuver around the ruling; party officials decided that they were out of legal options and relented to the influx of black and Hispanic voters. Some Peripheral South states chose to acquiesce to the ruling. *SP*, 669; Strong, “The Rise of Negro Voting in Texas,” 512, 521. In Virginia, the statewide white primary had already been invalidated by federal courts, and the party did not officially forbid black participation. By 1948, black candidates competed for several state legislative seats, and captured a city council position in the predominantly black city of Richmond.

to later democratization challenges, between these poles of acquiescence and defiance lay intermediate options, such as using courts or bureaucracies to stall compliance and deploying intimidating rhetoric and other behaviors that might raise the perceived costs for insurgents of exploiting the ruling or for federal officials of securing compliance.

On the eve of *Smith*, the enclaves under study had much in common compared to the more urbanized, industrialized, and whiter enclaves of the Peripheral South. Each featured two million to three million residents, a black population share ranging from 35 percent to 47 percent, and a swath of “Black Belt” counties.⁷² Their similarities cast enough doubt on structural accounts of variation in enclave responses to *Smith* to make room for an account emphasizing elite agency. These accounts, reviewed elsewhere, could emphasize political economy, political culture, and prospects for black insurgency.

Of course, Deep South states were not identical. As the narratives below detail, on a number of dimensions, Georgia and Mississippi were bookends; they were the most and least urbanized and industrialized, and their black populations were most and least prepared to exploit a democratization pressure such as *Smith v. Allwright*. On these dimensions, South Carolina lay between them. The magnitude of differences across these enclaves, however, was not great.⁷³ Black protest capacity is obviously important, but it is unclear how it would affect rulers’ responses to democratization challenges.⁷⁴ Two other features of Deep South enclaves require mention: the centralization of authority and intraparty conflict.

Issued by state constitutions, statutes, regulations, and party rules, formal political authority helped determine which enclave actors were empowered to manage various governance tasks. This authority would make actors at different levels of the polity relevant at key moments. Deep South enclaves shared weak governorships, weak fiscal and administrative capacities, and powerful, malapportioned, unprofessional legislatures.⁷⁵ Their three most powerful

72. Together, the three enclaves were home to one-quarter of America’s black citizens.

73. On one estimate, black voter registration in the early 1930s ranged from .4 percent (MS) to .8 percent (SC) to 3 percent (GA). Paul Lewinson, *Race, Class, & Party* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963 [1932]), 218–221.

74. Scholars working from a social movement perspective have flagged a number of variables as important for explaining differences in black insurgencies, such as: the degree of coercion of black agricultural labor, the share of economically independent black professionals, black urbanization, the size and dispersion of communication and organizational networks, and the existence of recognized leadership. E.g., Doug McAdam, *Political Process and Black Insurgency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 45–47. Mickey, *Paths Out of Dixie*, chaps. 1–3, reviews alternative accounts and the democratization literature.

75. Governors—usually barred from serving consecutive terms—had few chances to distribute patronage in order to

chambers were the Georgia House, the Mississippi House, and the South Carolina Senate. As the narratives detail, these enclaves differed in the degree to which they centralized authority. South Carolina’s Senate reigned supreme over the state’s 46 counties, thus centralizing political authority in a small, Black Belt-dominated institution. Relative to South Carolina, authority in Mississippi was diffused from the center to its eighty-two county governments, due in part to the powerful office of county sheriff. Georgia, shaped by a highly malapportioned electoral system, 159 counties, and a fairly strong executive, mixed centralizing and decentralizing features.

Elite conflict also differed somewhat across these enclaves. In all three, elite disagreements rooted in ideological differences, sectional grievances, or clashing ambitions occurred only within the confines of the state party. Each state could boast of its powerful federal officeholders (who did not involve themselves a great deal in internal party conflicts).⁷⁶ In Mississippi and South Carolina, however, intraparty conflict was much less organized into durable factions than was the case in Georgia. Ruling parties also differed in their sectional, class, and cultural interests, and in the party institutions that refracted these interests as parties struggled to respond to democratization challenges. The narratives trace how these differences—in institutions of state and party, and intraelite conflict—helped shape rulers’ responses to *Smith*.

SOUTH CAROLINA

On the eve of *Smith v. Allwright*, factional conflict within South Carolina’s ruling party lay dormant. Politicians were united in their pragmatic and principled commitment to the white primary. Observing increasingly emboldened black political mobilization and restive white supremacist groups in a wartime atmosphere of heightened racial tensions, rulers anticipated numerous immediate problems if the white primary were abolished. These included racial violence, black penetration of the party at the county level, and the disruption of rent-seeking arrangements. Most important, by threatening one-party rule, the end of a white-only Democratic Party

enhance their power. Legislatures also dominated poorly insulated state judiciaries. Counties managed road work, education, law enforcement, and poor relief.

76. These included South Carolina’s James E. “Jimmy” Byrnes—then Roosevelt’s “Assistant President”—and Mississippi Senator Pat Harrison (D), chair of the powerful Finance Committee. Others included U.S. Senators “Cotton Ed” Smith (D-SC) (chair of the Agriculture Committee), Oscar Johnston (D-MS), and Richard B. Russell (D-GA) (who later led the famed Southern Caucus). These officeholders and administrators played key roles as bulwarks against unwanted interventions and as procurers of patronage, but not in quantities large enough to restructure intraparty factions. The papers of federal officeholders are notable for the absence of discussions of intraparty politics.

threatened the policies desired by the party's Black Belt elites.

Capitalizing on the state's lack of factional conflict and pliant state party, enclave rulers quickly fashioned a radical solution—by repealing all statutes and state regulations pertaining to party primaries, the state effectively *privatized* its only mode of political competition. Through this massive deregulation, rulers blocked the incorporation of blacks into the state party, reactivated sectional conflict, and delayed political reforms.

In the short term, the privatization response prevented both the rapid entry of black politicians and voters into the party that occurred in Texas and short-circuited the rise of a white supremacist "Southern Democratic Party" opposed to the national party. Taking advantage of the "new" white primary system, black activists built a proto-party, the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), and registered and mobilized thousands of voters. By 1948, federal courts had invalidated South Carolina's privatization response to *Smith*. By then, however, privatization—and the reforms it delayed—helped position South Carolina Democrats to take a leadership role in the Dixiecrat revolt.

South Carolina's Senate Dominance

South Carolina featured a strange mix of a completely dominant legislature, a weak executive, and counties ruled as the personal fiefdoms of senators. Senate districts corresponded exactly to county boundaries, thus yielding one senator for each of the state's 46 counties. Almost one-half of these counties were majority-black (see Figure 1), meaning that Black Belt interests dominated the Senate. And the Senate effectively governed counties.⁷⁷ Legislative delegations from each county, dominated by its senator, controlled the mode of governance, appointments, appropriations, and administrative decisions of their counties. The result was a remarkable fusion of the state's executive and legislative functions. In this administration-by-legislature, annual "supply bills" for each county directed its activities. They often took extreme forms; one specified whom would be hired as the ladies' restroom attendant at the county courthouse.⁷⁸ Patronage and other rent-seeking

77. Framers at the enclave's founding moment, the 1895 constitutional convention, still faced a majority-black state and remembered with horror black-controlled county governments during Reconstruction. Thomas C. Holt, *Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); William J. Cooper, Jr., *The Conservative Regime: South Carolina, 1877–1890* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991 [1968]).

78. James L. Underwood, *The Constitution of South Carolina, Vol. II: The Journey Toward Local Self-Government* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), 93–98; Columbus Andrews, *Administrative County Government in South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1933), 40–41.



Fig. 1. South Carolina counties by majority-black status, 1940. Shaded counties have majority-black population.

opportunities abounded for senators, who, given the circumstances, were understandably content to remain in the Senate rather than pursue more prestigious offices. State Senator Edgar Brown—for decades the state's most powerful politician—remarked that “[governors come and go, but] I go on forever.”⁷⁹ The state's domination by the upper chamber provided additional power for the lowcountry, even as it declined over time in population and socioeconomic influence. Defeating upcountry reform efforts, the Black Belt-run Senate effectively centralized political authority.

Party Factionalism

On the eve of *Smith*, South Carolina's party-state seemed firmly in the hands of the economically and socially isolated lowcountry, despite the increasing industrialization of the state's upcountry. South Carolina's intraparty strife climaxed in the 1930s. Traditional upcountry antipathy for the aristocratic and condescending airs of lowcountry politicians were manifest in battles over the regulation of child labor, prohibition laws, and other issues on which upcountry voters preferred cultural autonomy instead of a middle-class “progressive” ethos. By the time of the New Deal, one-fifth of voters in the upcountry were textile workers, and their votes were up for grabs. While culturally conservative and suspicious of the state, these textile workers were open to appeals from labor organizers and strongly backed the New Deal.⁸⁰ In the 1930s, upcountry/lowcountry conflict

79. Walter B. Edgar, *A History of Santee-Cooper, 1934–1984* (Columbia: R. L. Bryan, 1984). State employees were beholden to Brown who profited from several kickback schemes. Heard interviews with Edgar Brown, Gedney Howe, Harry Ashmore, and William Workman, Heard Papers.

80. David L. Carlton, *Mill and Town in South Carolina, 1880–1920* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1982); Jacquelyn

took on a sharper class cast. Former millhand (or “linthead”) Governor Olin Johnston, whose political base lay in the upcountry, battled with increasingly cohesive cliques of lowcountry legislators over control of the Highway Department, state budgets, constitutional reform, upcountry labor conflicts, electoral fraud, and much else. Johnston sought labor-friendly social and employment policies and backed striking textile workers in the bloody confrontations of the 1930s.⁸¹

The nascent “Barnwell Ring” of lowcountry solons—led by Edgar Brown in the Senate and Sol Blatt in the House—forced the upcountry to subsidize road building elsewhere in the state. By the early 1930s, the Highway Department’s annual budget exceeded all other state agencies combined.⁸² After a comical but potentially violent standoff between the state militia and embattled highway officials beholden to the state senate, lowcountry legislators eventually beat back Johnston’s attempt to wrest control of the state apparatus and the Highway Department.⁸³ They had fashioned a political equilibrium well suited for pursuing their rent-seeking goals and for protecting the interests of large landowners and the larger textile manufacturers. These forces increasingly embraced federal assistance and state-sponsored economic development.⁸⁴ When Johnston returned as governor in 1943—the year before *Smith v. Allwright*—he no longer pushed his populist-labor program, or challenged conservatives’

hold on the state apparatus. Observers declared that factional conflict in the state had ceased.⁸⁵

Finally, South Carolina’s State Democratic Executive Committee (SDEC) reinforced the lowcountry’s numerical advantages in the Senate because one member per county was elected to the committee. As the upcountry’s share of the state’s population increased over the decades, about one-half of the executive committee remained in the hands of lowcountry representatives. Except for the floor’s election of the chair, it was difficult for outside forces to overtake party machinery. Deep South SDECs would long be critical sites of enclave decision making.

Anticipating *Smith v. Allwright*

Politicians and resource holders of both races viewed the white primary as, by far, the most significant barrier to black voting and as the key institutional bulwark of one-party rule.⁸⁶ Officeholders, white civic organizations and opinion leaders agreed on the importance of preserving it.⁸⁷ Some saw biracial discussions about black voting as a useful way to gather information about black elite preferences.⁸⁸ Others thought highly constricted black suffrage—limited to the well-educated—might effectively co-opt black elites and legitimate the status quo. Black registration and voting were miniscule.⁸⁹

Dowd Hall et al., *Like A Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Bryant Simon, *A Fabric of Defeat: The Politics of South Carolina Millhands, 1910–1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

81. David L. Carlton, “The State and the Worker in the South: A Lesson From South Carolina,” and Thomas E. Terrill, “‘No Union For Me’: Southern Textile Workers and Organized Labor,” both in *The Meaning of South Carolina History: Essays in Honor of George C. Rogers, Jr.*, ed. David R. Chesnut and Clyde N. Wilson, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 202–213 and 186–201, respectively.

82. William L. Suttles, “The Struggle for State Control of Highways in South Carolina, 1908–1930” (master’s thesis, University of South Carolina, 1971); Walter B. Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 491; Anthony B. Miller, “Palmetto Politician: The Early Political Career of Olin D. Johnston, 1896–1945” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, 1976), 26–29.

83. The national ridicule that followed such events greatly embarrassed leading state politicians. *NYT*, 29 Oct. 1935, 3 Nov. 1935, and 8 Dec. 1935; Miller, “Palmetto Politician,” 223.

84. Edgar, *South Carolina*, 103, 123–124. John H. Moore, *The South Carolina Highway Department, 1917–1987* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987); David Robertson, *Sly and Able: A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes* (New York: Norton, 1994). David L. Carlton, “Unbalanced Growth and Industrialization: The Case of South Carolina,” in Winfred B. Moore, et al., eds., *Developing Dixie: Modernization in a Traditional Society* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 122.

85. Key agreed, ranking the state tenth among the eleven-state South. *CS*, 13 Jan. 1937; John K. Cauthen, *Speaker Blatt: His Challenges Were Greater* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1965), 104. For the rest of Johnston’s career, the Barnwell Ring supported him. As a U.S. Senator, however, he was always a loyal New Dealer. Workman, *Bishop From Barnwell*, 46–47; *NYT*, 2 June 1944; John E. Huss, *Senator For the South: A Biography of Olin D. Johnston* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961).

86. Cooper, *Conservative Regime*, 98–103; Herbert Aptheker, “South Carolina Poll Tax, 1737–1895,” *JNH* 31 (1946): 131–139; George B. Tindall, “The Campaign for the Disfranchisement of Negroes in South Carolina,” *JSH* 15 (1949): 212–234; Laughlin McDonald, “An Aristocracy of Voters: The Disfranchisement of Blacks in South Carolina,” *South Carolina Law Review* 37 (1986): 557–582; Heard interview with E. C. Rhodes, Heard Papers.

87. Whites, guided by a progressive social reform ethos and a paternalistic racist ideology, viewed blacks as generally unfit for the exercise of suffrage. Only a few upcountry labor unions supported black registration drives. Hoffman, “The Genesis of the Modern Movement,” 346–359; Heard interview with Modjeska Simkins, Heard Papers.

88. Miller, “Palmetto Politician,” 360–361; *CS*, 23 Apr. 1942; and 18 and 21 May 1942. Seeking to tamp down growing black unrest and political restiveness, many well-to-do whites evinced a centuries-old mistrust of universal white male suffrage. The lowcountry laid claim to the South’s most sophisticated anti-democratic sentiment.

89. Some blacks in Columbia and in upcountry towns registered and voted for Roosevelt in the 1936 general election, increasing their typical vote in Columbia seven-fold (up to about seven hundred). Heard interview with James Hinton, Heard Papers; *NYT*, 23 Aug. 1936. The party postponed consideration of limited suffrage until 1944 because of the war. Farmer, “The End of the White Primary,” 16; *Christian Science Monitor* (CSM), 22 Sept. 1942.

In 1935, following the *Grovey* decision, powerbrokers in the state senate introduced legislation to repeal all state regulation of political parties. On their legislators' logic, if the state code were scrubbed of all references to party activity, the primary would be rendered invulnerable to federal judicial challenge.⁹⁰ In addition, however, primary elections would no longer be subject to criminal laws regarding fraud, corruption, electoral violence, and other chicanery. Even by southern standards, South Carolina's elections during and since Reconstruction produced high levels of violence, disorder, and corruption. Governors had relied on the National Guard to deter or halt primary election violence in Charleston more than once in the 1930s. Thus, Democratic Party Chair Ben T. Leppard worried that the privatization solution could lead to elections over which "the state would be without authority."⁹¹

In 1938, the General Assembly empowered "the state convention of any political party, organization, or association to add to or limit the qualifications for membership therein for voting in any state, county, or municipal primary election." After this law's passage, the party eliminated the Hampton Rule, which had allowed into the primary a small number of black men who had long backed the Democrats.⁹² This change amounted to easy position taking by upcountry "millhand" Governor Olin Johnston, who sought the U.S. Senate seat of the state's preeminent white supremacist demagogue, Sen. Ellison D. "Cotton Ed" Smith. Like most whites, and all white politicians, Johnston was committed to white supremacy. However, he was not yet a racial demagogue. Preparing for his race against Smith, he worried about appearing "soft" on white supremacy. During the campaign he took credit for eliminating the Hampton rule, declared the possibility of black suffrage dead, and tried to dismiss the issue. However, he still lost to the very popular Smith, then the longest-serving member of the U.S. Senate.⁹³

In 1943, Johnston, again governor, planned to challenge Smith in the 1944 Democratic senatorial primary.⁹⁴ In the interim, factional conflict had

subsided. However, elites grew more concerned about the ruling party's ability to safeguard its historic project. World War II disrupted agricultural labor markets and sparked divisive mill strikes, and the national party appeared increasingly unreliable on these and other matters. More serious, white supremacy seemed everywhere under threat. Black organization of NAACP branches increased sharply. In 1930, only two branches existed (in Columbia and Charleston). By 1943 fifteen branches were scattered across the state, totaling some one thousand members.⁹⁵

War production sparked rapid growth in several cities and small towns, particularly as blacks left rural areas for more lucrative manufacturing positions, often to compete with whites for jobs. This was, for South Carolina's whites, a new phenomenon.⁹⁶ The newly established FEPC exacerbated matters. In 1942 elections, "work or fight" legislation—which threatened black men with military service if they did not work the land—took center stage. Interracial tensions in cities, especially Charleston, often exploded into racial violence. As the specter of an emboldened black population loomed, white supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan grew in size and assertiveness.

Enclave rulers threatened both black agitators and these organized white supremacists in an effort to deter racial disorder.⁹⁷ Many state politicians worried over possible black mobilization, which provided electoral opportunities for white supremacists. Black groups had already demanded entry into the Democratic primaries. Furthermore, in 1943, the state's NAACP announced the equalization of teachers' salaries as its main goal and initiated a federal lawsuit in Charleston. The state's most virulent white supremacist politicians exploded at this demand and began quietly in late 1943 to bring together the rougher progeny of past Governors "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman and Cole Blease with lowcountry aristocrats increasingly troubled by the national party's alleged embrace of blacks. They hoped to build a "Southern Democratic Party" (SDP) that would capture the state Democratic Party machinery and lead a region-wide revolt against Roosevelt. If blacks were successful in breaching the

90. The state's judges—chosen by the General Assembly, not by popular election—rarely challenged the General Assembly. Indeed, the judges were often former legislators.

91. The Senate chose to table the bills and take note of further challenges to the primary; when none occurred, they postponed privatization indefinitely. *Charleston News and Courier (CNC)*, 3 Apr. 1935.

92. Voters had to "produce written statements from 'ten reputable white men' who swore that the would-be voter had . . . voted the Democratic ticket continuously" since 1876. Farmer, "The End of the White Primary," 20; Lewinson, *Race, Class & Party*, 154; *CS*, 12 June 1938.

93. Demonstrating his *bona fides*, he later remarked, "Did you know that a nigger can't vote in our primary? One stroke of your Governor's pen made white supremacy safe forever." Miller, "Palmetto Politician," 293, 302–303.

94. Smith was by then the Senate's most senior member, having served since 1909.

95. Contrary to scholars' expectations, leadership in this effort had rural, not urban, roots. Peter F. Lau, *Democracy Rising*; Lau, "Freedom Road Territory: The Politics of Civil Rights Struggle in South Carolina During the Jim Crow Era," (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2001), 97–98, 160, 173; Ervin D. Hoffman, "The Genesis of the Modern Movement for Equal Rights in South Carolina, 1930–1939," *Journal of Negro History (JNH)* 44 (1959): 346–359.

96. After all, almost all of the state's low-skilled non-agricultural employment before the war—in the textile mills of the upcountry (by statute) and the shipping jobs around Charleston—were safely racially segregated.

97. In 1943, Governor Johnston used plain-clothes constabularies, the FBI, and the Home Guard to investigate reports of weapons caches hidden by blacks throughout the state. Miller, "Palmetto Politician," 400.

state party, the SDP would preserve all-white, one-party rule.⁹⁸

In the 1940s, fueled by better-paying war jobs and army service, South Carolina's NAACP continued to grow rapidly. By 1946, the number of branches increased from 15 to 49 and paid membership exceeded 10,000.⁹⁹ In January 1944, the state NAACP conference scheduled a black voter registration drive and initiated a call for the formation of "Fourth Term for Roosevelt Clubs" throughout the state. John McCray, editor of the black newspaper *Lighthouse and Informer* and the effort's spokesman, then called for the creation of a South Carolina Negro Democratic party (later, the Progressive Democratic Party) to parallel the official state party until the latter's racial integration. Thus, two weeks before the Supreme Court announced its ruling in *Smith*, activists began to plan this auxiliary party.¹⁰⁰

Worried by the 1941 *U.S. v. Classic* ruling, state party elites had begun considering in 1942 how to evade an invalidation of the white primary. As he left office in January 1943, Governor Jefferies "noted that the 'best thought of the state' believed that the dangers of federal control and Negro participation outweighed the costs of unregulated primaries." He recommended that "all primary election rules now in our statutes . . . be repealed and the only laws which should remain on the statute books should be laws designed to prevent [and punish election] fraud." Governor Olin Johnston's inaugural address echoed the recommendation.¹⁰¹

Party officials—most of them legislators—immediately introduced legislation to repeal primary laws and provide that each political party "shall be the sole judge of the qualification of its members." Signed by Johnston in April 1943, the statutes would go into effect in June 1944. However, statutes criminalizing primary election fraud and regulating

primaries in local elections remained; some worried that their presence would lead to the invalidation of the (private) white primary that *Grovey* reversed. This legislation provided a ready-made solution to *Smith v. Allwright*; moreover, it would serve to limit discussion of alternatives.¹⁰²

Senator "Cotton Ed" Smith, Johnston's opponent in the U.S. senatorial primary just a few months away, called the ruling "the greatest crisis in the history of the South, far worse than even Reconstruction since the Democratic party had now betrayed the South." Media responses varied from the apocalyptic to the calm embrace of a multi-party system. The Charleston *News and Courier* immediately called for a return to the favored method of aristocrats—the use of party nominating conventions, the apportionment of which would greatly advantage lowcountry elites. Johnston denounced this as a ploy against the common white people of the state.¹⁰³

Johnston convened a special session eleven days after the ruling.¹⁰⁴ It launched Johnston's Senate campaign against Smith, the state's standard bearer of white supremacy, and black activists responded angrily.¹⁰⁵ State legislators, and especially lowcountry and Barnwell Ring senators and House leaders, were concerned mainly about *Smith's* longer-term implications for the party and its project. The decision did not threaten them personally in the short term. All had seniority and regularly ran unopposed. None had progressive political ambitions, in part, perhaps, because of the great rent-seeking opportunities they arranged for themselves through large public spending projects in the lowcountry. Legislators in majority-black counties seemed electorally secure; thus far, black mobilization efforts occurred mainly in Charleston, Columbia, and upcountry towns. Those interested in statewide or federal

98. Concerns about the long-term viability of securing policy goals through the national party emerged earlier. As one lowcountry conservative lamented to an ally in 1936, "nothing is clearer than that the northern Democrats cannot get the northern negroes without courting the negroes in their efforts to get the ballot for southern negroes." Smith backed the SDP idea. Miller, "Palmetto Politician," 272; *Anderson Independent*, 10 Dec. 1943.

99. Lau, *Democracy Rising*, 135–138. Nationally, NAACP membership grew 700 percent during World War II.

100. Many NAACP leaders remained affiliated with (and often leaders of) the state's Republican Party, and the NAACP had to remain non-partisan. Thus, it could not organize these clubs. In 1942, Charleston NAACP leader Arthur J. Clement called for the formation of a black political party, but others considered this impractical. Instead, the black community would focus on voter registration and a lawsuit against the white primary. The Negro Citizens Committee was formed to raise money and agitate against it. Richards, "Osceola E. McKaine," 162.

101. Thus, the view that *Smith* "stunned the South" needs qualification. Vallery, *Two Reconstructions*, 158. The state party studied the issue and in September 1942, recommended the repeal of the state primary laws. Miller, "Palmetto Politician," 411–412. *House Journal* (1943), 38; *CS*, 13 and 20 Jan. 1943.

102. *CS*, 10 Feb. 1943; Miller "Palmetto Politician," 414. Because this legislation was developed before the Court had granted *certiorari* for *Smith*, debate was limited and low-key. The legislature interpreted *Classic* as holding that the statement of the two criteria triggering the state action doctrine was mere *obiter dicta*, and thus privatization would survive judicial scrutiny. This interpretation was a reasonable one, but *Smith* proved it mistaken. *SP*, 620.

103. One thought that the end of the white primary "would make South Carolina uninhabitable by decent white people." Senator Smith backed the convention idea. In contrast, the Columbia *State* suggested that there was now "A Party for Everybody," given the presence of Democrats, Republicans, "Negro Republicans," Progressive Democrats, Southern Democrats, etc. *CNC*, 4 Apr. 1944; *CS*, 4 and 6–7 Apr. 1944; Miller, "Palmetto Politician," 419.

104. At this session, Johnston said that if the proposed new laws and repeals should fail, "we South Carolinians will use the necessary methods to retain white supremacy in our primaries and to safeguard the homes and happiness of our people. White supremacy will be maintained in our primaries. Let the chips fall where they may." *WP*, 14 Apr. 1944; *NYT*, 15 Apr. 1944.

105. Activist Osceola McKaine considered Johnston's closing lines "a threat of violence upon Negroes—an open invitation to the Klan to get busy." Richards, "Osceola E. McKaine," 165.

offices were more worried about the short-term implications.

However, even electorally secure lowcountry legislators feared that black voting would disrupt the rent seeking that sustained their domination of their home counties. As with Mississippi's Delta planters, they had good reason to worry. County party organizations in the Black Belt were so demobilized that the development of even a small black voting bloc might translate into significant black influence over county executive committees, platforms, and possibly delegations to the state party convention. Thus, rulers differed in their reasons for concern, and in their perception of the urgency of the problem, but there was a consensus on the need for a strong response to *Smith*.

Options open to special session participants were quite narrow. Some legislators now suggested that black political participation be limited from another angle: tighter educational requirements for voter registration. Such proponents, including the state's most powerful politician, state Senator Edgar Brown, hailed from the lowcountry, preferred fewer upcountry "lintheads" in statewide elections and hoped that educational requirements would eliminate many white voters. Other legislators voiced the criticism of privatization raised in 1935: a private party meant that there could be no criminalization of electoral fraud. Given the state's record of fraud and violence, some worried that the result would be a party riven by conflict and disorder.

Support for privatization trumped such concerns, however, and legislators lined up behind the governor. Practically unanimously, the legislature repealed more than 150 bills relating to party primaries in the six-day session.¹⁰⁶ With a few strokes of Governor Johnston's pen, the Democratic Party had been converted into a private club. A few liberal white South Carolinians registered their dissent, but a broad consensus favored the move.¹⁰⁷

The Black Party Challenge

South Carolina's black leadership was a small and relatively cohesive group of leaders of groups, such as the NAACP, the Negro Citizens' Committee (NCC), the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP),

and the black wing of the state Republican Party. These organizations pursued distinct but overlapping goals, and many leaders were active in several (or even all) of them.¹⁰⁸ Following party privatization, blacks in Columbia, the state capital, sought unsuccessfully to register in the primary in order to establish a fact pattern for litigation against the party.

The PDP demanded that the state party award it eight of its eighteen delegates to the upcoming national Democratic convention; when denied, it announced it would send its own delegation to Chicago. In August, the PDP held its own state convention and voted to back the national ticket of Roosevelt and its own slate of statewide candidates. This was a remarkable, and unprecedented, development in the twentieth-century South. In order to boost morale and build more local-level club organizations, charismatic black activist Osceola McKaine announced his PDP candidacy for the U.S. Senate.¹⁰⁹

Racial tensions roiled the lowcountry. Two companies of the Home Guard were dispatched to Florence County to quell potential disturbances by black voters. Ultimately, McKaine officially received about 3,200 votes, most of which came from lowcountry counties such as Charleston, Sumter, and Florence. Although he lost, the 1944 election was pivotal in paving the way for a regular black challenge to the state party. From 1940 to 1947, black voter registration increased from .8 percent to 13 percent. Enclave rulers now had to reckon with the prospect of growing black political mobilization supported by resurgent protest organizations.¹¹⁰

Back to the Courts

The 1944 South Carolina senatorial election launched a complex legal fight over the constitutionality of the state's privatized primary and the exclusion of blacks from voting and participation in party affairs. This long battle activated latent sectional splits between upcountry and lowcountry county parties, and within the party's executive committee. Upcountry county parties agreed to comply with court rulings to allow blacks to vote and participate in party decision-making institutions, whereas the party's executive committee, still controlled by lowcountry representatives, ordered all county parties

106. In Ball's words, unless the state "conduct[s] primaries as gentlemen conduct elections in the colleges, the white man's party as a voluntary association similar to literary societies or congregations of churches . . . will be afflicted with internal combustion and blow up." Tinsley E. Yarbrough, *A Passion For Justice: J. Waties Waring and Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 62. There were time constraints, too. As some complained, the legislature had less than three weeks to consider a plan of action before precinct meetings; then the state party convention would convene and new party rules would have to be adopted. Heard interview with Beverly Herbert, Heard Papers; Farmer, "The End of the White Primary," 40.

107. James McBride Dabbs (*CS*, 21 Apr. 1944); Howard Odum (*CS*, 30 Apr. 1944); *Newsweek* (1 May 1944), 33.

108. Heard interview with Modjeska Simkins, Heard Papers; Barbara A. Woods, "Modjeska Simkins and the South Carolina Conference of the NAACP, 1939–1957," in Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara A. Woods, eds., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers 1941–1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 85–97.

109. McKaine is profiled in Sullivan, *Days of Hope*, chaps. 5–6.

110. *CS*, 10–24 Sept. 1944. Much chicanery ensued. State election officials denied poll-watcher positions to Republicans and PDP members; with the non-secret ballot still in place, precinct managers could easily destroy ballots of minor parties. Some six thousand may have voted for McKaine, almost double the number allotted to him.

to defy court orders. These splits frustrated efforts by party officials to restrict black voting through new educational requirements.

In 1947, black groups filed an injunction in federal court to nullify the Democratic Party's white primary. Arguing that the case should be dismissed, party attorneys called the party primary "a private nominating venture." U.S. Federal District Court Judge Waties Waring—a Charleston aristocrat and recent convert to racial equality—quickly struck down the white primary, arguing that "to say that there is any material difference in the governance of the Democratic party in this state prior to, or subsequent to, 1944, is pure sophistry . . . It is time for South Carolina to rejoin the Union."¹¹¹ Assuming their appeal would fail, party leaders discussed other options to bar blacks from the party, including nomination of candidates by convention, and adding further education or property requirements to voter registration laws. Meanwhile, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the ruling, and the Supreme Court refused to review it.¹¹²

Although Governor Strom Thurmond professed to be "shocked" by the decision and predicted that all Americans would rue the day it was made, the *Columbia Record* actually welcomed it as a motor for the state's transition to a two-party system.¹¹³ Party leaders, however, still fought to maintain a white party. In 1948, when blacks contested party posts in Columbia, five lowcountry gubernatorial candidates withdrew from the race in disgust.¹¹⁴

Prominent journalist William D. Workman condemned Waring for his "usurpation of party prerogatives," but rejected further legal challenges given Waring's threat to jail non-compliant party officials. Workman also rejected a call to surrender the Democratic Party to "blacks and scalawags." Rather, he advocated "rigid educational or property qualifications" for all voters. Given abysmally low absolute levels of—and massive racial inequalities in—literacy and per capita school expenditures, such an "objective" standard would provide for only the most gradual extension of suffrage to blacks and the poorest whites.

The state party interpreted court rulings as allowing only "qualified" blacks—those registered to vote in the general election—to vote in the primary. It claimed compliance with this, but denied blacks "party

membership."¹¹⁵ This meant that blacks could vote only by presenting registration certificates demonstrating that they were qualified voters. It also meant that blacks could not participate in party decision making, such as precinct meetings or county or state conventions. However, Democrats in (upcountry) Greenville County permitted blacks to vote in primaries and dropped a loyalty oath that the state party had just instituted to weed out black voters. As the state's most populous county, Greenville posed a real challenge to the state party's executive committee, as did Democrats in five other upcountry counties that defied the state party and complied with federal law. Observers noted that upcountry whites had begun capitalizing on black votes in statewide elections.

Waring's new preliminary injunction ordered the Democratic Party to open enrollment of party membership rolls to blacks. Waring also struck down the party's loyalty oath. Higher courts affirmed his rulings and also invalidated Alabama's requirement that applicants for registration interpret passages from the state constitution. In 1950, the General Assembly began restoring laws regulating primaries. Soon, four blacks won seats on the Columbia Democratic Party executive committee. Thus ended South Carolina's period of *formal* legal guarantees of white supremacy in statutes and party rules.¹¹⁶

Implications for the Future

In South Carolina, privatization was one of several possible responses; others included an abandonment of nominations by primary and stiffer educational qualifications. These other options would have heightened factional conflict within the ruling party by disadvantaging poorer whites in the state's upcountry. In the short term, privatization prevented a rapid incorporation of ambitious black politicians and resource holders, as occurred in Texas. By avoiding this incorporation, the ruling party therefore avoided a significant split. Moreover, the adoption of privatization was in tension with efforts to modernize the state's electoral administration through the introduction of the secret ballot and repeal of the poll tax.¹¹⁷

Both reforms might have aided movements such as the PDP and SDP. However, as long as enclave rulers

111. Heard interview with George Buchanan, Heard Papers; *Elmore v. Rice*, 72 F. Supp. 528 (S.C., 1947).

112. *CSM*, 3 June 1947; *NYT*, 13 and 20 July 1947, and 31 Dec. 1947; *NYT*, 20 Apr. 1948.

113. One-party politics "disfranchised for every practical purpose everybody who didn't go along with the national . . . party," and suppressed intrawhite "disagreements . . . concerning . . . state affairs." *CR*, 26 Apr. 1948.

114. One of them was prominent Charleston House member T. Allen Legare, who endorsed Thurmond's Dixiecrat bid. *CS*, 21 Jan. 1948; Yarbrough, *A Passion for Justice*, 81. However, in Columbia's municipal elections, with a black voting-age population of at least 10,000, only 47 voted. *CR*, 15 May 1948; *SP*, 628–629.

115. *CNC*, 25 July 1948; *WP*, 21 May 1948.

116. The oath required party voters to back party principles, including social and educational segregation, "states' rights," opposition to the FEPC, and so on. Party leaders threatened to disallow votes from counties that kept open their enrollment books past the executive committee's deadline. *NYT*, 13 and 28 June 1948. Under Thurmond, the state's Department of Education hired a black educator. *WP*, 18 July 1948 and 22 Dec. 1948; *CSM*, 13 Jan. 1949, 29 Mar. 1949, and 28 May 1949; *CSM*, 4 Jan. 1950; *NYT*, 5 Mar. 1950.

117. In other southern states, the poll tax applied to primary voting and often had a large effect in dampening white turnout. In South Carolina, it only applied to general elections, and thus was unimportant for one-party politics, but did affect whites and blacks seeking to vote in presidential elections.

sought to lobby for the constitutionality of privatization, they could not afford to draft legislation securing these reforms without reasserting the role of the state in the administration of primary elections.¹¹⁸ Thus, the state party would be able to consider abandoning the national party in 1948 without jeopardizing its hegemonic status vis-à-vis other political movements. Blacks were blocked from the party only until 1948 and 1949, but this was long enough that Thurmond would be able to place the state in a leadership role in the Dixiecrat revolt. In South Carolina—unlike Mississippi, the other leader of the movement—the Dixiecrat movement would hasten, rather than stall, Republican party building.¹¹⁹

MISSISSIPPI

As in South Carolina, Mississippi's rulers sought to evade *Smith v. Allwright*. The effectiveness of an especially onerous poll tax, continued repression of blacks, and weak black protest capacity meant that the ruling had little immediate impact on black registration or voting. Rulers agreed on the need to preserve the white primary. However, sectional differences and the relatively decentralized nature of party-state authority meant that Mississippi rulers made few institutional changes to strengthen their capacity to weaken black mobilization—despite the preferences of powerful actors. As in South Carolina, the political ambitions of the governor shaped enclave responses to the Court's invalidation of the white primary.

Mississippi's Sharp Decentralization of Authority

In contrast to South Carolina, Mississippi's polity was highly decentralized. Although its constitution did not feature "home rule" provisions, the state's eighty-two counties retained significant formal authority and informal power relative to state-level actors and institutions. A powerful, five-member Board of Supervisors governed each county.¹²⁰ The state also featured a unique sheriff's office.¹²¹ Over time, the

118. In the 1946 general election, voters—as usual, in plain sight of all those at the polling precinct—chose one of six different ballots, one for each of six parties and factions, for federal elections.

119. South Carolina Preparedness for Peace Commission, *Report to the Governor and Members of the General Assembly* (Columbia: 1945).

120. Local officials remained basically uninterested in state politics, except insofar as state budgets affected them. Heard interview with Howerton, Heard Papers. Institute for Government Research, *Report on a Survey of the Organization and Administration of State and County Government in Mississippi* (Washington: Brookings, 1932), 622, 627, 720, 739. The Brookings study recommended a sharp centralization of political authority in the executive branch. Heard interviews with Allen Bridgforth and Sam Anderson, Heard Papers.

121. Although unable to serve consecutive terms, sheriffs had significant power through the office's dual functions of law

state's sheriff lobby grew increasingly powerful and for decades prevented the decoupling of the office's taxation and policing functions, thus frustrating efforts by governors to enact reforms, such as centralizing the state's coercive apparatus.

Mississippi's governor, referred to as the state's "chief observer," was perhaps the nation's weakest.¹²² The legislature featured a powerful House in which Deltan legislators, led by long-time Speaker Walter Sillers, benefited from seniority and legislative expertise.¹²³ For decades, advocates of government reorganization sought both a reduction in the crazy quilt of overlapping departments and a strengthened executive. State lobbies of sheriffs and other county officials, fearing a loss of autonomy, fought these efforts. Black Belt legislators worried that the calling of a constitutional convention could open the door for legislators from majority-white counties to reapportion the legislature. Others feared that constitutional revision might invite federal judicial attacks on its disenfranchisement provisions.¹²⁴

Factions in Mississippi

Like South Carolina, Mississippi politics featured a sectional divide on prohibition, public spending, and other issues, but no durable factions. In 1903, Hills legislators secured the passage of a law requiring the use of statewide primaries for party nominations. This helped their counties elect a string of

enforcement and tax collection. Paid a percentage of taxes collected, sheriffs often made small fortunes.

122. As in South Carolina and Georgia, governors could not serve consecutive terms. Because voters separately elected several agency administrators, gubernatorial control of the executive branch and patronage powers were weak. The constitution offered the governor a limited role in state budgeting. By tradition, the governor hailed from outside the Delta. Still, Deltan campaign donations proved critical for candidates elsewhere and helped make for pliant governors. Robert B. Highsaw and Charles N. Fortenberry, *The Government and Administration of Mississippi* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1954), 69; Heard interviews with Howerton, Walter Sillers, Hardy, Friend, Swango, Gore, Toler, and Buckley, Heard Papers.

123. The Delta-controlled legislature avoided for several decades its required reapportionment. Walter Sillers, the son of a prominent Deltan planter, served in the House for forty-nine years (including twenty-one as speaker). Thomas R. Melton, "Walter Sillers and National Politics, 1948–1964," *Journal of Mississippi History* (*JMH*) 39 (1977): 213; Roger D. Tate, "Easing the Burden: The Era of Depression and New Deal in Mississippi" (PhD diss., Univ. of Tennessee, 1982), 23; Elbert R. Hilliard, "The Legislative Career of Fielding Wright," *JMH* 41 (1979): 13; Heard interviews with Weaver Gore, Heard Papers. Fortenberry and Abney, "Mississippi," 520.

124. Thomas E. Kynerd, *Administrative Reorganization of Mississippi Government: A Study in Politics* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978), 45–60, 98–99, 123; Tate, "Easing the Burden," 48; Daniel C. Vogt, "Government Reform, the 1890 Constitution, and Mike Conner," *JMH* (1986): 54; *Jackson Daily News* (*JDN*), 1 Feb. 1934; Glenn K. Brown, "Walter Sillers, Jr., and Martin S. Conner: A Study in Mississippi Political Relationships" (master's thesis, Mississippi State University, 1984), 58.

farmer-friendly governors and secure some taxation and education policies that benefited these “white” counties. (Delta counties were then about 70 percent black. See Figure 2.) Although the “Delta vs. Hills” cleavage characterized statewide elections in the 1930s, sharp factional conflict within party or legislature was rare.¹²⁵

As elsewhere, the Mississippi Democratic Party was a creation of the state. Statutes regulated virtually all aspects of the state’s political parties. This extended to requiring—in contrast to South Carolina—a fairly apportioned SDEC, which determined the party’s relationship with the national party, methods of candidate nomination and national convention delegate selection, and the party’s platform. The SDEC was comprised of three representatives from each of five districts and was thus less vulnerable to capture by a particular sectional interest. Thus, because no one region could dominate the SDEC, party machinery did not serve in Mississippi as a site of strong authority over party-state affairs. The party only rarely involved itself in nomination struggles or in the electoral disputes more common in Georgia and South Carolina. Furthermore, the large supply of numerous statewide elective offices reduced problems in regulating ambition within the party.¹²⁶

Still, the party was dominated by a politically cohesive Delta that drew on malapportionment, legislative seniority, unofficial planter control of legislative nominations, influential campaign donations in statewide elections, and the greater competence of its legislators.¹²⁷ Planters sought cheap, docile agricultural labor; federal flood assistance and agricultural price supports; and a reduced tax burden for Delta counties. Already well represented in the legislature, the region’s interests were best articulated by the Delta Council, a quasi-public pressure group that conducted research and planning, lobbied in Jackson, and infiltrated and surveilled unionization efforts by black sharecroppers in the Delta.¹²⁸

125. Delta politicians were most likely to oppose high spending and statewide prohibition. On the 1903 primary statute, see Albert D. Kirwan, *Revolt of the Rednecks: Mississippi Politics, 1876–1925* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1951), 122–135. Key ranked Mississippi eighth in the degree of factional conflict in the eleven-state South. *SP* 17.

126. *Miss. Code* 1930, Sec. 5866; Heard interview with W. H. Anderson, Heard Papers. State law required all parties to use primaries to nominate candidates; the state paid for the Democrats’ primaries. Heard, *A Two-Party South?*, 106–107.

127. Delta politicians dominated precinct meetings that selected county convention delegates. Heard interviews with Weaver Gore, Allen Bridgforth, Walter Sillers, Leroy Percy, Heard Papers.

128. Delta counties financed one-third of the council’s operating budget. Woodruff, “Mississippi Delta Planters and Debates over Mechanization, Labor and Civil Rights in the 1940s,” 273, 264, fn. 2, 279; Woodruff, *American Congo*; Cobb, *Most Southern Place On Earth*, 200; Heard interview with T. W. Hill, Heard Papers; Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* (London: Verso, 1998), chap. 6.



Fig. 2. Mississippi counties by majority-black status, 1940. Shaded counties have majority-black population.

Many Delta planters, south Mississippi industrialists and mill owners, and urban professionals began to coalesce around an agenda of state-facilitated, low-wage, industrial development. Where sectional and ideological cleavages once overlapped fairly neatly, by the late 1930s, many Delta politicians helped Governor Hugh White pass the innovative Balancing Agriculture With Industry (BAWI) plan for enticing external capital into the state.¹²⁹ Ecological analysis of voting patterns in gubernatorial elections revealed that on the eve of the transition, factionalism had sunk to its lowest point in decades.¹³⁰

As with South Carolina, Mississippi lacked an indigenous white liberalism. No important political or civic organizations organized the state’s white progressives. The local American Federation of Labor (AFL) was very conservative, and the state’s CIO organizers and unions faced incessant hounding and red baiting. Also similar to South Carolina, the state

129. BAWI and related efforts targeted Hills and Piney Woods counties, leaving Delta labor markets undisturbed.

130. Francis Glenn Abney, “The Mississippi Voter: A Study of Voting Behavior in a One-Party, Multifunctional System” (PhD diss., Tulane University, 1969); *SP* chap. 11; Heard interviews with Gore and Buckley, Heard Papers.

lacked a discursive space for reconsidering the ruling party's project. The state's two dailies, the *Jackson Daily News* and *Jackson Clarion-Ledger*, rhetorically safeguarded white supremacy.¹³¹ By 1944, Mississippi's rulers presided over a relatively issueless, demobilized polity.¹³² Although cultural and class differences separated Hill and Delta, and although political-economic interests varied with the state's topography, strife was reduced within the party by complicated alliances, personal feuds, and a Delta-dominated House.

Prelude to Smith v. Allwright

As war clouds appeared on the horizon, the state's white rulers foresaw no real threats to the white primary or one-party rule. They sincerely believed that "their" blacks had no desire to participate in electoral politics. In the event that the white primary or other barriers to black suffrage weakened, these rulers believed that low educational levels, apathy, and intimidation would prevent blacks from capitalizing on such changes.

The state's black protest capacity remained weak. In 1943, the state had only six NAACP branches with a paid membership of 143.¹³³ Mississippi's small class of "respectable" blacks developed some statewide organizations, such as the Committee of One Hundred. Its county affiliates negotiated with white elites to reduce indiscriminate racial violence, improve educational funding and social welfare provisions for blacks, and structure interracial elite bargaining. However, it did not attempt to confront segregation or white supremacy in the political sphere.¹³⁴

However, some Democrats expressed concern. Generally, politicians from the Delta, home to black majorities, were more concerned about lowering barriers to suffrage. While coordinating to secure better

black schooling, Delta elites actively opposed educational reforms that might awaken black political aspirations. For example, in 1940, they unsuccessfully sought to amend legislation providing free textbooks (a staple of Mississippi populism) by preventing black schools from receiving civics textbooks that discussed democratic rights and duties. Additionally, they defeated attempts from 1935 to 1940 by U.S. Senator Theodore "The Man" Bilbo and Governor Paul B. Johnson—Hills populists—to repeal the state's poll tax. True, there were many reasons why Delta politicians might have wanted to maintain the poll tax—by the 1930s, it dampened white Hills turnout much more than black turnout. However, the fact that Delta legislators could strategically invoke the repeal's implications for black voting testified to the greater political salience of these dangers.¹³⁵

Mississippians had good reason to think that the war was disrupting their state's thoroughly racialized political economy; in some senses, it was. First, the substantial share of the state's black population inducted into the armed forces—some 78,000—combined with growing consciousness raising across black America to change black elite goals. Rather than seeking marginal policy improvements, black educators began to call for the equalization of teachers' salaries and to consult with Thurgood Marshall and the national NAACP concerning the pursuit of lawsuits on their behalf. In 1942, the conservative Committee of One Hundred vowed to pursue more aggressive policy demands, including voting rights. Second, service in the armed forces and black female participation in better-paying industrial jobs in the booming Gulf Coast and the nearby factories of Memphis raised incomes for locals; this fueled, as elsewhere, a sharp rise in the number of NAACP branches statewide. Membership increased from fewer than 200 to more than 2,500 from 1943 to 1945.¹³⁶

Third, throughout the Black Belt, tighter labor markets for black agricultural laborers and domestic servants and growing concerns about a decline in black deference toward whites and Jim Crow norms, made a return to the pre-war status quo seem less likely to blacks and whites. Interviewers from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics found that many white Deltans sincerely believed popular rumors of region-wide and coordinated black rebellions fomented by outsiders, including Eleanor Roosevelt. Delta

131. Heard interviews with R. W. Starnes and George McLean, Heard Papers. Willson Whitman, "Tupelo: Feudalism and TVA," *Nation* 148 (31 Dec. 1938): 12–14; Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948–1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004); John R. Skates, "A Southern Editor Views the National Scene: Frederick Sullens and the Jackson, Mississippi, *Daily News*" (PhD diss., Mississippi State University, 1965).

132. Brown, "Walter Sillers, Jr.," 32; Robert L. Brown, "A Revival of Conservatism in Mississippi Politics: The Administration of Henry L. Whitfield, 1924–1927" (master's thesis, University of Mississippi, 1962).

133. Launched in the early 1920s, the Jackson branch lay dormant for several years. Despite the relative physical safety the city offered, the branch rarely met in the same location in consecutive meetings. Klan members and others similarly intimidated and shut down branches in South Carolina's upcountry.

134. Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 35, 13; Andrew A. Workman, "The Rejection of Accommodation by Mississippi's Black Public Elite, 1946–1954" (master's thesis, University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, 1988), chap. 1; Neil R. McMillen, "The Migration and Black Protest in Jim Crow Mississippi," in *Black Exodus*, ed. Alferdteen Harrison (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 83–99.

135. Chester M. Morgan, *Redneck Liberal: Theodore G. Bilbo and the New Deal* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1985), 226, 228; Tate, "Easing the Burden," 191–192; "Text Books in Mississippi," *Opportunity* 18 (1940): 99–100; Erle Johnston, *Politics: Mississippi Style*, 58; *JDN*, 23 May 1940.

136. Black publisher Percy Greene estimated 78,000 in his June 1947 interview with Heard, Heard Papers; Heard interview with McLean, Heard Papers. Workman, "The Rejection of Accommodation," 26 and 51.

planters' influence in federal manpower agencies and on draft boards allowed them to secure a *de facto* "work or fight" policy during the war.¹³⁷

Fourth, friction between off-duty black servicemen and whites in small towns near military training bases, as well as between blacks and whites on these bases, fueled deadly skirmishes at Camp Shelby, Camp McCain, and Camp Van Dorn.¹³⁸ Fifth, in 1944 and 1945, returning black servicemen transformed local protest patterns. Their very presence in some towns and cities sparked assaults by uniformed white policemen. Such incidents led Percy Greene, editor and publisher of the (black) *Jackson Advocate*, and the Committee of One Hundred and other organizations to demand the hiring of black police.¹³⁹ In general, the war produced social and economic dislocation, white fears of an unreliable black labor supply, emboldened returning veterans, and larger, more ambitious black protest organizations. However, the means by which rulers maintained white supremacy in the political sphere remained effective. The white primary, the poll tax, and literacy and residency requirements secured an effectively all-white Democratic electorate.¹⁴⁰

Responding to Smith

In Mississippi, the party-state's responses to *Smith v. Allwright* were predictable. Fiercely conservative former Governor Mike Conner remarked that the decision was "in accord with the policies and purposes of the New Deal," which had "repudiated the principles of the Democratic Party." Governor Tom Bailey, while highly conservative, was more closely aligned with the Roosevelt administration and remained fairly quiet. Firebrand U.S. Representative John Rankin, whose Tupelo district had few blacks, declared, "One of my greatest fears has been realized." Mississippi's white press shared his indignation.¹⁴¹

Other party elites were more subdued. Because statewide elections were held in odd-numbered years, Mississippi rulers—unlike those in most enclaves—faced little pressure to develop a quick response to the ruling. Other than a few municipal elections, Mississippi's blacks could not seek to capitalize on the

ruling in 1944.¹⁴² Because of this, rulers lacked electoral incentives to stake out potentially difficult positions on the issue, as occurred in South Carolina. This fact, combined with the absence of pressure on the ruling party by white supremacist groups, encouraged the party to delay its response. Relative to other Deep South states, the Klan remained dormant. Thus, like other southern states, Mississippi's party proceeded as if the decision applied only to Texas and changed none of its practices.¹⁴³

Inspired by the decision, younger black activists inside and outside the NAACP considered a legal challenge to the state's white primary. Some worried that the NAACP was too far ahead of black public opinion. Eventually, they decided to accede to Thurgood Marshall's advice and wait for a federal election to challenge the state party's rejection of *Smith*.¹⁴⁴ In December 1944, Percy Greene's *Jackson Advocate* began publishing a series of editorials that cited discrimination by registrars and other practices—but not the poll tax—as the main barriers to black voting. Throughout 1945, more black veterans returned to Mississippi, many enrolling at Jackson State, Tougaloo and other black colleges. In January 1946, some founded a Mississippi branch of the regional Progressive Voters League (PVL) and chose T.B. Wilson as its president. Because of its status as an indigenous and non-partisan educational organization, the PVL was considered by white politicians to be less threatening than the NAACP. Better able to secure support from black church and fraternal lodge leaders, its membership grew quickly. As elsewhere, Mississippi's PVL shared leadership, members, and tactics with the state's NAACP.¹⁴⁵

Black activists in early 1946 delivered a public statement to Governor Bailey and the legislature that seemed to wake up legislators to the need to act. The statement "accused the legislature of neglecting to provide improvements in black educational and voting privileges and threatened court action if nothing was done."¹⁴⁶ The PVL board asked the

137. Martha Swain, "The Mississippi Delta Goes to War, 1941–1942," 67 *JMH* (1995); Nan E. Woodruff, "Pick or Fight: The Emergency Farm Labor Programs in the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas during World War II," *Agricultural History* 64 (1990): 74–80.

138. The best analysis is Kryder, *Divided Arsenal*; Dittmer, *Local People*, 17; *WP*, 19 Oct. 1942.

139. Remarkably, after complaints by black groups, Jackson's mayor dismissed two white officers. Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 43, 46.

140. The only significant reform occurred in 1935, when the Corrupt Practices Act required that the poll tax be paid each year, rather than once for two years' tax. Heard interview with Buckley, Heard Papers.

141. *WP*, 6 Apr. 1944; Stetson Kennedy, *Southern Exposure* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1946), 115; Dittmer, *Local People*, 26.

142. Blacks had no access to the polls in the July municipal elections in Jackson. Political observers considered municipal elections highly unimportant, especially relative to elections for county offices. Heard interviews with Wilbur Buckley and Harty, Heard Papers.

143. Acting Governor Fielding Wright professed surprise when he heard of Department of Justice plans to investigate the Klan in Mississippi; he claimed he thought it had long been dormant. Black leaders concurred. *MCA*, 2 Aug. 1946; Heard interviews with Wilson and Hill, Heard Papers.

144. Workman, "The Rejection of Accommodation," 32. Difficulties finding an attorney from outside Mississippi who had passed the state bar stymied the national NAACP's efforts to support indigenous activism. Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 63–64; Klarman, "White Primary Rulings," 75.

145. Workman, "The Rejection of Accommodation," 33–34.

146. Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 66; *Chicago Defender*, 9 Mar. 1946.

state party's executive committee (SDEC) to clarify party rules regarding black voting in the upcoming primary.

Although the SDEC met with the PVL board, it failed to answer the PVL request or to announce a change in policy. Privately, it concluded that blacks were legally permitted to participate in the party's primary, and considered means of deterring black voters. However, it failed to issue instructions to county parties or election commissioners.¹⁴⁷ Black veterans in Jackson led efforts to help others read and interpret the constitution, and inform other veterans about their voting rights. Because of the understandable fears many blacks had about traveling to county courthouses to register to vote and pay their poll taxes, veterans organized large groups to travel together. None, however, traveled to the Delta, which they considered too dangerous.¹⁴⁸

Legislators clearly differed over the urgency of crafting a state-level response to the ruling. Deltan Fielding Wright, an influential member of the state senate and future Dixiecrat leader, sought the passage of a statute along the lines of the South Carolina plan that would privatize state regulations of the primary.¹⁴⁹ Wright had already planned to run for governor in 1947, and hoped to demonstrate his leadership to the Delta. However, most legislators bypassed privatization because they did not fear black suffrage.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, the legislature exempted veterans from paying poll taxes for one year. In signing the law, Governor Bailey claimed that other suffrage restrictions would prevent black primary voting. Legislators allied with Senator Bilbo had long sought a full repeal of the poll tax, and the veterans' exemption served as a useful way to advance the cause. Thus, sectional interests led to differing perceptions of the threat of black voting. However, these differences did not extend to electoral politics. At the end of the session, the entire Senate issued a proclamation endorsing Wright's gubernatorial bid. Given the traditional election of a non-Delta governor, this proclamation underscored the fact that sectional conflict in the legislature had subsided.

147. *JDN*, 18–19 and 30 May 1946; *WP*, 6 Dec. 1946; *NYT*, 8 Dec. 1946.

148. Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 71–73; Harry Wright, "A Survey of Veterans Services for Negro Voters in Mississippi," *New South* 2 (Mar. 1947). Black veterans capitalized on their campus presence, especially at (black) Jackson State University, which featured a chapter of the liberal American Veterans Committee.

149. He warned that "if we don't change these laws some day when they address the gentleman from Sharkey [his hometown] and he rises from his seat he'll be black as coal." *JDN*, 23 Feb. 1946; *MCA*, 9 Apr. 1946.

150. On other occasions, Wright argued that reliably hostile circuit clerks would ensure that black veterans would fail registrars' constitutional interpretation tests. *JCL*, 9 Apr. 1946; *MCA*, 21 Apr. 1946 and 9 June 1946.

The 1946 Senatorial Election

In 1946, Senator Bilbo's re-election campaign proved the state's most important political event. Long the Senate's most infamous racist demagogue, as well as one of the South's most reliable New Dealers, he had never campaigned primarily on white supremacy. But Bilbo's rhetoric, and the reactions it sparked, marked a turning point in the party's response to *Smith v. Allwright*. From town to town, Bilbo stoked white fears of insurgents and outside agitators. As the primary drew nearer, he also warned blacks not to vote.¹⁵¹ The University of Michigan-trained Bilbo rejected the NAACP's call for federal election observers and promised to provide legal assistance himself to any whites facing legal reprisals for protecting white supremacy. He scoffed at the possibility of federal prosecutors securing convictions in Mississippi.¹⁵²

The headline of the *Jackson Daily News* warned blacks, "DON'T TRY IT!"¹⁵³ Many leading politicians and journalists viewed Bilbo's rhetoric as counterproductive, for it might hasten federal interference in state elections.¹⁵⁴ One of Bilbo's opponents charged that were it not for Bilbo's race-baiting rhetoric, "there would be no registered Negroes and no attempt by them to vote on July 2." This was wrong, of course; efforts to mobilize black voting preceded the campaign. Rather, the view summed up ruling politicians' surprising lack of political intelligence about black activists' preferences and behaviors. Ultimately, about 2,500 blacks voted in the primary, about one-third of all registered blacks—not many fewer than had voted in South Carolina for a black U.S. Senate candidate two years earlier (see above). Abuses of blacks and their ballots varied

151. Heard interview with Sam Anderson, Percy Greene, Heard Papers; *JCL*, 11 Apr. 1946; *JDN*, 8 Dec. 1946. "You and I know what's the best way to keep the nigger from voting. You do it the night before the election . . . Red-blooded men know what I mean." He also suggested that the PVL be "atomically bombed and exterminated from the face of the earth." Whites who helped it "should be horse-whipped, tarred and feathered and chased out of the state." Dittmer, *Local People*, 2; Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 75. Rep. John Rankin told "law-abiding blacks" not to vote in his district. *WP*, 2 July 1946. Earlier, he warned that black votes helped defeat right-wing U.S. Reps. Martin Dies (D-TX) and Joe Starnes (D-AL). *WP*, 10 Apr. 1946.

152. Bilbo's comments, as well as a flogging incident in Rankin County, prompted the Justice Department to announce an investigation to ascertain whether federal laws had been violated, but it dispatched no investigators to the state. Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 78–79; *NYT*, 25 June 1946; *WP*, 25 June 1946.

153. The *Jackson Daily News* also reminded black readers that participants in party primaries were required by state law to vow to support the party's nominee in the general election and to have been in accord with the party over the prior two years. *JDN*, 23 June 1946 and 19 Apr. 1946; Erle Johnston, *Politics: Mississippi Style*, 80.

154. Newspaperman Erle Johnston worried that "Bilbo is not a champion of white supremacy. He is a menace to it. His wild remarks, and their effects, tend to offset the good work being done by those who understand the situation and seek to do something about it intelligently." Johnston, *Politics: Mississippi Style*, 81.

considerably.¹⁵⁵ In some areas, whites allowed black voting. In others, including the all-black community of Mound Bayou, law enforcement officers attempted to void black votes on the grounds that the voters were not actually loyal party members. Black voters faced threats of violence and beatings, before and after voting, by sheriffs, police, and others.¹⁵⁶

Bilbo won a huge victory, including a majority of the Delta, the traditional base of his opposition. Elite interviews and newspaper reports all concurred that Bilbo's opposition to the FEPC and to black voting convinced thousands of Delta whites, including planters and other economic elites, to support him for the first time.¹⁵⁷ The 1946 senatorial primary was the first federal election in Mississippi since 1944, and black activists used eyewitness reports to file complaints of voting rights violations with the Justice Department. They sent approximately thirty affidavits, but U.S. Assistant Attorney General Thomas Caudle announced that no investigation would occur due to "insufficient evidence." Blacks and two white voters, soon joined by national black protest groups, then filed a formal complaint with the U.S. Senate's Special Committee to Investigate Senatorial Campaign Expenditures, charging that Bilbo's rhetoric created a climate of violence and intimidation.¹⁵⁸

The Committee, featuring Republicans motivated to embarrass their counterparts, held an extraordinary set of hearings in Jackson. This public examination of black suffrage restriction was unprecedented at either the state or national level since the late nineteenth century, and initiated a long period of at least intermittent federal and media attention on the state. Almost 200 blacks registered to testify, and almost 70 did so. In his defense, Bilbo cited a state law requiring primary voters to have been in accord with party principles over the

155. Johnston, *Politics: Mississippi Style*, 83. The relatively tolerant Gulf Coast town of Pass Christian, lobbied by white and black veterans, ruled that blacks be allowed to vote. Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 76; *NYT*, 9 June 1946; *JDN*, 5 June 1946.

156. These included elite negotiations between conservative whites and "accommodationist" blacks that resulted in agreements (later broken) to allow some blacks to vote (in Natchez); blacks' choosing not to vote (in Greenwood); and a party leader's (fulfilled) agreement with black activists to employ county law enforcement to protect black voters (in Clarksdale). Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 83, citing *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, 3 July 1946; Heard interview with T. W. Hill, Heard Papers; *NYT*, 25 June 1946; *WP*, 25 June 1946 and 5 Dec. 1946.

157. For many Delta counties, groups of planters decided legislative nominations.

158. William D. McCain, "Theodore Gilmore Bilbo and the Mississippi Delta," *JMH* 31 (1969): 23. Investigators gathered data in 22 (of 82) counties from some 450 individuals. They noted the key role of circuit clerks in disqualifying blacks and of many other authorities in intimidating blacks from voting. Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 93, citing "Preliminary Survey and Report of Investigators Henry Patrick Kiley, Francis T. Kelley, and Roy A. Moon of Complaint of Mr. T. B. Wilson, Pres., Miss. Progressive Voters League," 2.

previous two years. However, a party official refuted this claim, revealing that the SDEC had privately ruled to permit black voting.

The hearings were significant in other ways. They informed rulers of black organizing efforts, especially the critical role of veterans in exploiting the temporary poll tax exemption.¹⁵⁹ Many county-level politicians knew of black mobilization efforts, but state leaders often did not. This knowledge helped build support among party politicians for a state legislative response to the white primary's abolition—along the lines of Wright's privatization proposal. In addition, the hearings revealed a split within the party on membership and voting requirements. They also sparked much larger voter registration efforts by black veterans.

If rulers were complacent from 1944 to 1946, they now snapped to attention and began to deliberate seriously about their response to *Smith*. At this early stage, it may seem obvious that rulers were united in their preferences about outcomes—the continued exclusion of blacks from party affairs. In Mississippi, rulers were indeed unified in preferring an all-white party. However, as we will soon see, this assumption would be incorrect when applied to Georgia.¹⁶⁰

Most estimates of the number of black voters in the 1946 primaries hovered between 2,500 and 4,000, but—due to the failure to collect and maintain centralized registration statistics—politicians' guesses differed widely. (The highest estimate was 40,000.) Party leaders differed significantly in their expectations concerning the magnitude of the threat of black insurgency, the efficacy of various suffrage restrictions, and legislative support for various options. This led to divergent estimates of the efficacy of different approaches to disenfranchisement, such as registrars' use of the 'understanding' clause; interracial elite negotiation, voter intimidation, and violence; and electoral fraud.

There was also uncertainty over the possibility of defying *Smith* through party privatization, as in South Carolina, then being litigated. Some politicians even despaired of finding any effective method of suffrage restriction and called for a countermobilization of white voters. Acting Governor Fielding Wright—soon to be Strom Thurmond's running mate on the 1948 States' Rights Party ticket—traveled the state to sound out solons on their views. Finding significant support for his privatization plan, Wright convened

159. *Bilbo Hearings*. Blacks attempting to vote were beaten—in and out of police custody—in Gulfport; white men stood guard around the Western Union office to prevent their informing outside allies. In Canton, authorities deputized "a popular white farmer . . . for the sole purpose of harassing and beating blacks with a huge club if they tried to vote." Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 84, 86. *WP*, 6 Dec. 1946; *NYT*, 8 Dec. 1946; *JDN*, 10 Dec. 1946.

160. Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 66–67; *NYT*, 22 Dec. 1946. All officeholders and party functionaries interviewed by Heard in the summer of 1947 made this clear.

a special session. In his opening address, he surveyed the high stakes, lambasted *Smith v. Allwright*, and criticized outsiders' interference. He declared that Mississippi "shall ever vigorously defend [its] right" to provide for voting qualifications and that the state would "preserve and maintain the dignity and integrity of the Democratic party in this State." On policy options, though, he deferred to constitutional experts. With an eye to avoiding the potential damage caused by overheated rhetoric in lawsuits defending enclave practices, Wright carefully avoided discussing race.¹⁶¹

As elsewhere, options varied by level of governance (county or state), by their bluntness (i.e., the likelihood of restricting white suffrage), and by their subsequent impact on party-state capacities to fend off further threats to enclave rule. Before the special session, viable strategies included: doing nothing (on the view that county officials would manage local challenges); privatization; the enforcement or tightening of existing constitutional requirements of literacy and education; and even the return to nomination by convention. The latter was a non-starter, as white farmers viewed the primary as the signal achievement of the Populist revolt.¹⁶²

Regardless of strategy, most party politicians sought to avoid a choice that necessitated a constitutional convention. Governors frequently made such calls and always were rejected; sometimes the opposition argued in terms of white supremacy.¹⁶³ Usually, county officials feared reversing the state's relatively sharp decentralization of power from which they benefited.

State-level solutions could have differential effects by region. For instance, the liberalization of primary voting rules would probably increase voting by both blacks and poorer whites, thus likely weakening the political power of Delta planters. The converse was also plausible; tightened suffrage requirements applied equally to both races might well advantage Delta elites. Although white elites and most voters throughout the state backed white supremacy, the likely electoral consequences of the white primary's abolition worried Delta politicians much more than those elsewhere.

Privatization would be much more difficult in Mississippi than in South Carolina, for the state's constitution required that the legislature regulate primaries; privatization could not go into effect without a constitutional

amendment, and this could not occur until November at the earliest, after the gubernatorial election. This delay, combined with its uncertain constitutional validity, rendered privatization unpopular. Some legislators favored waiting to allow time for federal courts to rule on the South Carolina plan and also to consider more thoroughly various options. Delta legislators, as well as Governor Wright, rejected this option. Others sought better implementation of educational restrictions; this meant restricting voter registration, not party participation. Still others wanted to empower county commissioners to develop difficult qualifications on their own that would not be subject to appeal, such as adopting Arkansas' requirement of fealty (punishable by perjury) to party principles, and allowing county parties to conduct annual registrations during which voters' qualifications might be challenged.

The House quickly passed a bill allowing parties to administer an oath to party at polling places. Senate opposition focused on the possibility that a party faction seizing a county's party executive committee could require the re-registration of all primary voters in order to disenfranchise the opposing faction.¹⁶⁴ The party principles bill passed, as did legislation authorizing county executive committees to undertake new registrations, whenever they deemed it necessary to their "welfare," and to challenge applicants on their loyalty to party principles.¹⁶⁵ Party chair Judge Hubert Holmes, addressing the SDEC, declared that "there are those who have participated in our primaries who were of a different political faith . . . Let us tighten up the belt of democracy and exclude from our party those who are not in accord with the principles as enunciated by Thomas Jefferson and Woodrow Wilson." A Delta-dominated party subcommittee then enumerated the party's principles.¹⁶⁶

The state and state party behaved as one. With the party principles clarified, county parties sought fealty to them. However, as the SDEC's secretary admitted privately, the state party, lacking the administrative

164. The senate amended the oath bill by a slim margin; records feature only 'yea' votes and do not distinguish among those absent, abstaining, or opposing. Two senators criticized black disenfranchisement, and one denounced segregation—dissent not present in South Carolina's deliberations.

165. Those who had voted in the past three primaries were exempted. Lying was punishable as perjury. *NYT*, 15 Mar. 1947; *Chicago Defender*, 19 Apr. 1947.

166. Judge Herbert Holmes, Address Delivered Before State Democratic Executive Committee, Jackson, 14 May 1947, Heard Papers. Loyal party voters would also oppose the establishment of a permanent FEPC, anti-poll tax and anti-lynching legislation, and violence and disorder, and would support the party's nominees in the general election. After the unwelcome intrusion of the Bilbo hearings, state politicians avoided discussions of white supremacy in deliberations over party principles. Besides seeking to avoid handing legal adversaries ammunition about white supremacist motives, harsher rhetoric, as Bilbo showed, brought greater attention to the enclave. *CSM*, 15 May 1947; *JDN*, 14 May 1947.

161. Williams, "Mississippi and Civil Rights," 107; Workman, "The Rejection of Accommodation," 53; *NYT*, 4–5 Mar. 1947; *JDN*, 8 Jan. 1947.

162. Kirwan, *Revolt of the Rednecks*.

163. One legislator opposed an earlier call for such a constitution because he feared changing what was then still a "Yankee-proof constitution;" another "warned that changes in the franchise sections of the constitution could lead to 'negro police officers' in Jackson again." Vogt, "Government Reform," 54; *JDN*, 31 Jan. and 1 Feb. 1934.

capacity to do so, would not attempt to enforce county- and local-level compliance with this requirement.¹⁶⁷ Delegating these choices to county politicians allowed the SDEC to avoid the politically difficult task of developing a single statewide policy.

Black political organizations, already featuring overlapping memberships, now began coordinating their activities. In an extraordinary meeting in Jackson, black leaders decided to ask black voters to affirm the SDEC's party principles.¹⁶⁸ The national Progressive Voters' League (PVL) approved a platform that clashed directly with the SDEC's soon-to-be-announced party principles, thereby making life difficult for the state's branch of the PVL. At the same meeting, black leader T. B. Wilson urged blacks to vote in the Democratic primaries. However, he also acknowledged that some voters preferred Republican candidates, despite the fact that black activists in Mississippi did not consider using the Republican Party as a political vehicle, unlike some southern compatriots. Black Republicans confided to V. O. Key's researcher and co-author, Alexander Heard, that they had blocked voter registration efforts in their two strongholds, Vicksburg and Natchez. Meanwhile, veterans in Jackson trained voters on registration regulations and publicized Truman's address to the NAACP convention in Washington. Despite these efforts, black voter registration rose from .4 percent to only about 1 percent of the state's black voting-age population. It seemed that the state's highly onerous poll tax dampened voter registration and turnout (see conclusion below).

In August 1947—on the eve of the gubernatorial primary—about 12,000 blacks were registered, and about one-half of them voted.¹⁶⁹ The PVL recommended that blacks report themselves to be in accordance with party principles and added that “we believe that such things as the FEPC, poll tax, and lynching laws should be left to the states.” Rejecting the view that the principles were chosen to lower black voting, SDEC chair Herbert Holmes stated that the principles requirement would be required of all voters and that he expected that some whites would be challenged. Election officials generally did not administer the oath requirement to black voters, who faced less resistance than in 1946.¹⁷⁰

167. Heard interview with Sam Anderson, Secretary of the SDEC, Heard Papers.

168. Heard, transcript of notes taken during public meeting of the American Veterans Committee, 23 June 1947, Central Methodist Church (Jackson), Heard Papers.

169. Jackson *Advocate*, 24 May 1947; Williams, “Mississippi and Civil Rights,” 114–117; Heard interviews with T. B. Wilson, Hill, and Greene, Heard Papers. Holmes concurred; *JDN*, 4 Aug. 1947.

170. Black leader T. B. Wilson also noted that “our members are being advised to create no disturbance if their vote is challenged and they are turned away.” U.S. Attorney General Tom Clark asked the Justice Department to investigate whether Mississippi's new primary statutes violated federal law. *JDN*, 4–6 Aug. 1947. Williams, “Mississippi and Civil Rights,” 120–127.

In a special election to replace the now-deceased Bilbo, Circuit Judge John C. Stennis defeated U.S. Representatives John Rankin and William Colmer by about 5,000 votes. Black turnout was lower than in the August primary. Mississippi's few white liberals and black voters strongly backed the relative moderation of Stennis.¹⁷¹ Significantly, there was no “party” decision or behavior regarding black voting—only some counties “tightened their belts.”

In 1948, during the burgeoning Dixiecrat revolt, U.S. Senator James O. Eastland privately prodded legislators to push through a proposed state constitutional amendment that would require voters to be of “good moral character.” As a suffrage restriction device, this would be a very powerful county-level tool to be used at the discretion of registrars. Eastland worried about the prospects of black voting, especially in the Delta, if federal anti-poll tax legislation were passed. After the amendment was passed and prepared for popular ratification that fall, however, opposition grew among many county-level politicians who worried that factions would be able to punish one another with such a flexible instrument. Leaders, such as House Speaker Sillers, did not to campaign for it and the amendment failed by a large margin.¹⁷²

Implications for the Future

Unlike other southern enclaves, Mississippi's party and state remained relatively decentralized. Moreover, state party machinery—including the all-important SDEC—was fairly apportioned among Delta and Hills counties and—given disagreement in devising new methods of suffrage restriction—not prone to quick, decisive action. In order to balance sectional differences in threat assessments and preferences about strategies, ambitious politicians empowered county-level party actors to allow (or disallow) black voting.

Given the fact that rulers were not pressured to act in 1944, and, given the belated black organizing effort, by the time a majority of party politicians determined they had to act, the privatization plan seemed riskier. As the South Carolina case revealed, the stakes were higher than merely black voting. An issue never much discussed in Mississippi during this period was the possibility of black participation in precinct meetings, county conventions, and so on. However, given the lesser ability of black protest organizations to

171. Party officials and candidates agreed to disenfranchise black voters while avoiding white supremacist rhetoric. *MCA*, 20 Sept. 1947; *JDN*, 21 Sept. 1947 and 4 Nov. 1947; *NYT*, 6 Nov. 1947.

172. *SP*, 642. Key also interprets this outcome as reflecting the moderate streak of Mississippi's voters, but observers attribute its failure to the decision by leading politicians to withhold their support. Moreover, a constitutional amendment's ratification required a majority of those voting for any election on a ballot, not a majority of those voting on the amendment. Voters often did not vote on amendments unless there was campaigning focused on them.

capitalize on the court's ruling, threats to political white supremacy—while attractive to some as a campaign issue—did not loom on the horizon for most Mississippi politicians. The party would approach coming democratization pressures with similarly decentralized institutions.

GEORGIA

Of all Deep South enclaves, Georgia was most affected by the abolition of the white primary. In the context of sharp factional conflict within the ruling party, *Smith* sparked an impressive statewide black mobilization. This mobilization, coupled with relatively progressive state leadership, raised the possibility of the end of enclave rule. However, coordination problems within the more progressive faction and skillful use of electoral violence and voter repression resulted in a triumph for the white supremacist Talmadge faction in the gubernatorial election of 1946. Subsequent efforts by progressives and moderates to build alternative political movements almost fractured the ruling party. By 1947, *Smith v. Allwright* had induced such chaos within the ruling party that Talmadgeite leaders, preoccupied with the fate of their faction, opted to keep the party on the sidelines of the Dixiecrat revolt. This brief, four-year period would play a large role in shaping Georgia's path out of Dixie.

Georgia's Mixture of Centralizing and Decentralizing Elements

Georgia's enclave was established after Reconstruction culminated in violence, the collapse of the state's government, and the fleeing of its governor into exile. Georgia planters and "New South" townsmen and professionals cemented their alliance and political hegemony. The Constitution of 1877—crafted mostly by unreconstructed Confederate elites and fiscally conservative farmers—constrained public borrowing, as well as state-sponsored economic development, and established a highly malapportioned legislature.¹⁷³ After Democratic politicians repressed and co-opted agrarian radicals in the 1890s, Atlanta elites secured the passage of disfranchising provisions that obliterated black voting. White voter turnout also plummeted and did not recover for decades.¹⁷⁴

173. Bartley, *Creation of Modern Georgia*, 68–70, 74, 154; Albert B. Saye, *A Constitutional History of Georgia, 1732–1968* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1971), 286–287 and 304–307; Melvin C. Hughes, *County Government in Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1944), 39. Amended more than three hundred times, mostly for local matters, the constitution provided substantial local autonomy. The constitution required that the 54 senate districts rotate among their counties every two years. Thus, urban representation diminished further.

174. Bartley, *Creation of Modern Georgia*, 152–153. One politician remarked proudly that "whatever divisions are yet to come,

In Georgia, county governance remained fairly autonomous from the state legislature. Although special legislation established the size and shape of boards of county commissioners, weak oversight of the implementation of this special legislation resulted in a "total absence of state control over county affairs." Decentralized governance was problematic. Almost three-quarters of the state's counties had fewer than 20,000 residents and were thus too small and poor to be effective, especially as new policy demands emerged in health, welfare, and education.¹⁷⁵

In many of the state's rural counties, courthouse "rings," composed of economically influential individuals, officials, and their networks of families and friends, dominated politics. These so-called key men brought poorer whites—beholden to these elites for loans, mortgages, fertilizer, and so on—to the polls to vote as instructed. In so doing, county leaders could credibly commit their county's vote in gubernatorial elections and thus improve their returns on rent-seeking. The state's electoral laws facilitated this control of county voting. Courthouse cliques marked ballots for voters outside polling booths and monitored their choices.¹⁷⁶ South Georgia legislative delegations fended off the adoption of a statewide, mandatory secret ballot until 1949, and the state's punitive poll tax provided additional opportunities for controlling votes.¹⁷⁷ Through both its formal and informal powers, Georgia's governor was one of the South's strongest. The governor served as ex-officio budget director and chose presiding officers and chairs of key committees in both legislative chambers.¹⁷⁸ While the legislature—highly malapportioned in favor of rural Georgia—served to block many political reforms pressed by urban politicians,

whatever issues are yet to be met, we will . . . settle them on a white basis." Laughlin McDonald, *A Voting Rights Odyssey: Black Enfranchisement in Georgia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 42.

175. Hughes, *County Government in Georgia*, 20–24, 40–43, 166–167. Even by late 1940s, "sixty per cent of the bills introduced" dealt with local issues. Collier, "Georgia: Paradise of Oligarchy," 155.

176. By the 1940s, state law allowed counties to choose among three ballot types. Ballots were often numbered so that a voter's name could be matched with her ballot. Those failing to vote as instructed would find that the roads around their farms would remain unpaved. Bernd, "Georgia," 299–300. William Anderson, *The Wild Man From Sugar Creek: The Political Career of Eugene Talmadge* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), 16; Joseph L. Bernd, *Grass Roots Politics in Georgia: The County Unit System and the Importance of the Individual Voting Community in Bi-factional Elections, 1942–1954* (Atlanta: Emory University, 1960); *Atlanta Constitution* (AC), 15 Dec. 1947; *Atlanta Journal* (AJ), 4 Mar. 1948; 4, 11, 16 Apr. 1948; Ralph J. Bunche, *The Political Status of the Negro in the Age of FDR* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973 [1940]), 162; Joseph L. Bernd, "Georgia: Static and Dynamic," in *The Changing Politics of the South*, ed. William C. Havard (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 299–300.

177. In the 1940s, a legislator noted, "We've never had an honest vote in Georgia." Key men often controlled which candidate won a county, as well as its election procedures. *WRG*, 112, 17, 82, 4.

178. Bernd, "Georgia: Static and Dynamic," 321.

However, the use of the county-unit system in nominating statewide candidates, combined with the fact that convention delegates were apportioned on the county-unit basis, meant that—regardless of the candidate—rural Georgia retained substantial influence in party machinery.¹⁸³

Factionalism in Georgia

On the eve of the transition, the Deep South's sharpest factional conflict existed within Georgia's ruling party. Eugene "Gene" Talmadge, a charismatic white supremacist demagogue, led a coalition of county courthouse rings and poorer white farmers against a much less cohesive "anti-Talmadge" faction of so-called urban moderates and progressives across the state. Talmadge harkened back to his Populist hero, Tom Watson, in railing against the "moneyed interests" of the cities. Of course, the county-unit system allowed him to limit his appeal to "two-unit" counties, but Talmadge also relied on Atlanta corporations to finance his campaigns.

The Talmadge faction advocated and implemented much more conservative policies than those of the Populists. Amidst the general textile strike of 1934—during which almost 40,000 Georgia workers struck—Talmadge called out the National Guard and declared martial law. He ordered the detention of hundreds of workers in what one journalist called a "barbed-wire concentration camp" at Fort McPherson, near Atlanta. On some afternoons, Talmadge would stroll up to the fence and read aloud to the strikers from *Mein Kampf*.¹⁸⁴ His several terms as governor, during which Talmadgeites controlled the state legislature, featured no substantive policy initiatives. Instead, these years were marked by severe fiscal mismanagement, staunch opposition to the New Deal and governmental reforms, the use of the state's coercive apparatus to intimidate political opponents, and the personal manipulation of state agencies.¹⁸⁵

A shifting constellation of social groups, patronage and personalistic networks, and interest groups comprised the looser anti-Talmadge faction. These included business leaders and professionals, "good government" whites represented by the League of Women Voters (LWV), most media outlets, and

various county courthouse gangs co-opted by gubernatorial candidates who, for various reasons, remained outside the Talmadge faction.¹⁸⁶ Atlanta was home to many moderate and progressive civic groups. As such, it was the center of anti-Talmadge forces. Besides supporting various state modernization projects and minor policy provisions for blacks, and decrying the worst abuses of white supremacy—especially those which attracted attention from the North, such as lynching and the state's infamous penal system—anti-Talmadge politicians failed to challenge publicly the major pillars of white supremacy.¹⁸⁷ Later, black voters (many of them vets), returning white war veterans, and many union members joined this constellation.¹⁸⁸ For decades, Talmadge opponents remained bedeviled by their failure to coordinate consistently behind a single gubernatorial candidate.¹⁸⁹

In 1900, in an effort to attract Populist voters back to their party, conservative Georgia Democrats codified an all-white primary in party rules.¹⁹⁰ Observing state politics from Atlanta University, W. E. B. Du Bois declared that the white primary's real victims were not blacks—who by then were already disenfranchised by other devices and practices—but poor whites.¹⁹¹ By the 1920s, state law regulated party primaries, primary voter qualifications and registration requirements. However, unlike general elections, state law did not require county parties to use a secret ballot for primary elections, and few did so.

Compared to those of its neighbors, Georgia's ruling party was much more strife-ridden, unstable, and prone to crisis. Numerous times in the prewar period, governors and others manipulated the state's coercive apparatus for partisan purposes, declared martial law and even a financial "dictatorship" over control of highway funds, and were themselves arrested in standoffs over personal feuds, battles over control of the Highway Department patronage, and schemes to empty state coffers. At

186. In 1947, the LWV had 13 branches and 3,700 members; only 2 branches were in two-unit counties. *WRG*, 54.

187. Henderson, *The Politics of Change in Georgia*. In the 1940s, Atlanta progressives began filing suit in state and federal courts that challenged the constitutional validity of the county-unit system.

188. Evidence from more than one dozen elite interviews conducted in the 1940s suggests that the vast majority preferred the maintenance of one-party rule, the white primary, and Jim Crow laws and norms. Heard Papers; *WRG*.

189. Given how the county-unit system disadvantaged urban politicians and voters, without such coordination, the anti-Talmadge vote without exception would be divided and Talmadgeites would win.

190. Holland, *The Direct Primary in Georgia*, 54. After various changes, it was restored in 1908 in party rules.

191. Its "whole purpose . . . was . . . to flatter white labor to accept public testimony of its superiority instead of higher wages and social legislation[,] to bribe white labor by giving it a public badge of superiority." Du Bois, "Georgia: Invisible Empire State," *The Nation* 120 (21 Jan. 1925): 63–67.

Because the county-unit system bred high levels of electoral fraud, control of party machinery was very significant.

183. *SP*, 393; Holland, *Direct Primary*, 37. The nominee, through the party chair, could appoint sixty at-large members of the SDEC. *WRG*, 76–77.

184. Heard interview with Roy Harris, Heard Papers; Anderson, *Wild Man*, 17–18, 60, 75, 110; Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta*, 18; *NYT*, 18, 22, and 25 Sept. 1934; Citizens' Fact-Finding Movement of Georgia, *Georgia Facts in Figures: A Source Book* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1946), 105.

185. During a 1931 embezzlement inquiry, he pleaded, "Yeah, it's true. I stole, but I stole for you, the dirt farmers!" Anderson, *Wild Man*, 60.

Table 1. Black Voting-Age Population Registered to Vote, 1940–1970

	1940	1947	1952	1956	1960	1964	1968	1970
Georgia	3	19	23	27	29	44	56	64
Mississippi	0.4	1	4	5	5	7	59	68
South Carolina	0.8	13	20	27	16	39	51	57
Peripheral South	5	18	25	30	39	56	67	69

Sources: Garrow, *Protest at Selma*, 7, 11, 19, 189, 200; Harold Stanley, *Voter Mobilization and the Politics of Race* (NY: Praeger, 1987), 97; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *The Voting Rights Act: Unfulfilled Goals*, 19.

Arnall had a reputation among Georgia's black protest leaders and media and those elsewhere as racially progressive, and the Pittsburgh *Courier* and Chicago *Defender* interpreted his victory as proving that the "Race Issue is Dead in Dixie" and signaling a democratic reawakening.¹⁹⁸ As governor from 1943 to 1947, the nationally ambitious Arnall won one stunning legislative success after another. He repaired the state's higher education and penal systems, secured numerous state governmental administrative and budgetary reforms, restored (with the benefit of the war) the state's fiscal health, and repealed the state's poll tax. Others also credited him with lowering the state's voting age to eighteen and implementing the federal Soldiers' Voting Act.¹⁹⁹ Georgia was first in the nation to accomplish each of these reforms. Against long odds, he also convinced state solons to establish a commission to draft a new constitution. Arnall won national praise, and he took a leadership role among southern governors.²⁰⁰

On the eve of *Smith*, key members of both party factions did not actually view white supremacy as threatened. Precious few blacks paid their poll tax, and party leaders did not substantially alter party regulations in the years leading up to *Smith*.²⁰¹ Arnall was

clearly less devoted to white supremacy compared to Talmadge and his faction; his election and popularity among legislators also suggest that those members of Georgia's ruling class who cared to scan the sky saw few clouds of racial threat looming. Factional conflict in the early forties persisted, but Arnall's skillful leadership seemed to have weakened the Talmadge faction. Even so, anti-Talmadgeites expressed no desire to depart from the consensus on white supremacy.

Immediately after *Smith*, Arnall remained silent, while Talmadge decried both the ruling and Governor Arnall's inaction. Meanwhile, the ongoing Constitutional Revision Commission—chaired by Arnall—examined existing provisions pertaining to primary elections; its private deliberations suggest that leading politicians, including the governor, endorsed South Carolina's privatization plan.²⁰² Several thousand blacks had registered in an orchestrated campaign, but the SDEC announced that they would not be eligible to participate in the upcoming primary.

Meanwhile, Arnall called *Smith* "a blow to liberalism" and claimed that black attempts to join the party and federal anti-poll tax legislation would backfire by weakening the state's own reform efforts. He continued to support segregation as "conducive to the welfare" of both races.²⁰³ The NAACP branch in Columbus filed a test suit against county officials to apply *Smith* in Georgia. The party demurred, concluding that it was not party to the ruling.²⁰⁴

instructed Highway Patrol officers to stop and search all blacks on roads after 9 PM. On the stump, Arnall stated that the "sun would not set" on blacks who tried to enroll in a white school in his native Coweta County. Sullivan, *Days of Hope*, 156; Henderson, *The Politics of Change in Georgia*, 139.

198. Pittsburgh *Courier*, Sep. 19, 1942, and Chicago *Defender*, Sep. 19, 1942; National media echoed this enthusiasm (e.g., *Time Magazine*, 21 Sept. 1942).

199. The law provided for voter registration, voting by mail, and a poll tax exemption for members of the armed services. An estimated 250,000 Georgians in military service, black and white, were eligible. Outside observers gave Arnall credit for many reforms, such as the repeal of the poll tax, which he refused to back publicly before sufficient votes appeared. Heard interview with Josephine Wilkins, Heard Papers; Henderson, *Politics of Change*, 85.

200. At one point he may have been on a short-list for vice president in 1944, and he embarked on national speaking tours after publication of each of his books in the late 1940s. He tied himself to Roosevelt and Henry Wallace, one of the party's leading race progressives, and offered a seconding speech for Wallace at the 1944 national convention.

201. Legislation implementing the Soldiers' Voting Act passed unanimously during a special session in January 1944, and with

little expression of racial fears by Talmadgeites. Garson, *The Democratic Party*, 44. In 1941, the party's executive committee (SDEC) encouraged counties to use secret ballots.

202. The commission focused mainly on furthering home rule for counties and state governmental reform (for example, civil service reform and reapportionment). Most commissioners, including Arnall, preferred to delete any constitutional or statutory regulations concerning primaries, leaving them unregulated and thus flirting with even greater levels of electoral corruption. In its April and December meetings, the commission also retained the poll tax and failed to require the use of a secret ballot. "Good government" advocates had lost again. Albert B. Saye, ed., *Records of the Commission of 1943–1944 to Revise the Constitution of Georgia* (Atlanta: State of Georgia, 1946), in two volumes; *AJ*, 29 May 1944.

203. *WP*, 30 June 1946. Arnall also opposed the FEPC as "an irritant to harmonious relations."

204. Black barber Primus E. King sued the Muscogee County party in federal court for his exclusion from the polls. *NYT*,

Rulers' Beliefs and Preferences

If the new constitution remained unratified, they could do nothing and leave the issue in the hands of federal courts to rule on King's challenge. They could choose the privatization option, as endorsed by Arnall and the commission. Other options included adopting new, ostensibly non-racial qualifications for party "membership," or delegating to county parties the authority to restrict black turnout. Finally, as some black groups suggested in a compromise, the state legislature could adopt new qualifications for voter registration.

A few institutional features of Georgia's party-state structured the debate. Given the governor's legislative influence, it would be more difficult than in other enclaves for a rural-dominated legislature to overwhelm Arnall's preferences. More importantly, the county-unit system effectively insulated gubernatorial elections from the possible harms of black voting. Although blacks had voting-age majorities in approximately 47 counties (see Figure 3), the vast majority of registered blacks inhabited the largest cities, which were in the electorally anemic six-unit counties. Thus, there was less urgency than there would have been in the absence of the county-unit system. Moreover, Talmadge concerns about the maintenance of the county-unit system were in tension with a privatization response. This tension played a critical role in the state's deliberations and deserves a closer look.

In 1917, legislators from small counties safeguarded the system by changing it from a party rule to state law. Talmadge politicians feared that party regulations barring electoral fraud and establishing rules for settling contested legislative elections—then quite common—were vulnerable to attack by their opponents, who might someday control state party machinery. Thus, after a resounding victory in 1940, the Talmadge-dominated party, in response to the heavily corrupt governorship of New Dealer Eurith D. "Ed" Rivers, quickly secured recount and other anti-fraud rules into statutory form. Privatizing the party would mean transferring the county-unit system and anti-fraud statutes governing primaries from state law to party regulation, and thus, in the eyes of the Talmadge faction, placing them at greater risk. Although some members of the faction would come to support privatization, many had serious concerns along these lines.²⁰⁵

11 May 1944; and 8 and 10 June 1944. CSM, 24 June 1944 and 25 Aug. 1944; McDonald, *A Voting Rights Odyssey*.

205. In 1940, Talmadge warned against electoral fraud in primaries committed by local officials and soon signed the law, declaring that if "you don't contest a few elections, it gives unscrupulous people a chance to get in control." Proceedings of the Georgia Democratic State Party Convention, Macon (2 Oct. 1940), Vol. 1, Box 1, Papers of the Georgia State Democratic Party Executive Committee, RBRL, 73–74. Georgia Laws, 1941, 432 and passim.

Regarding *Smith*, Arnall's decision was basically to do nothing. He did not call a special session to devise a response. Even his 1945 State of the State address did not mention the white primary. In calling for repeal of the poll tax, he saw "no danger" that, in its absence, black voting posed a threat to the party, and he refused to articulate a plan for retaining the white primary.²⁰⁶ Arnall's political ambitions shaped his response to *Smith*. In early 1945, he almost succeeded in attempting to convince the legislature to amend the constitution so that governors could serve consecutive terms. Had he done so, his incumbency advantages and great popularity would have assured him re-election. We could imagine at least one counterfactual Georgia. Here, spurred on by his national ambitions and aided by the state's anti-Talmadge faction, Arnall might have crafted a very different, and much earlier, incorporation of blacks into the party, with massive implications for the state's subsequent political development.

However, the anti-Talmadge faction failed to work out a stable leadership succession. Its most powerful political operative, House Speaker Roy Harris, had been instrumental in Arnall's election (as well as several other gubernatorial candidates) and in the passage of his legislative program. Harris expected to be anointed the faction's gubernatorial candidate for the 1946 election. However, he felt betrayed when Arnall attempted to seek re-election by amending the constitution and disagreed with Arnall's failure to safeguard political white supremacy. Harris exited the faction and helped defeat the constitutional amendment providing for successive gubernatorial terms. He then became one of the top strategists for white supremacy in the Talmadge faction.²⁰⁷ Arnall attempted to burnish his national image, mainly through more liberal position taking on black voting and an assault on the resurgent Klan.²⁰⁸ More important, he sought the election of an anti-Talmadge candidate in the 1946 gubernatorial race; otherwise, his political future would be in jeopardy.

206. Governor Ellis Arnall, "Message of the Governor to the General Assembly of Georgia," 9 Jan. 1945, Executive Minutes, Arnall Papers, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta. Arnall, protecting his racial right flank, asserted that the party—a voluntary association—could exclude blacks from its primary. *AJ*, 27 June 1945.

207. In January 1946, Harris (with help from Talmadge and Rivers forces) again killed the constitutional amendment. Tarleton Collier, "Georgia: Paradise of Oligarchy," in Robert S. Allen, ed., *Our Sovereign State* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1949), 136; *WRG*, 164. Later, he became president of the Citizens' Councils of America.

208. E.g., *WP*, 17 June 1946. The Klan was not the only white supremacist mobilization. Immediately after the war, brown shirts marched through Atlanta. Steven Weisenburger, "The Columbians, Inc.: A Chapter of Racial Hatred from the Post-World War II South," *JSH* 69 (2003): 821–860; Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

In late 1945, a federal judge ruled that blacks could vote in the 1946 primary.²⁰⁹ Several prominent Georgia newspapers backed the decision. However, Arnall warned blacks not to vote, and the state appealed the decision, to the disappointment of black leaders. In January, however, the Arnall-controlled SDEC relented, agreeing to let blacks vote.²¹⁰ The U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals soon upheld *King*, but the majority opinion suggested complete privatization as a way out. House Speaker Roy Harris called for a special session to repeal the state's primary laws, à la South Carolina. Talmadge, preparing for another run for governor, agreed.²¹¹

Arnall faced a serious dilemma. His national political prospects would be damaged by non-compliance with *Smith* and *King*; however, embracing these rulings and publicly backing black incorporation into the party would greatly help Talmadge and thereby possibly destroy Arnall's future in state politics. He took a strong stand and announced his opposition to any scheme to evade the courts and, further, that privatization would risk both the county-unit system and free and fair elections. He also vowed to block a special session called by the legislature. Arnall informed the SDEC that the white primary was dead. The committee altered party rules to permit black voting in the upcoming 1946 gubernatorial primary.²¹²

Black Georgia's Response to Smith

In early 1946, black Georgia achieved astonishing results. As in other states, a small black protest leadership populated several overlapping groups, including the state's Republican Party, the NAACP, and other

209. While Georgia law did not require the holding of a primary, the court ruled that "whenever a political party holds a primary in the State, it is by law an integral part of the election machinery." *Chapman v. King*, 154 F.2d 460 (6 Mar. 1946). The U.S. Supreme Court quickly denied *certiorari*, leaving the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court's ruling as law.

210. The *Atlanta Journal* and *Macon Telegraph* backed it; *AJ*, 13 Oct. 1945. The committee's counterparts in Alabama ruled similarly, but they also adopted a resolution backing a constitutional amendment requiring that registrants be able to "understand and explain" parts of the federal Constitution (the "Alabama Plan"). *NYT*, 13 Jan. 1946.

211. Harris boasted that the state's cat-and-mouse game with the courts would "go on *ad infinitum!*" Kennedy, *Southern Exposure*, 123. Senate President Frank Gross spoke out against such a special session, partly because he claimed that the county-unit system might be endangered if not fixed in statute. Arnall signaled his agreement with Gross' speech. *AC*, 29 Mar. 1946. Typically cautious, U.S. Senator Richard Russell—soon to become the South's key congressional strategist—announced that the decision whether to protect the white primary was best left to the state party and the legislature. *NYT*, 2 Apr. 1946.

212. Arnall was rumored to become the next solicitor general; pundit Drew Pearson reported that the forty-year-old Arnall was considered by "a number of political observers" to have "a good chance to be the next Democratic candidate for president." "Let's not be afraid of the demagogues," Arnall pleaded. Arnall, *Shore Dimly Seen*, 59–60; *CSM*, 4 May 1946; *AC*, 5 Apr. 1946. *WP*, 16 and 30 June 1946.

statewide black networks.²¹³ A. T. Walden, state secretary of the Georgia NAACP conference of branches, was also president of the Georgia Association of Citizen Democratic Clubs (CDCs). Soon, there were about seventy-five such clubs statewide, totaling 15,000 to 20,000 members. The CDC endorsed statewide candidates, whereas local clubs backed local candidates as they chose. In 1946, the organization boasted twenty-five full-time paid organizers.

The (white) Committee for Georgia, an organization affiliated with the progressive Southern Committee on Human Welfare, coordinated with black organizations and helped finance field workers in all counties to spur black voter registration and campaign against Talmadge, even before the anti-Talmadge candidate(s) became known. The state's CIO, then involved in a large, region-wide effort to unionize non-agricultural labor, also participated. In Atlanta, a large registration drive brought together several black political and civic organizations. Black registered voters in 1946 increased from about 3,000 to about 21,000 (or from about 4 percent to 27 percent of the city's electorate).²¹⁴ Statewide, about 125,000 registered—more than 100,000 outside Atlanta—in a remarkable, and remarkably quick, mobilization that propelled black voters from a negligible presence to about 20 percent of Georgia's electorate.²¹⁵

A Turning Point: The 1946 Gubernatorial Election

Georgia's 1946 gubernatorial election amounted to a critical juncture in the state's political development. A victory of the now-biracial anti-Talmadge faction would effect a statewide incorporation of blacks into the ruling party and likely ended enclave rule in Georgia. The faction was hampered, however, by two related problems: its leadership succession dispute in 1945 and its candidate coordination problem in the 1946 primary. Relying on an impressive, systematic repression of black voting, Gene Talmadge won the 1946 primary with a minority of the popular vote but a narrow county-unit plurality. The Talmadge faction, exploiting the bizarre

213. In 1949, the bipartisan Atlanta Negro Voters League was established. It allowed its members to support any presidential candidates but agreed to back Democratic candidates in statewide primaries.

214. Heard interviews with A. T. Walden and D. F. Watson, *Heard Papers*; Jack Walker, "Negro Voting in Atlanta: 1953–1961," *Phylon* 24 (1963), 380, table 1. Heavy turnout in effectively all-black precincts helped white liberal Helen Mankin win a congressional seat in a 1946 special election. C. A. Bacote, "The Negro in Atlanta Politics," *Phylon* 16 (1955): 344–349. Heard interview with Margaret Fisher, *Heard Papers*; Karen J. Ferguson, *Black Politics in New Deal Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

215. Joseph L. Bernd, "White Supremacy and the Disfranchisement of Blacks in Georgia, 1946," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 64 (1982): 492–513, and *Grass Roots Politics*; Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta*, 66. The lowest estimate of black registration, 85,000, appeared in the *Atlanta Constitution* (18–20 July 1946).

Three-Governors Controversy (see below), expanded its control over party machinery and then navigated the enclave through the critical 1950s and early 1960s.

In declaring his candidacy, Gene Talmadge promised to restore the white primary, “the One Issue in This Race.”²¹⁶ He invoked South Carolina’s privatization plan as a model. Talmadge attacked his opponent indirectly by campaigning against Ellis “Benedict” Arnall. Now-Talmadgeite House Speaker Roy Harris condemned Arnall and announced he would either run for governor himself or help elect a candidate devoted to saving the white primary. Arnall, meanwhile, assisted reformers in attacking Harris’s “Cracker Party” machine organization in Augusta. In a stunning result, on the strength of black voters and a large voter registration drive organized by white reformers—many of them war veterans—Speaker Harris lost his seat.²¹⁷

Given Harris’ defeat, the field of gubernatorial candidates narrowed. Arnall pegged young business moderate James V. Carmichael as his successor; Carmichael agreed that the white primary was dead and opposed efforts to repeal statutes regulating primaries. Were Carmichael to prevail, many thought Arnall could control the state delegation to the 1948 National Democratic Convention. Notably corrupt former Governor “Ed” Rivers jumped in the race. Apparently paid to enter the race by Talmadge forces (a not uncommon practice), he split the anti-Talmadge vote.²¹⁸

Soon after Talmadge’s paper, *The Statesman*, announced Talmadge’s candidacy, it offered a blueprint for restricting black suffrage. It cited rarely invoked sections of the state code that held that any Georgia citizen could challenge the registration of any registrant by claiming that the registrant was, for reasons specified in the challenge, unqualified to vote. Talmadge’s campaign mailed thousands of challenge forms to supporters in every county.²¹⁹

216. *The Statesman*, 11 July 1946 (the official Talmadge organ). The “issue” meant campaigning against Arnall, not Carmichael, and against the “Atlanta papers,” which attempted to dictate their political preferences to the voters.

217. *AC*, 16 June 1946; McDonald, *A Voting Rights Odyssey*; James C. Cobb, “Politics in a New South City: Augusta, Georgia, 1946–1971” (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 1975); Jennifer E. Brooks, “Winning the Peace: Georgia Veterans and the Struggle to Define the Political Legacy of World War II,” *JSH* 68 (2000): 571–576. Augusta’s black vote would have split between independents and the Cracker party were it not for Harris’ race baiting. About 4,000 blacks voted, 90 percent of them for independent candidates. *WRG*, 172–173.

218. Carmichael was general manager of Marietta’s 28,000-employee Bell Aircraft plant, a former legislator, a fiscal conservative and a “good-government” Atlantan. *WRG*, 256–57; Philip Scranton, ed., *The Second Wave: Southern Industrialization from the 1940s to the 1970s* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); *WP*, 14 July 1946.

219. 18 and 25 Apr. 1946. Common grounds for challenges included failure to meet state or county residency requirements (one year, and six months, respectively); lacking “good character;”

Talmadge campaign officials traveled across the state to interrogate witnesses at these purge hearings.²²⁰ Those who had been challenged could request a hearing to restore their registration, but in many counties, the burden of proof lay with the challenged voter. Failure to appear at hearings often resulted in disqualifications.²²¹ The practices of relevant officials—usually tax collectors who served as registrars—seemed to track factional lines, with pro-Talmadge authorities much more likely to purge blacks in larger numbers. Ultimately, more than 16,000 registered blacks were disenfranchised.²²² In the Black Belt, Talmadge supporters intimidated and coerced blacks, with acts ranging from night riding to cross-burnings to murder. Carmichael accused Talmadge and “his henchmen” of promoting white crowd violence against blacks on the eve of the primary. Indeed, the summer of 1946 featured a wave of racial violence throughout the South, much of it targeting black veterans. Georgia played host to much of it.²²³

An analysis of the disenfranchised by county suggests that the election turned on the Talmadge campaign’s suppression of black voters and the failure of anti-Talmadge forces to coordinate behind a single candidate.²²⁴ A loss by the popular vote winner was almost unprecedented, and state and national media expressed outrage, as well as fear about what a Talmadge-controlled Democratic Party would become once the state got out of the election administration business.²²⁵ Governor-elect Talmadge (technically just

failure to “understand the duties and obligations of citizens,” illiteracy, and inability to “understand and give a reasonable interpretation” of the state or federal constitutions. Bernd, “White Supremacy,” 495–497.

220. Blacks sought help from local federal attorneys, but these attorneys did not investigate registration or voting processes.

221. Joseph L. Bernd and Lynwood M. Holland, “Recent Restrictions Upon Negro Suffrage: The Case of Georgia,” *Journal of Politics* 21 (1959): 489; William L. Belvin, Jr., “The Georgia Gubernatorial Primary of 1946,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 50 (1966): 37–53.

222. In Savannah, Talmadge supporters blocked more than 5,000 blacks from the polls, a margin that easily decided the county’s vote. Other tactics included outright refusal to allow blacks to vote (in at least five counties), slowdowns at black polling places, and ballot stuffing. A.T. Walden’s organization in Fulton County and the Committee for Georgia in several other counties successfully challenged purges through a “slow down” of litigation. Heard interview with Margaret Fisher, Heard Papers. On Savannah, Bernd, “White Supremacy,” 502, 503, 500.

223. Garson, *The Democratic Party*, 199. Carmichael also accused Talmadge of trying to bribe sheriffs for their election-day support by promising to place all 159 of them on the payroll of the Bureau of Investigation. *AC*, 7 June 1946.

224. Using declassified FBI affidavits, Bernd concluded that this suppression was pivotal. “White Supremacy,” 502.

225. Georgia’s factional conflict during this period did *not* map directly onto sectional differences; by one count, 116 newspapers—almost all of them in two-unit counties—opposed Talmadge and 9 supported him. *Columbus Ledger*, 18 July 1946. Famed national columnist Drew Pearson called the election “the most alarming

the Democratic nominee) announced that the party would arrange for a “white man’s primary” under the county-unit system and called on the legislature to repeal primary statutes in order to comply with federal courts. Urban moderates began the first of a long series of unsuccessful lawsuits, also in federal court, claiming that the county-unit system violated the Fourteenth Amendment.²²⁶

The Three-Governors Controversy

Just before the perfunctory general election, Talmadge died. Thence began a confusing and tragicomic conflict during which, over the course of less than three months, three governors presided over Georgia: Talmadge’s son Herman; Arnall; and the duly elected Lieutenant Governor, Melvin Thompson. Vague rules of gubernatorial succession allowed the Talmadge-dominated legislature to anoint young Herman Talmadge governor. A special election in November 1948 (with a Democratic primary in September) would determine who would finish out the second half of the late Gene Talmadge’s four-year term (1947–1951).²²⁷

The legislature quickly passed the (Gene) Talmadge white primary bill, which was even more radical than South Carolina’s. It combined South Carolina’s privatization plan—complete repeal of primary-related statutes—with stricter enforcement of registration laws and new, periodic re-registration of voters. In signing the legislation, Governor Herman Talmadge argued for the importance of attacking black suffrage by restricting registration, noting that blacks could vote in general elections, which did *not* feature the county-unit system.²²⁸

Soon, white progressives and moderates outraged by the legislature’s actions formed the “Aroused Citizens of Georgia.” The group announced plans “to maintain a true Democratic party” under the

name “the Democratic Party of Georgia.” It declared that the party’s leadership had forfeited the right to use the party name by their “efforts . . . to perpetuate their rule by a series of unlawful, unconstitutional and undemocratic actions” culminating in the white primary bill.²²⁹

The possibility that white supremacists could be defeated in a general election by a party of white progressives and moderates and blacks was, for Talmadgeites, all too real. General elections were decided by a simple popular vote, not by the county-unit vote. Thus, the anti-Talmadge whites and blacks marooned in six-unit counties would finally exert real influence on statewide elections. For Talmadge forces, this made the extension of the county-unit system to general elections even more urgent. House moderates defeated a proposal to submit to the voters for ratification a constitutional amendment that would do so.

In March 1947, Georgia’s Supreme Court named Lieutenant Governor Melvin Thompson governor until a special election could be held in November 1948. Sixty-three days after the crisis began, Gene Talmadge’s son Herman left the governor’s office, and Harris immediately announced Talmadge’s candidacy for the special election. Thompson declared that Talmadge and his forces “now have no right to speak for the Democratic Party” and that “today, again, law and order prevails in Georgia.” He vowed to veto the party privatization act passed during Herman Talmadge’s short tenure as governor.²³⁰

Thompson—and anti-Talmadge moderates—faced a real dilemma. If Thompson vetoed the legislation, he would deliver a ready-made issue to young Herman, who had inherited control of the party machinery. If he signed it, he could remove the issue, run as a candidate for a *separate* Democratic Party, and defeat Talmadge with the help of black voters in a general election. Thompson sought to establish his bona fides on white supremacy and promised to carry out the Talmadgeite party platform without disturbing it.²³¹ He called for the legislature to require racially segregated ballot boxes—well-suited for suffrage restriction—and the state regulation of primaries and established educational requirements for registration applicants.²³²

political development in the Nation” and termed Talmadge “the most Hitlerian Governor since Huey Long.” *WP*, 24 July 1946.

226. Talmadge argued that black “bloc voting” indicated their incapacity for full citizenship. He also claimed that the purge efforts were only partly successful and must continue. 1946 Convention minutes, 35 and 113–115, SDEC Papers, Russell Library, UGA-Athens. *CSM*, 30 July 1946 and 2 Aug. 1946.

227. As Gene Talmadge’s health worsened after the primary, his backers launched a write-in campaign for his son Herman in the general election. Technically, Talmadge was an independent in the general election challenging the party nominee, his father. By law, the legislature would choose one of the top two vote-getters, but Herman Talmadge finished third. Later, the Talmadges’ home county of Telfair discovered fifty-eight votes that had been placed in the “wrong envelope,” and Herman Talmadge was selected. Henderson, *The Politics of Change*, 178.

228. *WRG*, 61. Thompson legislators proposed to maintain state regulation of primaries but require applicants with less than a high-school degree to pass an education test based on interpreting the U.S. Constitution. The state NAACP announced it would challenge any such law in court. *NYT*, 29 Jan. and 22 Feb. 1947.

229. *NYT*, 27 Feb. 27 1947.

230. All legislation passed during Talmadge’s tenure would have to be re-submitted for Thompson’s signature or vetoed.

231. *CSM*, 25 Mar. 1947. He also claimed to have helped draft the white primary bill.

232. Some counties already segregated ballots by race. Heard interview with Rep. Robert Elliott, Heard Papers. If those with no schooling whatsoever were barred from voting, less than 11 percent of the black voting-age population (VAP) would be disenfranchised, compared to only about 2.5 percent of whites. If the requirement were set at six years’ schooling, about 60 percent of the black VAP and one-quarter of the white VAP would be barred. *AJ*, 17 and 30 Apr. 1947.

Talmadge forces were intent on blocking any legislation that might allow Thompson to claim credit for protecting white supremacy. Theirs was a risky strategy—to accept potential gains in black suffrage in order to improve the chances of recapturing the governor’s mansion and passing more satisfactory legislation. Factional conflict left both chambers gridlocked, and the legislature adjourned without passing any laws involving party primaries.²³³

At the 1946 party convention, dominated by the newly triumphant (but increasingly frail) Gene Talmadge, Talmadgeites had gained control of the SDEC, whose members would serve until 1948.²³⁴ Thus, even after the governorship was awarded to Thompson, Roy Harris, young Herman Talmadge, party chair Jim Peters, and other Talmadgeites would control party machinery throughout 1947 and 1948. Control over the powerful executive committee would have a large bearing on the 1948 special gubernatorial election (also, as luck would have it, on the decision of the ruling party to join the Dixiecrat revolt). Thus, the moderate “Democratic Party of Georgia” held a state convention. Thompson forces labeled Peters and other members of the SDEC as “bolters” from the Democratic Party and formed their *own* SDEC.

Talmadge-chosen House Speaker Fred Hand then demanded that Thompson call a special session to pass Thompson’s proposal for educational requirements on voter registration. The Democratic National Committee recognized Governor Thompson as the titular head of the party. Both Democratic “Parties” scheduled meetings to arrange for the 1948 primaries, leaving it to state courts to decide which faction controlled the party.²³⁵ The Georgia Supreme Court ruled that Talmadgeite James Peters was the rightful legal chair of the Democratic executive committee.²³⁶ Progressives had failed to seize the party machinery.

233. Many house members from two-unit counties who were opposed by black voters voted against the white primary bill and against the constitutional amendment to extend the county-unit system to general elections because of their allegiance to Thompson. Heard interviews with Rep. Jack Williams and Robert Elliott, Heard Papers.

234. They sought to lock in their control of party machinery by transferring the power to appoint the 60 at-large members of the SDEC (one-half of its total membership) from the governor to the party chair, a Talmadge ally.

235. Meanwhile, the Thompson party met and set rules for *its* primary. It did not develop a new educational requirement but merely noted the constitutional provision that all registrants must be able to read and write.

236. Also, all primary candidates would be required to pledge their support to the party’s nominees in the general election, and all primary polling places would be segregated by race. *WP*, 9 Aug. 1947; *CNC*, 21 Sept. 1947; *NYT*, 23 Sept. 1947; *Jacksonville Times-Union*, 18 Dec. 1947; *The Statesman*, 8 Jan. 1948; *Morris v. Peters* (203 Ga. 350), 23 Feb. 1948; *AJ*, 11 Jan. 1948. Some thought the Court gauged popular support for Talmadge and ruled

Anticipating the 1948 Gubernatorial Election

Understandably, politicians were very uncertain about the stability of the ruling party and of one-party rule. Whether a second party would be a bolting, black, more urban, and progressive faction or a bolting, white-only, more rural, and white supremacist faction would depend on the outcome of the 1948 gubernatorial primary. It was also unclear whether Talmadge could win a general election. White supremacists did not (merely) fear black suffrage. In the words of House Speaker Fred Hand, “What we don’t want ‘em to do is to get in a position in our party so they can be manipulated. [L]et ‘em have their own party, a black Democratic Party if they want.”²³⁷

Other Talmadgeites did not expect the development of a second party and deplored black incorporation attempts. Noteworthy here is the rhetorical abandonment of white supremacists’ dedication to one-party rule. This speaks to the degree to which *Smith* and the black mobilization it sparked had imperiled the state party. Talmadgeite strategist Roy Harris thought a second party in Georgia would be a Republican Party,

unless you want to go along with the Henry Wallace pinks. . . . I don’t know whether the niggers will go Republican or not. I do know we’re going to have a white man’s party in Georgia. . . . It won’t make any difference what the Supreme Court decides on the South Carolina primary. The Negro is going to motivate Georgia politics for years to come. Under a two-party system the Negro would be the balance of power. . . . We can’t let the niggers run Georgia. They’ll do it . . . if Thompson gets elected next year.²³⁸

Unlike elsewhere, Georgia’s ruling party faced serious possibilities of collapse. A second “Democratic” Party that incorporated blacks might battle the white supremacist rump party in general elections—and thus outside the confines of the county-unit system. Given the statewide nature of Georgia’s black insurgency, such a party would be highly competitive and would likely transform enclave rule and hasten the state’s democratization. The political repression of 1946 suggested that the

accordingly. Candler to Peters, 25 Feb. 1948, Box 3, SDEC Papers, Russell Library; Bernd, “Georgia,” 314.

237. House Speaker Fred Hand did “not dismiss the possibility of a second party.” *WRG*, 234–237. He advised Talmadge to advocate the white primary through the 1948 election regardless of a court ruling on the South Carolina plan. By arguing that the ruling had no immediate effect on Georgia, the faction could buy time until the next election. Interview with House Speaker Fred Hand, *WRG*, 234–237.

238. State Rep. Bob Elliott said he wished “the niggers and the unions and those white folks you talk about would start another party.” Interviews with Rep. Robert Elliott and Roy Harris, *WRG*, 242–245, 259–264.

Talmadge faction would not concede enclave rule without a fight.

Implications for the Future

In contrast to their counterparts in South Carolina and Mississippi, Georgia's rulers divided sharply along factional lines and disagreed on how to respond to *Smith*. This fact, in conjunction with the enormously important county-unit system and the progressive political ambitions of key actors, produced acquiescence to, and then defiance of, *Smith*. From 1944 to 1946, acquiescence facilitated the impressive rise in black registration and voting. In the aftermath of electoral violence and voter repression, the 1946 gubernatorial election and ensuing Three-Governors Controversy, anti-Talmadgeites considered developing a separate, biracial party loyal to the national party.

Legal control over the "Democratic" label remained unclear, and neither Talmadgeites nor their opponents were at all sure that one-party rule—and with it, stable enclave rule—would continue. The progressive ambitions of key faction members, coupled with the uncertainties surrounding "ownership" of the party, would convince Talmadge faction leaders to take the safe route and avoid the Dixiecrat revolt. In the longer run, the critical 1946 gubernatorial election wrecked the party's more progressive faction for almost two decades. These developments ensured Talmadgeite rule during the critical decade of the 1950s. In Georgia, *Smith* produced the region's most profound effects; these would reverberate throughout its democratization.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The narratives offered here all point to the contingency and complexity of rulers' efforts to manage threats to their rule. Outcomes could not be predicted with reference to structural features of the polity; instead, outcomes were bound up in the political ambitions of some rulers, as well as conflict and cooperation across sectional and factional divides. Political institutions, often with sharp sectional biases, refracted how socioeconomic power would be converted into rulers' responses, thus constraining and enabling different authorities as they managed democratization challenges. Furthermore, the perception of the threat to enclave rule posed by blacks was paramount across all three enclaves. Importantly, these perceptions did not always conform with reality. Rulers differed in the quality of their intelligence about goings-on in black communities, as Jim Crow's parallel public spheres and civic institutions frustrated their ability to "see like states." Even as the transition progressed, rulers would continue to misinterpret the scope of black protest and the preferences of black leaders.

Two other features of these narratives deserve mention. First, the bluntness of policy instruments aimed at black political participation complicated enclave defenses. Some policy options were opposed because they would repress poorer whites; other lawmakers favored such options for this very reason. Thus, policy discussions could both raise factional tensions and alter the balance of power among factions. Second, although it may be too strong a claim to argue that the seeds of the enclaves' demise were sown in their founding, the constitutions of the late nineteenth century limited enclaves' fiscal and administrative capacities and the legal authority of actors, especially governors. When developing new capacities required constitutional revision, it posed a double threat to many: it could disrupt balances of power among section and faction by altering sectional biases in institutional arrangements; and it might expose the enclave to further federal judicial oversight.

These narratives point to some real puzzles, too. For instance, what explains the flurry of attempts at party building during this period? Blacks, white progressives and moderates, and motivated white supremacist ideologues all considered and often worked diligently to build organizations that used the "party" moniker. How should we characterize the organizations that waited in the wings for recognition by the national party, or lay in ambush of it?²³⁹ Is there a subterranean history of such efforts in other parts of the country? Further, how should we square this moment with the seeming solidity of the two-party system?²⁴⁰ The very different patterns of black mobilization across these states are puzzling as well. From a common take-off point, black protest diverged very quickly, not reversing until the late 1960s (e.g., Table 1). This divergence is not easily accounted for by any measure of black protest capacity antecedent to the transition. Although there were differences in this capacity, their magnitude was vastly outweighed by the magnitude of the ensuing changes.

By the early 1970s, enclaves had exited authoritarian rule via different paths. Their democratization experiences differed in terms of the orderliness of compliance with federal directives, the timing and nature of black incorporation into the ruling party, and the timing and nature of its reconciliation with the national party.²⁴¹ The manner in which the

239. See Hanes Walton, Jr., *Black Political Parties: A Historical and Political Analysis* (New York: Free Press, 1972), and "The National Democratic Party of Alabama and Party Failure in America," in Kay Lawson and Peter H. Merkl, eds., *When Parties Fail: Emerging Alternative Organizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

240. Pradeep K. Chhibber and Ken Kollman, *The Formation of National Party Systems* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

241. *Paths Out of Dixie*, chaps. 9–11.

abolition of the white primary unfolded did not determine these paths, but still shaped them.

Three Paths Out of Dixie

After some two decades of forthright resistance to any racial reforms, as well as attacks on white civil society and black protest, South Carolina's rulers exploited cohesive elite networks and an effective coercive apparatus to navigate safely the desegregation crisis at Clemson. This outcome provided increasing returns to rulers' strategic accommodation to democratization pressures. They capitalized on the state's external reputation to maintain order, deter interventions by national civil rights organizations, and limit federal oversight of party-state compliance with federal directives. By doing so, rulers accelerated the exit of white supremacist activists from the ruling party, and sped the party's incorporation of blacks and its reconciliation with the national party. Limiting democratization's disruptive effects, South Carolina successfully harnessed the revolution.

Mississippi also resisted early democratization pressures. However, during the 1950s, the state's decentralization of authority stymied reformers' attempts to overhaul the state's policing apparatus and pursue other governmental reforms. The party faction's dominance by Citizens' Council forces, coupled with the state's disorganized law enforcement, resulted in the debacle at Oxford. This massive military operation induced white supremacist violence that further corroded law enforcement, thereby sparking a massive intervention from national civil rights organizations. The ensuing spiral of interventions and disorder resulted in substantial federal oversight of Mississippi's compliance with federal directives. Blacks in Mississippi mobilized quickly, and did so *outside* the confines of the ruling party. In the chaos of a fissured state Democratic Party, relations with the national party became estranged—and remained so into the mid-1970s. In sum, Mississippi's rulers stumbled through the 1960s. By failing to deter white supremacist violence, they unwittingly induced the violations of Mississippi "sovereignty" against which they had long railed.

Georgia's white supremacist rulers narrowly escaped a collapse of the ruling party in the late 1940s. With the dominance of the Talmadge faction secured, they pursued a "massive resistance" to democratization pressures through the 1950s. In doing so, they decimated statewide networks of black protest. By the time black direct action movements swept the state, the likely engine of statewide black insurgency—black Atlanta—had accommodated to corporate interests by trading critical support in mayoral elections for meager policy benefits. This accommodation effectively neutralized the development of statewide insurgency networks. Instead, Georgia's Black Belt activists were left largely on their own to deal with powerful county interests and state-

sponsored violence. Atlanta's carefully developed reputation as a "dignified," compliant city reaped benefits for north Georgia and helped deter substantial interventions by civil rights organizations and the federal government into south Georgia. The "two Georgias" quickly diverged, as north Georgia experienced a harnessed revolution and south Georgia, a protracted democratization.

These different paths generated important legacies that still shape the present. In South Carolina and north Georgia, accommodation to democratization pressures garnered greater success in capital accumulation and accelerated economic growth. Conversely, Mississippi and south Georgia, where accommodation failed, suffered greatly on this score. Ironically, however, by managing to incorporate blacks and reconcile smoothly with the national party, South Carolina's rulers were soon unable to maintain a "brand name" for the state party that differed sufficiently from that of the national party. They thus doomed state Democrats over the long run. In Mississippi, by failing to accommodate strategically to democratization pressures, rulers positioned the rump state party such that Republicans had nowhere to run. In doing so they unintentionally benefited state Democrats for more than two decades. Besides existing questions of economic development and electoral change, the democratization perspective articulated here poses new questions about topics such as transitional justice, controversies over state-sponsored art, and the wave of constitution writing and political modernization projects that followed closely on the heels of the transition to democracy.²⁴²

Another American Exceptionalism?

With this research, I hope to contribute to an important new line of inquiry that disrupts traditional narratives of American democracy and suggests a different kind of American exceptionalism. Putting aside—at least for the moment—the "why-no-socialism" query, several scholars have persuasively argued that we have long underestimated the degree to which American democracy has been contested. In particular, building on the work of southern historians, they show that suffrage—the lynchpin of democratic rule—has been contested throughout our history, that its expansion has been anything but linear, and that retractions and expansions have been contingent throughout.²⁴³ Triumphalist narratives of the inevitability of universal suffrage in America are left reeling. Indeed, suffrage remains contested even

242. Of course, the democratization of enclaves in the Peripheral South awaits analysis as well.

243. Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic, 2001). Keyssar notes many moments when lawmakers "tightened the belt of democracy." *The Right to Vote*, 316–324. Martin Shefter, *Political Parties and the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), chap. 6.

today; witness the current debate over felon disenfranchisement.²⁴⁴ Others have raised important questions about the support for democracy over the history of U.S. political and legal thought.²⁴⁵

My understanding of the South fits with this line of research. I also emphasize suffrage and suggest a different periodization of America's democratic development.²⁴⁶ My work is a departure as well, because it concerns not just suffrage but democratic governance. On my view, not only universal suffrage but also a fully consolidated *democracy* is a recent American achievement. A whole host of requirements of democratic rule, including associational freedoms and the rule of law, have been consolidated only since the early 1970s. Richard Valelly argues that the U.S. is distinct among democracies for having enfranchised, disenfranchised, and *re*-enfranchised groups of its citizens while remaining a democracy.²⁴⁷ Similarly, Richard Bensei motivates his masterwork on the politics of American industrialization by wondering how the U.S. managed to undergo rapid industrialization while remaining democratic. My work suggests that the country *did* undergo a change in regime type—it transformed itself from a federal democracy at the turn of the century into one featuring stable enclaves of authoritarian rule.²⁴⁸

One implication of this perspective is that American political development scholars might reorient their comparisons. Rather than looking solely to Europe—the preoccupation of scholars of the welfare state—we might benefit from looking southward to Latin

America where several other polities have wrestled with questions of racial hierarchies, labor, and politics in a post-emancipation context. The U.S. differs, of course—it was a federal democracy before the abolition of slavery, and it tolerated pockets of authoritarianism for three-quarters of a century. Contemporary Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico are grappling with the presence of enclaves just after their recent democratizations and are doing so in a completely different historical moment.²⁴⁹ It is at the very least, however, an open question whether accounting for America's status as a "late, late, democratizer" is best understood by focusing on Western Europe, rather than the polities with which in some respects it shares a good deal more.²⁵⁰

If the consolidation of democracy across the entire polity took so long to occur, and was so complex and contingent, should we view it as permanent? Certainly we can imagine new restrictions on associational freedoms and on suffrage.²⁵¹ More broadly, this study reminds us of the importance of the partisan environment in safeguarding—or threatening—democracy well after it seems secured. Many other questions need answering if we are to understand the causes of America's belated democratization. How robust have been America's cultural commitments to democratic rule? What kinds of such commitments outside the South both sustained democratic rule there and enclave rule elsewhere? How should we assess institutions such as federalism and confederally structured parties?²⁵²

This research opens up another set of questions about the consequences of America's belated democratization. As Lord James Bryce noted, democratizers usually have materialist motivations—they seek to eradicate the "tangible evils" confronting them.²⁵³ Given the dramatic shift in policy provision and subsequent increases in inequality as rulers founded enclaves,

244. Jeff Manza and Christopher Uggen, *Locked Out: Felon Disenfranchisement and American Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); John Dinan, "The Adoption of Criminal Disenfranchisement Provisions in the United States," *Journal of Policy History* 19 (2007): 282–312.

245. Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). On the legal canon's blindspots, Richard H. Pildes, "Democracy, Anti-Democracy, and the Canon," *Constitutional Commentary* 17 (2000). James Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

246. New efforts to periodize U.S. political history with race at the foreground include Desmond S. King and Rogers M. Smith, "Racial Orders in American Political Development," *American Political Science Review* 99 (2005): 75–92. Gonzalez and King argue that the U.S. did not become fully democratic until the Voting Rights Act, but they make this argument only with reference to black suffrage, not by reckoning with the features of southern enclaves ensnaring whites and blacks alike. Francisco E. Gonzalez and Desmond King, "The State and Democratization: The United States in Comparative Perspective," *British Journal of Political Science* 34 (2004): 193–210.

247. *Two Reconstructions*, chap. 1. Also, King and co-authors have gone further and placed American democratization in cross-national perspective. Desmond King, Robert C. Lieberman, Gretchen Ritter, and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Democratization in America: The United States as a Democratizing Nation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming).

248. Richard F. Bensei, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). Of course, on Bensei's view, the maintenance of democratic rule outside the South remains puzzling.

249. Some scholars have made the leap. E.g., Rebecca J. Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Peter Kolchin, *A Sphinx on the American Land: The Nineteenth-Century South in Comparative Perspective* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Anthony W. Marx, *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of the United States, South Africa, and Brazil* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

250. I thank a reviewer for suggesting this phrasing.

251. The current moral panic over—and calls for policy responses to—"voter fraud" is unsurprising given the hyper-competitive partisan landscape, and raises parallels to fierce fights over contested elections during Redemption. Justin Levitt, *The Truth About Voter Fraud* (NY: Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School, 2007); James and Lawson, "The Political Economy of Voting Rights Enforcement in America's Gilded Age."

252. For William H. Riker, "federalism is an impediment to the freedom of everybody except segregationist whites in the South." *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964), 144. On the view outlined here, federalism is anything but an engine of the South's democratization. For a different view, see Richard P. Young and Jerome S. Burstein, "Federalism and the Demise of Prescriptive Racism in the United States," *Studies in American Political Development* 9 (1995): 1–54.

253. Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1921), 602.

there is good reason to expect that the fruits of democracy would be substantial.²⁵⁴ Southern blacks have benefited from the dismantling of racist law enforcement, the desegregation of labor markets, schools, and medical facilities, and the end of white supremacist rhetoric on the campaign trail and beyond. Whites have likewise benefited from sharp increases in public investment in education, infrastructure, and other policy provisions, and from the restoration of their associational freedoms. As one observer exclaimed in the early 1970s, “By God, the white Mississippian is free.”²⁵⁵

However, the stubborn poverty, deprivation, and inequality long characteristic of the rural South persist today, as well as in the urban South, as Hurricane Katrina brought to national light. Placed in a cross-national context, this outcome may not be too surprising. Scholars of regime change have offered several complementary explanations of the empirical regularity that democratic transitions tend *not* to result in substantial redistribution. Rulers are more likely to concede to democratization pressures when the expected costs of regime change are lower.²⁵⁶ Still, the recent achievement of American democracy deserves a fuller accounting of its winners and losers. This includes the re-entry into the national electorate of millions of the South’s citizens, whose influence—given institutions such as the Electoral College and particular partisan settings—cannot be taken for granted.²⁵⁷

254. C.f., J. Morgan Kousser, “Progressivism for Middle-Class Whites Only: The Distribution of Taxation and Expenditures for Education in North Carolina, 1880–1910,” *JSH* 46 (1980): 146–194.

255. Oral History Interview with Hodding Carter, 1 Apr. 1974, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter De Vries, Interview A-0100, Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina): 30–31.

256. Dahl, *Polyarchy*, 54; James A. Robinson, “Economic Development and Democracy,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 9 (2006): 508–511. For a complementary explanation, see Gerard Alexander, *The Sources of Democratic Consolidation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998). The structural dependence of democratic states on capital reinforces this result. Adam Przeworski and Michael Wallerstein, “Structural Dependence of the State on Capital,” *APSR* 82 (1988): 11–29. This dependence is only stronger for subnational polities unable to restrict capital flows to the extent that sovereign nation-states can.

257. The suggestion that national Democrats halt presidential campaigning in the South is particularly ironic. Here, the response to one consequence of the South’s democratization—the rise of southern Republicanism—is to cease crafting electoral appeals aimed in part at southern blacks, the very people who democratized the region as they fought for suffrage and other democratic institutions. In the context of the Electoral College, Key’s “have nots”

An explanation of the rather meager fruits of democracy earned in the South needs to deal with the performance of authoritarian rulers, and their defiance, delay, adjustment, and accommodations to democratic challenges over the long transition. It could be argued that enclave rulers held out long enough that, by the early 1970s, many of the broader questions about the region’s political economy had been settled. Here, Reinhard Bendix’ famous claim about the sequencing of industrialization and democratization in Europe may need revising. In the South, important decisions about the structure of the region’s postwar economic development took place before democratic rule was consolidated.²⁵⁸

A related implication is that scholars must free the study of black politics from the confines of the “social movement” perspective in which it has too long been trapped. It is perhaps a continuing victory of the region’s authoritarian rulers that we refer almost exclusively to these democratizers as movement activists. Through their long adjustment to democratization pressures, these rulers helped to narrow our gaze from wide-ranging “tangible evils” to abstracted “rights.”²⁵⁹ By focusing attention on the stars of Key’s stage—southern Democratic politicians—the true achievement of southern blacks and Hispanics and their white allies can be fully appreciated. This focus allows us to see these actors not as movement activists, but as domestic insurgents fighting to tear down and rebuild political regimes; not as seekers of “rights,” but as democratizers. If this interpretation is persuasive, *Smith* and the politics of the white primary deserve pride of place as the beginning of the end for authoritarian rule in America.

argument is turned on its head in a perverse corollary to Paul Frymer’s “capture” argument. Thomas F. Schaller, *Whistling Past Dixie: How Democrats Can Win Without the South* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006); Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

258. Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship: Studies of Our Changing Social Order* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 1996 [1964]).

259. For consonant views, see Adolph L. Reed, Jr., *The Jesse Jackson Phenomenon: The Crisis of Purpose in Afro-American Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Risa L. Goluboff, *The Lost Promise of Civil Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91 (2005): 1233–63; Charles M. Payne, “‘The Whole United States is Southern!’ *Brown v. Board* and the Mystification of Race,” *Journal of American History* 91 (2004): 83–91.