

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The South really has no parties. Its factions differ radically in their organization and operation from political parties. The critical question is whether the substitution of factions for parties alters the outcome of the game of politics. The stakes of the game are high. Who wins when no parties exist to furnish popular leadership?¹

—V. O. Key (1949)

ON FEBRUARY 22, 1937, Representative James P. Buchanan of Texas's 10th congressional district suffered a fatal heart attack. The special election triggered by the long-serving congressman's death attracted seven candidates—all Democrats, as was the norm in the one-party state of Texas. Among these was the ambitious young director of the state branch of the National Youth Administration, one of the many government agencies created by President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. As a 28-year-old making his first run for elected office, Lyndon Baines Johnson sought to compensate for his youth and lack of name recognition by distinguishing himself as "Roosevelt's man" in the race. Johnson did everything he could to tie himself to the immensely popular president. The centerpiece of Johnson's campaign was his support for FDR's controversial court-packing plan, which conservatives assailed as a dictatorial power grab but district residents reportedly favored seven-to-one.² On election day, Johnson's strategy of all-out support for Roosevelt paid off. With about a quarter of the eligible white population voting, Johnson earned 28% of ballots cast, enough for a plurality victory.

¹ V. O. Key Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Knopf, 1949), 299.

² Robert A. Caro, *The Path to Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 395.

At first, Johnson proved himself a loyal and effective New Dealer. Only on bills related to civil rights for African Americans, who at that time were effectively disenfranchised in Texas and across the South, did Representative Johnson, like nearly all his fellow Southerners in the House, toe an unwaveringly conservative line. During his first term he helped secure the passage of bills funding dam construction, rural electrification, farm tenancy reduction, and crop control, all of which brought concrete material benefits to the residents of his relatively poor district. He was even among the few Southern representatives to support the passage of the landmark Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which established national minimum wages and maximum hours. Rebuffing critics who feared that the FLSA would undermine the South's economic advantages as a low-wage region, Johnson declared, "If an industry cannot pay decent wages, I do not want it in my district."³

The 1938 elections, however, in addition to reducing the Democrats' House majority by 72 seats, also brought the primary defeat of Johnson's fellow Texan and FLSA supporter, Representative Maury Maverick. Johnson interpreted the defeat of the outspokenly liberal Maverick, who represented the adjoining 20th district, as a sign of his constituents' increasing conservatism. The next year, when pressed by White House counsel Jim Rowe to support an administration priority, Johnson replied, "You know, look where your old friend and my old friend Maury Maverick is, he's not here. The first problem we've got is to get re-elected. I don't want to go that way." Throughout his career Johnson continued to cite Maverick as a cautionary tale, insisting, "I can go [only] so far in Texas. Maury forgot that and he is not here. . . . There's nothing more useless than a dead liberal."⁴

Although Johnson remained a relative progressive by Texas standards, he continued to tack to the right over the course of the 1940s. His conservative drift culminated in the Republican-controlled 80th Congress, when, along with nearly all Southern congressmen, he voted for the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947.⁵ Johnson's support for Taft-Hartley's partial dismantlement of the pro-union New Deal labor regime earned him the enmity of organized labor, but given his constituents' anger over wartime strikes and unions' growing power, it was "good central Texas politics."⁶

³ Joe B. Frantz, "Opening a Curtain: The Metamorphosis of Lyndon B. Johnson," *Journal of Southern History* 45, no. 1 (1979): 10.

⁴ Jordan A. Schwartz, *The New Dealers: Power Politics in the Age of Roosevelt* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 264; James H. Rowe Jr., "Interview by Joe B. Frantz" (Interview I, transcript, Lyndon Johnson Oral History Collection, Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library, Washington, DC, September 9, 1969), 15, <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/oralhistories/detail/2952>.

⁵ Irwin Unger and Debi Unger, *LBJ: A Life* (New York: Wiley, 1999), 126–127.

⁶ Frantz, "Opening a Curtain," 13.

It also proved crucial to his razor-thin election to the Senate the following year over the conservative governor Coke Stevenson, who ran on a platform of “less government, lower taxes, states’ rights, and ‘the complete destruction of the Communist movement in this country.’”⁷ Famously, Johnson also benefitted from election fraud in south Texas. But as Stevenson’s gubernatorial successor Allan Shivers later observed, it was support for Taft–Hartley that “enabled Johnson to get close enough in votes to where [fraud] could make the difference.”⁸ Once in the Senate, Johnson maintained the careful centrism he had cultivated in the House, balancing the leftward pull of party loyalty and national ambitions against his constituents’ (and financial backers’) skepticism toward many aspects of New Deal liberalism.

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Lyndon Johnson’s career in the House is not merely an intriguing prelude to his subsequent career as Senate leader, vice president, and ultimately president. It is also emblematic of the contemporaneous careers of members of Congress (MCs) across the South.⁹ Like Johnson, the Southern congressional caucus—which numbered almost two dozen senators and a hundred-odd House members—underwent a dramatic ideological transformation between the mid-1930s and late 1940s, even as almost every single one remained, as Johnson did, a member of the Democratic Party. The consequences of this transformation were momentous at the time and continue to reverberate today.

A rich scholarly literature has documented Southern MCs’ critical role in American political development during and after the New Deal. After many years as the dominant faction in a minority party, Southern Democrats’ position in national politics was radically altered by the Great Depression. The Depression not only devastated the already-poor and underdeveloped South, but also in 1933 handed the Democratic Party unified control of the national government for the first time in a generation. Amidst the economic emergency, Southern MCs relaxed their traditional opposition to external intervention and gave overwhelming support to President Roosevelt’s New Deal, which vastly expanded the federal government’s role in the nation’s economic and social life.

In the late 1930s, as the economic emergency receded and traditional fears of federal power resurfaced, Southern MCs’ support for New Deal liberalism began to ebb. Though the South remained a one-party region,

⁷ Robert Dallek, *Lone Star Rising: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1908–1960*, Vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 315.

⁸ Frantz, “Opening a Curtain,” 14.

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, this book defines “the South” as the 11 states of the former Confederacy.

its representatives in Congress began allying with Republicans to block liberal reforms and even roll back elements of the New Deal regime. By the mid-1940s, with the passage of landmark laws such as Taft–Hartley, this conservative coalition had become a durable feature of congressional politics.¹⁰ Southern Democrats did not fully abandon New Deal liberalism, however. Rather, balancing party loyalty and desire for federal aid against fear of external intervention, they came to occupy a centrist position in congressional politics, “holding the balance of power between the two great parties” on questions of economic policy.¹¹

From this pivotal position, Southern MCs exercised profound influence over the scope and structure of the American state and political economy.¹² Even in the heyday of the New Deal, Southern MCs made their support for federal welfare and regulatory programs contingent on minimizing the federal government’s interference with the region’s racialized political economy. Southern MCs sought to limit spending on social welfare benefits, which undermined black laborers’ dependence on low-wage agricultural employment. They also pushed for statutory exclusions and local discretion that ensured that programs such as Social Security, means-tested welfare, and veterans benefits were administered in a racially discriminatory fashion. These policy designs had important long-term effects on the development of the U.S. welfare state.¹³

¹⁰ James T. Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal: The Growth of the Conservative Coalition in Congress, 1933–1939* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967); David W. Brady and Charles S. Bullock III, “Is There a Conservative Coalition in the House?,” *Journal of Politics* 42, no. 2 (1980): 549–559.

¹¹ Cortez A. M. Ewing, *Primary Elections in the South: A Study in Uniparty Politics* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 106; see also Ira Katznelson, Kim Geiger, and Daniel Kryder, “Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933–1950,” *Political Science Quarterly* 108, no. 2 (1993): 283–306; Ira Katznelson and Quinn Mulroy, “Was the South Pivotal? Situated Partisanship and Policy Coalitions during the New Deal and Fair Deal,” *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 2 (2012): 604–620.

¹² For a sweeping synthesis, see Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright, 2013).

¹³ Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Robert C. Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Lee J. Alston and Joseph P. Ferrie, *Southern Paternalism and the American Welfare State: Economics, Politics, and Institutions in the South, 1865–1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Michael K. Brown, *Race, Money, and the American Welfare State* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Norton, 2005). However, for accounts that emphasize the nonracial rationales for the policy designs, see Gareth Davies and Martha Derthick, “Race and Social Welfare Policy: The Social Security Act of 1935,” *Political Science Quarterly* 112, no. 2 (1997): 217–235; Julian E. Zelizer, “The Forgotten Legacy of the New Deal: Fiscal Conservatism and the Roosevelt Administration, 1933–1938,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2000): 331–358;

The South's pivotal position was perhaps most consequential on issues related to labor markets, where the region's dependence on a low-wage, racially segmented labor force made it particularly sensitive to federal intervention.¹⁴ Although Southern MCs expressed little overt opposition to the 1935 Wagner Act, which created a legal environment highly favorable to labor unions, their sensitivity on labor issues was already evident in the 1938 House vote on the FLSA, which most Southerners opposed. As unions grew in power, assertiveness, and racial inclusiveness, Southern MCs viewed them with increasing alarm, prompting cooperation with Republicans to rein in organized labor. These efforts culminated in 1947 with the Taft–Hartley Act, which passed over President Truman's veto thanks to overwhelming support from Southern Democrats. Taft–Hartley's retrenchment of the New Deal labor regime not only inhibited further union growth, but also arguably marked a crucial turning point in U.S. history away from European-style social democracy.¹⁵

Yet Southern Democrats stopped far short of a full alliance with Republicans, many of whom exhibited a “zealously sincere desire to dismantle the New Deal.”¹⁶ Rather, they joined with non-Southern Democrats to block more radical conservative reforms and consolidate liberal achievements. Southern MCs like House Ways and Means chair Wilbur Mills (D-AR), for example, were key to devising a fiscally and politically sustainable foundation for New Deal programs such as Social Security in the 1940s and 1950s.¹⁷ In doing so, they helped institutionalize

Larry DeWitt, “The Decision to Exclude Agricultural and Domestic Workers from the 1935 Social Security Act,” *Social Security Bulletin* 70, no. 4 (2010): 49–68.

¹⁴ On the South's isolation from the national labor market and the threat the New Deal posed to this isolation, see Gavin Wright, *Old South, New South: Revolutions in the Southern Economy since the Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

¹⁵ Nelson Lichtenstein, “From Corporatism to Collective Bargaining: Organized Labor and the Eclipse of Social Democracy in the Postwar Era,” in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930–1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 122–152; Sean Farhang and Ira Katznelson, “The Southern Imposition: Congress and Labor in the New Deal and Fair Deal,” *Studies in American Political Development* 19, no. 1 (2005): 1–30; cf. Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, “Regimes and Regime Building in American Government: A Review of Literature on the 1940s,” *Political Science Quarterly* 113, no. 4 (December 1998): 689–702.

¹⁶ This quote was originally used to describe Ohio senator Robert Taft, arguably the preeminent congressional Republican in the 1940s and early 1950s; James T. Patterson, *Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 314.

¹⁷ Julian E. Zelizer, *Taxing America: Wilbur D. Mills, Congress, and the State, 1945–1975* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Alan Jacobs, “Policymaking as Political Constraint: Institutional Development in the U.S. Social Security Program,” in *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*, ed. James Mahoney and Kathleen Thelen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 94–131.

a durable New Deal order that, although it fell short of progressive ambitions, was still a transformative achievement.¹⁸

Southern MCs' turn to the right in the 1930s and 1940s, coupled with their continued support for many elements of the New Deal order that they had helped construct, thus ranks among the most important political developments of the twentieth century. However, while scholars have described in great detail how these developments played out in Congress, much less is known about what drove them in the first place. Did Southern MCs' insulation from partisan competition give them the autonomy to base their decisions on their own personal policy preferences? Or, as is more commonly assumed, were Southern MCs acting as agents of the planters and other economic elites who controlled the one-party system? Or were they, like MCs outside the South, subject to an electoral connection that induced them to cater to ordinary voters?¹⁹ In short, whom did Southern MCs *represent*? It is this question that is my focus in this book.

1.1 EXISTING PERSPECTIVES

Perhaps the most common answer to this question is that MCs from the one-party South represented the region's economic elite, especially plantation owners and other low-wage employers. This perspective, which I label *elite dominance*, often goes hand in hand with a characterization of the one-party South as an authoritarian enclave within a national democratic regime.²⁰ As one review summarizes, the elite dominance account holds that the South's "shriveled, conservative electorate" stymied mass participation in politics, and its lack of electoral competition gave politicians "few incentives to respond to whatever popular pressures did emerge."²¹ Southern elites, through their command of economic and

¹⁸ David Plotke, *Building a Democratic Political Order: Reshaping American Liberalism in the 1930s and 1940s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); see also Alonzo L. Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973).

¹⁹ David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974).

²⁰ Edward Gibson and Robert Mickey have most fully developed the idea of Southern states as authoritarian enclaves; Edward L. Gibson, *Boundary Control: Subnational Authoritarianism in Federal Democracies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Robert W. Mickey, *Paths out of Dixie: The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015). Mickey, however, is careful to avoid the suggestion that authoritarianism necessarily implies domination by a cohesive elite; indeed, intra-elite conflict is central to his account.

²¹ Jeff Manza, "Political Sociological Models of the U.S. New Deal," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 309.

social resources, were able to control Democratic nominations and thus, given the lack of Republican opposition, install their preferred candidates in office. Southern primaries provided “a semblance of political choice and electoral competition,” but in the end they merely served to justify and entrench “complete planter dominance through the Democratic Party.”²²

The elite dominance account underlies most treatments of Southern MCs’ role in national politics during this period. The influential analyses of Ira Katznelson and his collaborators, for example, presume that Southern MCs, as agents of “an authoritarian . . . political system,” were “free from the constraints of a conventional reelection imperative” and represented “the interests of economic and political elites,” whose policy preferences they largely shared.²³ These analyses thus implicitly attribute Southern Democrats’ evolving position in congressional politics to Southern elites’ changing calculus regarding the costs and benefits of federal power. Similar assumptions about elite dominance undergird the accounts of such scholars as Richard Bense, Robert Lieberman, and Margaret Weir in political science; Lee Alston and Joseph Ferrie in economics; and Jill Quadagno and William Domhoff and Michael Webber in sociology.²⁴

²² G. William Domhoff and Michael J. Webber, *Class and Power in the New Deal: Corporate Moderates, Southern Democrats, and the Liberal-Labor Coalition* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 59.

²³ Farhang and Katznelson, “Southern Imposition,” 1, 6; Katznelson, Geiger, and Kryder, “Limiting Liberalism,” 284. Farhang and Katznelson “assume . . . that there was a very close mapping of personal and voting constituency [i.e., elite] preferences in the South in this era”; see Farhang and Katznelson, “Southern Imposition,” 9, footnote 38. In his latest work Katznelson has taken a somewhat softer line, acknowledging that Southern politicians such as Mississippi senator Theodore Bilbo depended on the support of lower-income whites; see Katznelson, *Fear Itself*.

²⁴ Bense describes the New Deal coalition as an alliance “between the southern plantation elite and northern working class.” Alston and Ferrie characterize the Southern Democratic Party as “controlled by landowners and merchants in the counties dominated by plantation agriculture—the black belt elites,” who “used Congressmen as their political agents.” According to Quadagno, national “social policy was shaped by the ability of the southern planter class to wield a disproportionate share of political power in the broader nation-state. Southern planters gained political power through the establishment of a one-party South, which effectively stifled opposition to the dominant planter class.” Likewise, Lieberman argues that Southern MCs opposed universalistic social policies because they threatened to give black laborers independence from “the planter elite and the political institutions that it dominated,” and Weir makes similar claims about the threat that federal control posed to “the planter elite that had dominated the region’s political and economic life for over half a century.” Finally, Domhoff and Webber claim the most important New Deal policies were allowed to pass only after Southern Democrats—“the party of the Southern white rich”—shaped them “to fit the needs of plantation capitalists and large agricultural interests.” See Richard Bense, *Sectionalism and American Political Development: 1880–1980* (Madison: University of Wisconsin

All of these authors attribute the behavior of Southern MCs overwhelmingly if not exclusively to the interests and preferences of regional elites, with most stressing specifically the dominance of plantation owners.

All analyses require simplification, and for some analytic purposes treating Southern MCs as agents of the Southern elite may be satisfactory. But the elite dominance model runs into difficulty when confronted with the vigorous contestation within the South on economic issues. As Lyndon Johnson's congressional career demonstrates, Southern MCs not only changed ideologically over time, but also took divergent positions at any given place and time. Johnson's narrow plurality in 1937 or his 87-vote margin in 1948, both over more conservative opponents, are hardly suggestive of tight elite control of their congressional agents. Nor does the apparent appeal of court packing and minimum wages to many voters in Johnson's district bespeak a monolithic conservatism in the Southern electorate. This ideological diversity and contestation is amply documented in fine-grained accounts of Southern politics, as exemplified by V. O. Key's 1949 magnum opus on the subject.²⁵

Notwithstanding Key's attention to the South's internal heterogeneity, the overall message of his *Southern Politics* is the inadequacy of one-party politics. The region's lack of partisan competition, Key argues, inhibited government responsiveness not only to disenfranchised blacks and poor whites, but to the eligible electorate as well. This model of Southern politics, which I will call *ruptured linkages*, acknowledges the contestation within the one-party system and the political participation of many nonelite whites. But it holds that without parties to foster issue-based conflict, facilitate collective responsibility, and provide low-cost information, voters cannot make meaningful electoral choices. The consequence, Key argues, is a politics unresponsive to voters' preferences and biased toward the "haves" over the "have-nots."²⁶ In short, the ruptured linkages suggests a weaker degree of upper-class control than elite dominance

Press, 1984), 370; Alston and Ferrie, *Southern Paternalism*, 34; Jill Quadagno, "From Old-Age Assistance to Supplemental Security Income: The Political Economy of Relief in the South, 1935–1972," in *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, ed. Margaret Weir, Ann Shola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 236; Margaret Weir, "The Federal Government and Unemployment: The Frustration of Policy Innovation from the New Deal to the Great Society," in *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, ed. Margaret Weir, Ann Shola Orloff, and Theda Skocpol (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 27; Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line*, 158; Domhoff and Webber, *Class and Power*, 5.

²⁵ Key, *Southern Politics*.

²⁶ Key, *Southern Politics*, chapter 14; for a succinct but more general statement, see Gerald C. Wright, "Charles Adrian and the Study of Nonpartisan Elections," *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2008): 13–16.

does, but otherwise offers a similar view of Southern MCs as relatively unresponsive to ordinary voters.²⁷

A third and distinctly minority perspective is summarized by Robert Dahl's characterization of the one-party South as a dual system: "a more or less competitive polyarchy in which most whites were included and a hegemonic system to which Negroes were subject and to which southern whites were overwhelmingly allegiant."²⁸ I refer to this model of Southern politics as *white polyarchy*, using polyarchy in Dahl's sense of a "relatively (but incompletely) democratized regime" characterized by a high degree of political contestation and participation.²⁹ The strongest version of this model characterizes the South as a *Herrenvolk* democracy—"democratic for the master race but tyrannical for the subordinate groups."³⁰ But the white polyarchy model also encompasses the more qualified view of the South as an "exclusive republic" that, while properly classed as nondemocratic, for the white population nevertheless resembled democracy in important respects.³¹ Both versions of white polyarchy make

²⁷ For analyses of congressional politics in the South roughly in line with the ruptured linkages view, see Key, *Southern Politics*, chapters 16–17; George Robert Boynton, "Southern Conservatism: Constituency Opinion and Congressional Voting," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (1965): 259; Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2002); Robert K. Fleck, "Democratic Opposition to the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938," *Journal of Economic History* 62, no. 1 (2002): 25–54.

²⁸ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 93–94.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁰ Pierre L. Van den Berghe, *Race and Racism* (New York: Wiley, 1967), 19. On this view, the exclusion and subjugation of blacks was compatible with, or even facilitated, the empowerment of poor whites; cf. Edmund S. Morgan, "Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox," *Journal of American History* 59, no. 1 (1972): 5–29. This was indeed an argument made, however insincerely, by many turn-of-the-century Southern disenfranchisers. Scholars such as Robert Mickey, however, criticize this view of Southern politics for ignoring the ways that oppression of blacks led also to the oppression of dissident and nonelite whites; Robert W. Mickey, "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," *Studies in American Political Development* 22, no. 2 (2008): 148–149. Linz argues that such restrictions are unavoidable in a racial democracy, which "is not only an authoritarian rule over the nonwhites but inevitably leads to increasingly authoritarian rule over those whites who question the policy of the majority and increasing limitations and infringements of the civil liberties and political expression of the dissidents"; Juan J. Linz, "Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes," in *Handbook of Political Science*, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, Vol. 3: Macropolitical Theory (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 328.

³¹ On exclusive republics, see Philip G. Roeder, "Varieties of Post-Soviet Authoritarian Regimes," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 10, no. 1 (1994): 61–101; compare with the discussion of "diminished subtypes" of democracy in David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy

a fundamental distinction between Southern blacks, who were wholly barred from political participation, and Southern whites, who even if non-voting were considered part of the political community. The white polyarchy model thus implies that, at least to a first approximation, Southern MCs represented their white constituents.

Each of these three models of Southern politics—elite dominance, ruptured linkages, and white polyarchy—is theoretically plausible, and the first two especially have undergirded numerous empirical investigations. No study, however, has subjected these three alternative accounts to systematic empirical comparison and evaluation, especially with respect to congressional representation. There are many fine studies of intra-Congress politics, and many also of politics “on the ground,” but precious little evidence regarding the linkages among mass opinion, elections, and congressional behavior in the one-party South. To a large degree this has been a consequence of a lack of electoral and especially public opinion data from the one-party period, which has prevented the kind of systematic statistical analysis of representation that is possible in more contemporary studies. Taking advantage of newly available data and specially developed statistical methods, in conjunction with archival and secondary sources, this book conducts the first such analysis. At stake is not merely an answer to the question of representation in the one-party South, but also a deeper understanding of a critical juncture in American history and of mass politics in democratic and authoritarian regimes.

1.2 MY ARGUMENT

Over the course of this book, I will argue that the white polyarchy model provides the best account of congressional representation in the one-party South. To do so, I rely on an analytical framework that encompasses the elite dominance, ruptured linkages, and white polyarchy models as special cases. This framework characterizes the South as an exclusionary one-party enclave, which departed from normal democratic politics in three major respects: its exclusion of many citizens from the franchise, its lack of partisan competition, and its embeddedness within a national democratic regime. Each of these features had important implications for Southern politics.

The exclusion of many citizens changed the selectorate—the subset of citizens who participate in the selection of government officials, and thus to whom officials are accountable—to something less than the full

with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research,” *World Politics* 49, no. 3 (1997): 430–451.

public.³² If this had been the only undemocratic feature of Southern politics, we would expect Southern officials to have represented the selectorate about as well as officials in democratic regimes represent the set of all citizens. But the second feature, the South's lack of partisan competition, complicates this expectation by undermining the linkages between citizens and representatives. It did so not by eliminating electoral competition entirely, since Democratic primaries provided an alternative to general elections, but by depriving voters of the low-cost information that party labels convey about candidates' policy positions and relationship to the governing coalition. The third feature of congressional politics in the South, however—its subnational embeddedness—compensated for this informational deficit, at least to a degree. In a crucial difference from state-level politics, which lacked both parties in government and partisan electoral competition, once in office Southern MCs operated in a national political arena structured by partisan competition. Thus, unlike state and local officials, Southern MCs had to take clear and salient policy positions in a party-defined ideological space.

Different claims about these three features correspond to different models of Southern politics. The elite dominance model, for example, follows from the claim that the selectorate was so exclusive as to include only the economic elite. The ruptured linkages model follows from the claims that one-party politics deprived the selectorate, even if broader than the elite, of effective control over elected officials. And white polyarchy follows from the claim that the South's embeddedness in a national partisan regime gave the selectorate—defined as all whites—the information required to hold Southern MCs accountable.

My central thesis that white polyarchy provides the best description of congressional politics in the South rests on a number of empirical premises. Most obviously, it presumes that despite their monolithic partisanship, both Southern MCs and Southern selectorates exhibited meaningful variation in their political preferences. While this premise may be implausible on issues related to race and civil rights, it is quite reasonable on economics.³³ For this reason, I focus on the issues of regulation,

³² I take this definition of *selectorate* from Bruce Bueno de Mesquita et al., *The Logic of Political Survival* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

³³ The exclusion of blacks removed from the Southern electorate the only constituency with any strong commitment to racial equality. Notwithstanding certain efforts to reform the Jim Crow system and a few maverick politicians' support for civil rights, the bedrock principle of racial segregation was—in public at least—virtually unquestioned among Southern white citizens and politicians until after the Voting Rights Act. For exceptions, see Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Timothy Werner, "Congressmen of the Silent South: The Persistence of Southern Racial Liberals, 1949–1964," *Journal of Politics*

redistribution, and social welfare at the core of the New Deal agenda, largely bracketing explicitly racial issues except insofar as they intersected with economic policymaking. To measure the preferences of Southern MCs, I estimate a dynamic ideal-point model of House and Senate votes on economics-related roll calls between 1931 and 1963. The resulting estimates of MCs' economic conservatism reveal Southern Democrats' diverse positions on economic issues in this period, as well as their ideological evolution from New Dealers in the 1930s to pivotal centrists after 1945. I also construct analogous measures of economic conservatism at the mass level, using data from hundreds of little-used public opinion polls fielded between 1936 and 1952.³⁴ These measures reveal patterns that parallel those in Congress: the Southern white public too shifted markedly to the right in the late 1930s and early 1940s, even as it remained internally diverse on questions of economics.

To connect the two arenas of mass opinion and congressional behavior, I develop an account of what I call the *selectoral connection*.³⁵ I argue that Democratic primaries, by providing a forum for intraparty contestation that was open to most Southern whites, induced Southern MCs to cater to their white constituents. I show that the electorate in the South, while nearly all white, extended well beyond the economic elite. In fact, voter turnout in the white community was only modestly below turnout among modern-day Southerners of all races. Moreover, electoral competition in congressional primaries was frequent enough to provide a realistic threat of opposition and ideological enough to present voters with meaningful policy-based choices. As a consequence, voters were able to select representative candidates prospectively and sanction out-of-step incumbents retrospectively. The threat of such punishment in turn induced incumbents to anticipate the judgment of voters and adapt their behavior to voters' changing preferences. The end result was congressional representation that was responsive to a broad swath of the white public.

71, no. 1 (2009): 70–81; Kimberly Johnson, *Reforming Jim Crow: Southern Politics and State in the Age before Brown* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³⁴ The somewhat shorter range of my public opinion data is largely driven by the fact that the National Science Foundation–funded project to clean and code early public opinion data has not reached beyond 1952. Poll questions on economic issues were also substantially sparser in the 1950s than earlier. For examples of this decline, see Hazel Gaudet Erskine, “The Polls: Some Gauges of Conservatism,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1964): 154–168. Fortunately, the period of greatest movement in Southern whites' economic attitudes (the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s) features particularly rich polling data.

³⁵ Compare Melanie Manion, “‘Good Types’ in Authoritarian Elections: The Selectoral Connection in Chinese Local Congresses,” *Comparative Political Studies* 47 (2014): 1–33.

To provide statistical evidence for Southern MCs' representation of their selectorates, I conduct a multifaceted analysis of the relationship between MCs' economic conservatism and the preferences of their constituents. I present evidence that Southern MCs' positions on economics were collectively in step with their selectorates', and that changes in the Southern mass public appear to have preceded those in Congress. I then show that within the South, MCs' conservatism covaried with the conservatism of their white constituents, both cross-sectionally and over time. Southern MCs even responded to the income level of their selectorates: richer selectorates elected more conservative MCs. All of these findings contradict the elite dominance model of Southern politics.

More remarkably—and contrary to the ruptured linkages model—I do not find that MCs in the two-party non-South were systematically more responsive to their selectorates than Southern MCs were. Nor do I find evidence of conservative bias in Southern congressional representation. Rather, owing probably to the effects of party loyalty, Southern MCs were markedly less economically conservative than non-Southern MCs from ideologically similar constituencies. In short, despite the limitations of the one-party politics and the disfranchisement of many whites, Southern MCs appear to have represented their white constituents about as well as non-Southern MCs did theirs. State politics, however, was a very different story: unlike the non-South, economic policies in Southern states bore no relationship to mass conservatism, and were uniformly more conservative than in the non-South. This suggests that it is only because of the unique features of congressional politics in the one-party South—specifically, the fact that in Congress Southern MCs operated within a partisan political arena—that congressional representation approximated white polyarchy.

1.3 IMPLICATIONS

My argument has three major sets of implications. Most directly, it challenges conventional explanations for Southern MCs' pivotal actions in shaping, limiting, and consolidating the New Deal order. Rather than merely reflecting the evolving preferences of Southern planters, Southern MCs were responding to the changing views of the white public at large. A fully satisfying account of this crucial era in American political development thus requires explaining not only the changing calculus of economic elites, but also the causes and contours of mass opinion and electoral politics in the South. If we want to understand Southern MCs' influence on the welfare state and political economy of the United States, we must first understand the evolving preferences and choices of ordinary white Southerners.

My argument also has implications for our understanding of the character and persistence of the South's exclusionary one-party enclaves. As Robert Mickey rightly argues, the suffrage limitations, barriers to political contestation, and other undemocratic restrictions of the one-party South justify its classification as an authoritarian regime.³⁶ Yet like many other electoral authoritarian regimes, the one-party South's undemocratic features did not preclude internal contestation or responsiveness to mass preferences.³⁷ Indeed, this very responsiveness may help explain the durability of the one-party system and the fervency of ordinary whites' resistance to external attempts to democratize the South in the 1950s and 1960s. This conclusion must be qualified by the evidence that Southern state politics was far less responsive than congressional politics. Nevertheless, my findings still suggest that the South's authoritarian regime lasted partly because it satisfied whites' preferences on both race and economics.

Most speculatively, my argument suggests a revised interpretation of the role that parties play in democracy. While it may seem strange to argue that the "authoritarian" South, which was undemocratic on multiple dimensions, informs our understanding of democracy, many scholars have made this very inference, most notably Key himself. The crux of Key's argument is that if one-party politics undermines representation even of the eligible electorate—and he argues that it does—then we can infer that it would do so even in an otherwise fully democratic regime. More recently, the party theorist John Aldrich has made this same inference to support his claim that a multiparty system is a necessary condition for democracy.³⁸ Thus, by showing that in some contexts the one-party South *was* responsive to the eligible electorate, my argument undermines the empirical basis for the almost unquestioned maxim that "democracy is unthinkable save in terms of . . . parties."³⁹

³⁶ Mickey, "Beginning of the End"; Mickey, *Paths out of Dixie*.

³⁷ Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

³⁸ John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? A Second Look* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 310–312; see also John H. Aldrich and John D. Griffin, "Parties, Elections, and Democratic Politics," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*, ed. Jan E. Leighley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 595–610; John H. Aldrich and John D. Griffin, *Why Parties Matter: Political Competition and Democracy in the American South* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Wright, "Charles Adrian."

³⁹ E. E. Schattschneider, *Party Government* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1942), 1. "No theorist we know of," assert Wright and Schaffner, "has . . . explicitly challenged Schattschneider's . . . proposition"; see Gerald C. Wright and Brian F. Schaffner, "The Influence of Party: Evidence from the State Legislatures," *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 2 (2002): 367.

1.4 PLAN OF THE BOOK

The remainder of this book is organized as follows. Chapter 2 fleshes out the theoretical background for my argument. After clarifying the logic of representative democracy and parties' role within it, it develops a theoretical framework for analyzing electoral politics in an exclusionary one-party enclave such as the one-party South. Using the terms of this framework, it describes the three rival models of Southern politics—"elite dominance," "ruptured linkages," and "white polyarchy"—that structure the empirical analyses in succeeding chapters.

Chapter 3 examines the political attitudes of the Southern mass public in the wake of the Great Depression and the New Deal. Taking advantage of hundreds of public opinion polls conducted beginning in the mid-1930s, it documents Southern whites' collective turn against many aspects of the New Deal as well as their persistent ideological diversity on economic issues. The chapter illustrates these developments with a focus on four policy areas: old-age pensions, minimum wages, union security agreements, and income taxation. It then summarizes these patterns using a dynamic group-level item response theory (IRT) model, which estimates the economic conservatism of demographic subpopulations in each state and year.

Chapter 4 moves from the mass public to the halls of Congress. Paralleling Chapter 3, it describes the ideological evolution and continuing diversity of Southern senators and representatives, focusing again on their positions on economic issues. Using an IRT model similar to that used to estimate mass conservatism, it shows that between the 1930s and 1940s Southern members of Congress (MCs), like the Southern white public, turned sharply but incompletely against New Deal liberalism. By the mid-1940s, Southern Democrats in Congress had come to occupy a pivotal position on economic issues midway between non-Southern Democrats and Republicans, giving them outsized influence over national policy-making in the wake of the New Deal. The chapter illustrates these developments with three of the four policy areas Chapter 3 examines at the mass level.

Chapter 5 explains how the white primary created a selectoral connection between Southern MCs and the voting public, thus incentivizing them to respond to the preferences of the eligible electorate. It marshals quantitative evidence on competition in Southern primaries as well as qualitative evidence drawn from archives, newspapers, and other historical sources on Southern MCs' representational and accountability relationships with their constituents.

Chapter 6 conducts a systematic statistical analysis of congressional representation in the one-party South. It examines Southern MCs'

responsiveness to their white constituents, both cross-sectionally and over time, and compares them to non-Southern MCs. It also shows that Southern MCs responded to the income of the median voter, and examines their ideological bias relative to non-Southern MCs. It then highlights the ways that congressional representation did differ across regions, and concludes by discussing how these findings help resolve the “puzzle” of Southern conservatism.

The final chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the revisionist portrait of Southern politics I have proposed. I begin by considering how much the South has changed since the dismantlement of the one-party system. I then explore the my findings’ implications for our understanding of American political development, of mass politics in authoritarian regimes, and of the role of parties in democracy.

Replication materials for this book can be accessed at <https://press.princeton.edu/titles/13231.html>.