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BEFORE A “SOLID SOUTH”

In the 1860 election, Republican Abraham Lincoln won the lion's share of electoral votes in the North and was completely shut out in the South.¹ Indeed, in Virginia—the only southern state that placed the Lincoln-Hamlin ticket on the ballot—out of 166,891 votes the Republican nominee garnered 1,887 (1.1 percent). Rather than wait to see what plans a new Republican administration would have for the overriding issue of slavery, the South forced Lincoln's hand when South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20, 1860. Ten more states would follow suit, forming the Confederate States of America—and what is defined as the South throughout this book. Table 2.1 shows the dates the eleven states seceded and their corresponding percentage of slaves out of each state's total population. It is evident from the table that states with larger slave populations seceded earlier.

TABLE 2.1 ■ Date of Secession and Percentage of Population in Slavery

State	Date of Secession	Number of Slaves (1860)	Percentage of Slaves (1860)
South Carolina	December 20, 1860	402,406	57
Mississippi	January 9, 1861	436,631	55
Florida	January 10, 1861	61,745	44
Alabama	January 11, 1861	435,080	45
Georgia	January 19, 1861	462,198	44
Louisiana	January 26, 1861	331,726	47
Texas	February 1, 1861	182,566	30
Virginia	April 17, 1861	490,865	31
Arkansas	May 6, 1861	111,115	26
North Carolina	May 20, 1861	331,059	33
Tennessee	June 8, 1861	275,719	25

Sources: Dates for secession are from University of Georgia Special Collections Libraries website (www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/selections/confed/dates.html). The 1860 census data for total slaves and percentage of population were extracted from the National Historical Geographic Information System website (www.nhgis.org/).

Note: Percentage of slaves is rounded up to the nearest whole number. The bivariate correlation between the percentage of slaves and the order of secession is highly significant at -0.919 ($p < .01$, two-tailed). This means that states with a greater portion of slaves seceded earlier.

The Civil War lasted a long four years and when it ended, roughly three-quarters of a million Union and Confederate soldiers had died in the struggle (Gugliotta 2012). On April 15, 1865, six days after Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered at the Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia, John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Lincoln. Vice President Andrew Johnson, a Democrat loyal to the Union, was elevated to the presidency. Like Lincoln, but perhaps even more so given his Tennessee roots, President Johnson intended for the rebellious states to reenter the Union with very little price to pay as a condition of readmission. After hostilities had ended, Johnson's leadership of Presidential Reconstruction drew the ire of northern congressional Republicans who expected the South to pay a dear price for its treason. With President Johnson leading Reconstruction in the aftermath of the war, ex-Confederates reasserted their positions of political leadership in the southern states. The leniency afforded the South culminated in a constitutional crisis pitting President Johnson against congressional Republicans.

In the first post-Civil War midterm election in 1866, House Republicans expanded their majority from 136 to 173 total seats, almost 77 percent (173 out of 226) of the lower chamber.² In the U.S. Senate, the GOP's majority went from 39 to 57 seats, 84 percent (57 out of 68) of the total.³ With the southern states currently enduring political limbo, lacking congressional representation because they were not granted readmission, northern congressional Republicans decided to take over the blueprint of Reconstruction—making sure that the South would endure a costly purgatory as a condition of reunion. Setting up a showdown with President Johnson, in 1867 Congress passed (over a veto) the Tenure of Office Act, which forbade the president from firing an executive appointee without congressional approval. Directly testing enforcement of the Act, President Johnson proceeded to remove Secretary of War Edwin Stanton (a Lincoln appointee), a move that facilitated his impeachment. In the impeachment trial of 1868, President Johnson escaped removal of office by a single Senate vote.

Thanks to their impressive seat gains after the 1866 midterm, congressional Republicans possessed veto-proof majorities, and they were adamant in taking over the process of shaping southern Reconstruction. President Johnson was rendered ineffectual because a united GOP could consistently override his veto of congressional legislation. By 1867, Presidential Reconstruction was replaced by Congressional Reconstruction or Radical Reconstruction, a more apt statement of the leadership of the so-called Radical Republicans who engineered the set of conditions for southern readmission to the United States. This chapter provides the foundation for understanding the key political dynamics that began with Radical Reconstruction and ended with the advent of the Democratic Solid South. The period running from roughly 1868 to 1900 was the most politically volatile in American history. An unresolved Reconstruction process ended in an uncertain political interlude that eventually gave way to a Democratic usurpation, breathtaking in its almost absolute control of the southern party system.

1868 TO 1900: THE RELENTLESS WORK OF DEMOCRATIC “REDEMPTION”

The preeminence of race in shaping and driving southern politics is clear from an identification of the locus of power on the eve of the Civil War. The most politically powerful southerners were those who hailed from the black belt region—distinguished by its dark and fertile soil—which contained the bulk of large-scale plantations and hence the highest percentage of slaves. Geographically, the southern black belt runs from the southeastern part of Virginia across the eastern half of North Carolina and then through the middle-to-lower portions of the Deep South states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and then tails off in east Texas.⁴ Figure 2.1 displays southern counties according to their percentage of slaves (less than 25 percent, 25 to 50 percent, and more than 50 percent), based on the 1860 census.

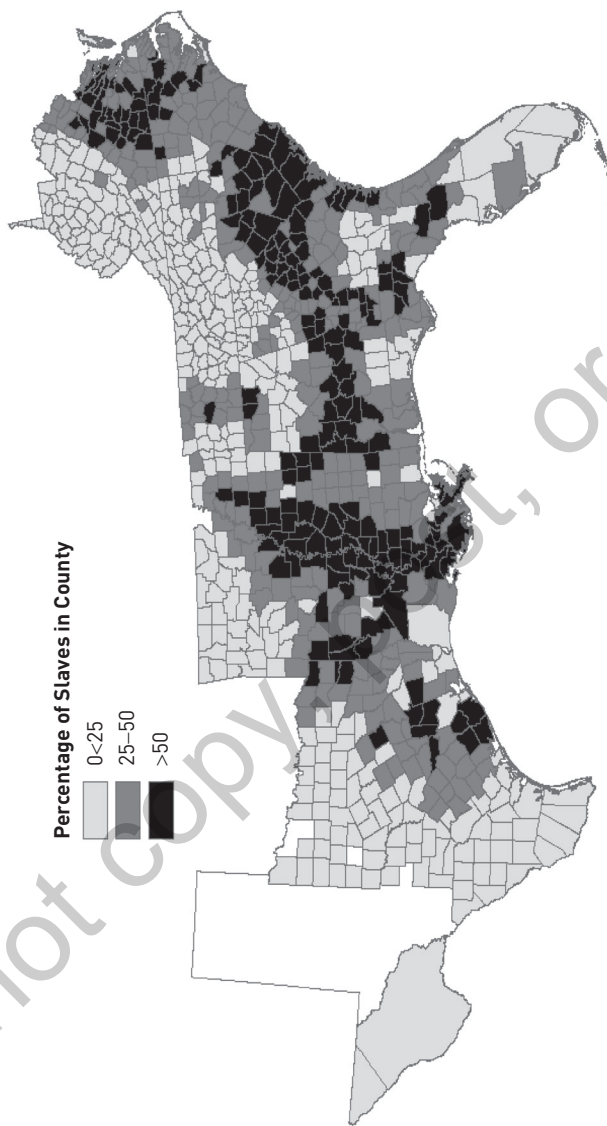
Due primarily to their potentially disastrous political station, black-belt whites, who resided in counties where the black population rivaled and often surpassed them in total numbers, were the undisputed elites of antebellum southern politics. Their loss of control during Reconstruction would be redeemed and restored for decades to come after extinguishing the Populist threat in the 1890s. Because they were a numerical minority in a majority black setting, black-belt whites had the most to lose if their black subjects were to ever attain political equality, a reality that was vigorously and successfully delayed until the 1960s.

Beyond their immediate confines, black-belt whites had another legitimate threat to their political power: upcountry southern whites who did not hold slaves and hence had no stake in seceding from the United States in order to protect the institution of slavery. America’s original sin, the peculiar institution of slavery, led to a disastrous Civil War and in the aftermath, native southerners who aligned with the Republican Party actively resisted the resurging black belt–led white supremacist southern Democracy. These mountain Republicans, many of whom fought for the Union, were bold enough to attempt a partnership with African Americans in a burgeoning Populist Party that threatened to redistribute economic power to the impoverished mass of black and white southerners. Just as they did during the “War between the States,” and hastening the demise of Reconstruction, black-belt whites found a way to steer the political agenda. Through a cunning combination of political ingenuity and outright violence, the agrarian movement of the 1890s was swiftly extinguished.

In one of the most insightful passages of *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, V. O. Key (1949, 9) had this to say about the political acumen of black-belt whites:

This sketch of the broad outlines of the foundations of southern politics points to an extraordinary achievement of a relatively small minority—the whites of the areas of heavy Negro population—which persuaded the entire South that

FIGURE 2.1 ■ Percentage of Slaves in Southern Counties Based on 1860 Census



Source: Shapefiles (state and county) and data on county slave populations are both from the National Historical Geographic Information System website (<https://www.nhgis.org/>). Figure created by the author.

it should fight to protect slave property. Later, with allies from conservatives generally, substantially the same group put down a radical movement welling up from the sections dominated by the poorer whites. And by the propagation of a doctrine about the status of the Negro, it impressed on an entire region a philosophy agreeable to its necessities and succeeded for many decades in maintaining a regional unity in national politics to defend those necessities.

But as this chapter will demonstrate, the ability of black-belt whites to control the southern political system was an arduous undertaking. The eventual establishment of a Democratic Solid South at the turn of the twentieth century was anything but a foregone conclusion, which most likely explains why Key was so impressed by the achievement.⁵

NORTHERN REPUBLICANISM IN THE SOUTH

The Grand Old Party was in its infancy when Abraham Lincoln won the White House in 1860. Although its exact origins are disputed (Gould 2003), the Republican Party came to be in 1854, as a party whose roots in the upper Midwest and its corresponding political platform would be anathema to white southerners.⁶ Extolling the motto of “free soil and free labor,” the rise of the GOP encroached upon the expansion of slavery in the vast territories of the western United States. The precarious and ultimately temporary North-South truce embodied in the 1820 Missouri Compromise, which only allowed for a 1-to-1 entry of free and slave states, was demolished in 1850, when Congress agreed to replace it with popular sovereignty.⁷ Popular sovereignty enabled the residents of the various territories to decide for themselves whether they would become a state that would allow or forbid the peculiar institution. The 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act, with its allowance of popular sovereignty in these two territories, foretold the imminence of a full-blown Civil War. “Bleeding Kansas,” as it came to be known, was a prelude and microcosm of the coming war, as pro-slavery and anti-slavery settlers killed each other in their attempt to decide whether the Sunflower State would be free or slave.

After the Civil War, northern Republicans finally infiltrated southern politics by pushing a costly reformist agenda that demanded compliance as a necessary condition for readmission to the United States. Most famously, the Radical Republicans passed the Thirteenth (1865), Fourteenth (1868), and Fifteenth (1870) Amendments. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, the Fourteenth provided for equal protection under the law and citizenship to anyone born in the United States, and the Fifteenth outlawed racial discrimination in voting. The Fourteenth Amendment became the centerpiece for readmission of the southern states.

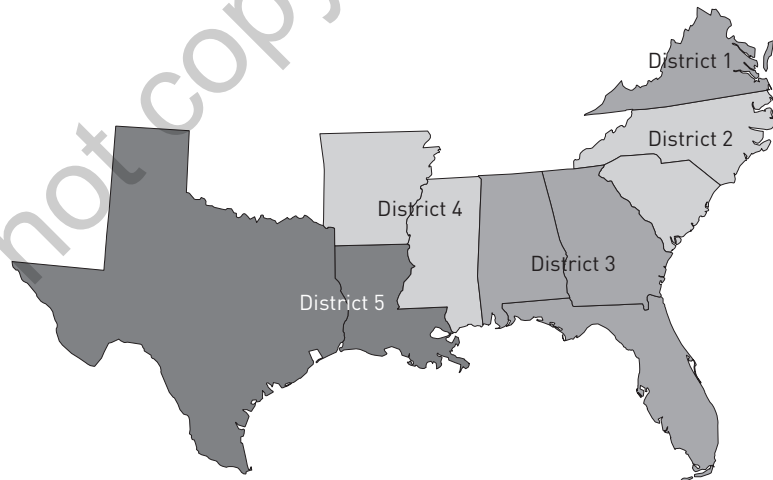
Reconstruction Acts

The wholesale readmission of the South created an obvious political complication. The Democratic loyalties of most white southerners, in combination with a smaller northern Democratic delegation, had the potential to comprise a national congressional

majority. Rather than see reunification lead directly to the end of Republican rule, northern congressional Republicans used their majorities to pass legislation that would perpetuate their control of the political system. Two objectives were capable of maintaining northern Republican majorities. First, grant and protect the right to vote for the recently freed southern black population. Second, disfranchise numerous southern whites in order to create a Republican majority among the eligible southern electorate. Fundamental to this undertaking was requiring passage of the Fourteenth Amendment as a condition of readmission to the Union. The details of this plan were laid out in a series of Reconstruction Acts passed in the spring and summer of 1867.⁸

By passing the Fourteenth Amendment in 1866, Tennessee avoided military Reconstruction. Under the first Reconstruction Act (March 2, 1867), the other ten southern states were divided into five districts ruled by a military commander who was not below the rank of brigadier-general. Figure 2.2 displays the five Reconstruction districts, with the first consisting of Virginia; the second North Carolina and South Carolina; the third Alabama, Florida, and Georgia; the fourth Arkansas and Mississippi; and the fifth containing Louisiana and Texas. The generals in charge of each district had broad powers to enforce the laws stipulated by Congress. There was a set of chronologically ordered directives that each state had to follow in order to be readmitted. The military officer was tasked with preparing a registration of the southern population. After completion of this registration, voters would then choose delegates to participate in a convention for writing a new state constitution that would then require popular approval followed by congressional approval. Additionally, each state legislature would also have to vote in favor of the Fourteenth Amendment.

FIGURE 2.2 ■ Military Districts during Reconstruction



Source: Figure created by the author.

The administration of the Republican Reconstruction effort required many complex steps. The second and third Reconstruction Acts (March 23, 1867, and July 19, 1867) provided the details of the voter registration process. In practical terms, the most nettlesome issue was making sure the voter registrars were qualified to hold their positions. Because these officials were the true arbiters of who would qualify to vote, they were held to the highest standard of loyalty to the Republic, by making them take the Ironclad Oath to the Union. Essentially, under this oath individuals swore that they never took part in the rebellion nor assisted the cause in any way. The high standards of the oath proved problematic in various southern localities where it was impossible to find a resident capable of qualifying as a registrar. Undoubtedly, in some instances the oath was finessed, and in numerous others, carpetbaggers (northern immigrants to the South) were made registrars.

It was also the case that in order to register to vote, an individual was required to swear an oath of loyalty to the Union (the oath closely tracked the provisions of Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment, which is displayed below). This oath, found in the second Reconstruction Act, made it clear that any resident who took an active role in the rebellion and/or held any of various legislative, judicial, or executive offices in the Confederacy, was ineligible to register. Of course, holding true to the letter of the law would result in wholesale disfranchisement of the native white southern population. In reality, a raft of exceptions and loopholes were exercised so that many otherwise disqualified ex-Confederates found their way onto the voter rolls. Nonetheless, the Reconstruction Acts fulfilled their purpose of crafting a southern electorate aligned with the Republican Party. Table 2.2 presents two important statistics: (1) the size of each southern state’s population of black and white males twenty-one and older (voting age) in 1860 and (2) the number of registered black and white males in the wake of the 1867 Reconstruction Acts.

It is remarkable how much the composition of these southern state voting-age populations transformed as a consequence of registration. For instance, in Alabama a clear white majority (of course, nary a single southern black was voting in 1860) in 1860 became a solidly black registered electorate in 1867. And even in those states (like in Arkansas and North Carolina) where the white majority was maintained, albeit substantially reduced, the majority of voters were decidedly Republican-leaning, thanks to a coalition of southern blacks loyal to the party of Lincoln, Republican carpetbaggers, and the segment of scalawags (native white southerners committed to the Union and GOP) who disproportionately resided in southern Appalachia (e.g., most prominently the mountain Republicans of East Tennessee and Western North Carolina).

Not surprisingly, in addition to Alabama, in the Deep South states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, registered black majorities foretold the most aggressive and violent white response to Reconstruction. It was in these states that the number of black officeholders was most prominent. Still, only in South Carolina did African Americans ever comprise a majority Republican state government, and due

TABLE 2.2 ■ Altering the Composition of the Southern Electorate

State	Number of White and Black Males 21 or Older (1860 Census)			Composition of Registered Electorate in 1868		
	Whites	Blacks	Comments	Whites	Blacks	Comments
Alabama	113,871	92,404	Probably safely white.	61,295	104,518	Fair white majority lost entirely.
Arkansas	70,852	22,633	Safely white.	33,047	21,207	Huge white majority cut down.
Florida	18,511	13,504	Probably safely white.	11,914	16,089	Fair white majority lost entirely.
Georgia	127,303	92,995	Probably safely white.	96,333	95,168	Good white majority almost lost.
Louisiana	94,711	92,502	Disfranchisement could Africanize.	45,218	84,436	Small white majority lost entirely.
Mississippi	80,051	89,963	Disfranchisement could Africanize.	47,434	62,091	Black majority increased.
North Carolina	138,136	71,355	Safely white.	106,721	72,932	Still safely white.
South Carolina	65,610	84,393	Safely black.	46,882	80,550	Still safely black.
Texas	103,500	36,215	Safely white.	59,633	49,497	White majority cut seriously.
Virginia	156,061	114,608	Probably safely white.	120,101	105,832	White majority endangered.

Source: Data (including comments) were reproduced from two separate tables in Russ (1934, 177).

Note: Although Russ (1934) does not emphasize this point, it must be the case that the substantial reduction in the white male registered electorate in 1868 is also directly attributable to Civil War casualties.

primarily to a sincere belief in political equality and an eye toward the consequences likely to ensue for disfranchising ex-Confederates, the black majority drew up a state constitution that tilted heavily in favor of universal male suffrage.

BOX 2.1 BLACK OFFICEHOLDERS DURING RECONSTRUCTION

During the brief period of Presidential Reconstruction (1865–1867) under Tennesseean Andrew Johnson, black representation in officeholding was virtually nonexistent because the northern-led Congress (U.S. House and U.S. Senate) had not yet forced the southern states to open elective offices to African Americans. This changed with the onset of Radical Reconstruction that northern Republican members of Congress imposed on the southern states in the era of federal military control of Dixie that lasted from 1867 to 1876 (with the actual end date varying by state; see the note under Table 2.3).

The emergence of black officeholders during Reconstruction was truly a revolutionary occurrence. Although many of these officials were freeborn northern carpetbaggers, most of them were from the South and had been slaves prior to the Thirteenth Amendment’s abolition of the peculiar institution. Further, due to such a small population of white Republican voters, the vast majority of black officeholders represented disproportionately black populations residing in the black-belt counties—the locus of the white ruling class that was responsible for inciting southern secession, ultimately ending Reconstruction, putting down the Populist Revolt of the 1890s, and successfully installing the Jim Crow system of legally enforced racial segregation (Key 1949).¹ Foner (1988, 355) put this remarkable development in perspective: “the spectacle of former slaves representing the Lowcountry rice kingdom or the domain of Natchez cotton nabobs epitomized the political revolution wrought by Reconstruction.” Not surprisingly, for many of these black officeholders, their willingness to serve came with a costly physical price. More than 10 percent were the victims of violence, and the bulk of these assaults (roughly 80 percent) were committed in the Deep South states of Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, which contained a large share of black-belt counties (Foner 1993, xxviii).

According to Foner (1993), during Reconstruction there were close to 2,000 African Americans who held public office in the southern states, with only fifteen affiliated with the Democratic Party; the vast remainder served as Republicans. And despite the mark of slavery afflicting most of them in the recent past, a clear majority of black officeholders were literate and accomplished in various occupations before their time spent as public servants. Nonetheless, in every southern state, white (typically northern) Republicans held the reigns of political power for the duration of Reconstruction. However, blacks in South Carolina comprised the majority of state house representatives during Reconstruction and accounted for about half of the state senate membership from 1872 to 1876 (Foner 1993, xiii).²

Table 2.3 presents data on the number of black officeholders during Reconstruction for each southern state who served in the U.S. Congress, state legislature (state senate and state house), major state offices, and every office at any level (federal, state, and local). These data are from Foner (1993), who indicates that he was able to account for almost 1,500 of the approximately 2,000 black officeholders who served during

(Continued)

(Continued)

TABLE 2.3 ■ Black Officeholders in the Reconstruction Era, 1867–1876

State (end date)	Congress	State Senate	State House	State Office	Any Office
AL (1874)	3	5	66	0	167
AR (1874)	0	5	22	3	46
FL (1876)	1	12	36	2	58
GA (1871)	1	6	43	0	108
LA (1876)	1	22	105	7	210
MS (1875)	3	13	102	8	226
NC (1876)	1	10	48	0	180
SC (1876)	6	29	210	8	314
TN (1870)	0	0	0	0	20
TX (1873)	0	2	15	0	46
VA (1873)	0	8	36	0	85
Total	16	112	683	28	1,460

Source: All data are from Foner (1993).

Note: The “end date” for each state denotes when the Democratic Party regained its governing majority by controlling the governorship and both chambers of the state legislature. The total number of black officeholders does include some instances of double counting because a handful of representatives were elected in two states, and with regard to those holding a major state office (and other offices), some held more than one position at different times over the course of their careers (e.g., the only African American to hold a major state office in Florida was Jonathan C. Gibbs, who was superintendent of education and also secretary of state; thus the total equals two state officeholders for the Sunshine State). The major state offices considered by Foner (1993, xvii) and the states that had at least one black officeholder representing it during Reconstruction are governor (LA), lieutenant governor (LA, MS, SC), treasurer (LA, SC), superintendent of education (AR, FL, LA, MS), secretary of state (FL, LA, MS, SC), supreme court (SC), and state commissioner (AR, MS, SC).

Reconstruction. Of the sixteen black members of Congress, two were U.S. Senators, both of Mississippi: Blanche K. Bruce and Hiram Revels. Of the African Americans identified as holding a major state office, one briefly served as governor of Louisiana (P. B. S. Pinchback), six were lieutenant governors, two were treasurers, four were superintendents of education, nine were secretaries of state, five were state commissioners, and one served on a state supreme court (Jonathan J. Wright of South Carolina).³ In the two states with the greatest number of black officeholders, Mississippi and South Carolina, four African American state legislators rose to the position of speaker of the house: John R. Lynch and Isaac D. Shadd in the Mississippi State House and Robert B. Elliott and Samuel J. Lee in the South Carolina State House.⁴

After Reconstruction ended in each southern state, with white Democrats native to the region winning a majority of state legislative seats and occupying the governorship (a process referred to as “Redemption,” and hence these native white southerners were dubbed “the redeemers”), the number of black officeholders dropped considerably, but it did not happen all at once. The decline in black officeholders occurred at a rate reflecting the institutionalization of Jim Crow laws (Foner 1993). The removal of black voters from the southern electorate necessarily ensured the removal of black officeholders. Republican George Henry White of North Carolina was the last black member of Congress to serve in a southern state until after the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965 (Justesen 2001). His tenure ended in 1901. Recognizing the writing on the wall, near the end of his farewell address to Congress, Representative White spoke these words, “This, Mr. Chairman, is perhaps the negroes’ temporary farewell to the American Congress; but let me say, Phoenix-like he will rise up some day and come again.”⁵

1. Given their much smaller black populations, this primarily explains why the lowest number of black officeholders resided in the Peripheral South states of Arkansas, Tennessee, and Texas (see Table 2.3).
2. As a reference point, during Reconstruction the South Carolina State Senate contained 31 members from 1868–1871 and 33 members from 1872–1876; the South Carolina State House contained 124 members (the same number to this day; see Dubin 2007, 170).
3. Perhaps to no surprise, among the major state offices, the highest number of African Americans occupied the least influential position, secretary of state, which Foner (1988) characterized as “essentially ceremonial” (354).
4. There was a fair amount of circulation among black officeholders. For instance, state house speakers John R. Lynch (MS) and Robert B. Elliott (SC) also served as U.S. House Representatives in their respective state delegations.
5. The full text of Congressman White’s farewell address is available online (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/whitegh/whitegh.html>).

Given the American system of federalism, the efficacy of the Reconstruction Acts varied widely, depending on the state. For instance, as Table 2.2 shows, Georgia was the only Deep South state that kept a registered white voting majority. The Peach State simply refused to carry out the disfranchisement provisions of the Reconstruction Acts (Russ 1935). Even so, the registered white population was drastically reduced because so many whites declined to register (a common occurrence throughout the South). In short, the implementation of voter registration became the first line of defense for molding a Republican electorate in the South. But this Republican bulwark exhibited variable strength, based on its application in each of the southern states. This was particularly the case once voters chose delegates to constitutional conventions that would then determine voter qualifications anew, in accordance with the provisions established in those state constitutions. A lengthy passage from Foner (1988, 323–324) summarizes the situation nicely:

Many Republicans could not reconcile their party’s democratic rhetoric with proposals to strip large numbers of “rebels” of the vote. Although upcountry scalawags, especially those who had suffered for their Unionist beliefs or

hailed from areas devastated by the South's internal civil war, supported disenfranchisement most vehemently, the issue followed no simple pattern, for it became embroiled in Republican divisions over the party's prospects of attracting white voters. Five states disenfranchised few or no Confederates: Georgia, Florida, and Texas, where moderates committed to luring white Conservatives into the party controlled the [convention] proceedings; South Carolina, with its overwhelming black voting majority; and North Carolina, where the party's white base appeared firm. (North Carolina's mountain delegates, however, objected to their constitution's leniency.) Alabama and Arkansas barred from voting men disqualified from office under the Fourteenth Amendment as well as those who had "violated the rules of civilized warfare" during the Civil War, and required all voters to take an oath acknowledging black civil and political equality. Even this was not enough for one delegate from the strife-torn Arkansas upcountry, who "would have disfranchised every one of them." Louisiana, where the likelihood of white support appeared bleak, disenfranchised Confederates from newspaper editors and ministers who had advocated disunion to those who had voted for the secession ordinance, but exempted men willing to swear to an oath favoring Radical Reconstruction. Mississippi and Virginia, to the chagrin of Whiggish Republicans, also barred considerable numbers of "rebels" from voting.

The key provision of the Fourteenth Amendment, which became the stumbling block for southern states' readmission to the Union, is found in Section 3:

No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.

The provisions in this section of the Fourteenth Amendment are explicitly designed to disqualify ex-Confederate leaders from holding office, and these restrictions/disabilities often served as the basis for preventing southern whites from registering to vote. Thus, this passage of the Fourteenth Amendment was intended to prevent the old guard from returning to political power (i.e., black-belt planters). As mentioned above, however, at the stage of writing new state constitutions, the severity of voting (and officeholding) qualifications were highly variable. Yet, none of the ten southern states enduring military Reconstruction could openly disavow the direct purpose of Section 3 of the Fourteenth Amendment (denying officeholding to southerners in positions of power who previously served the Confederacy) because it had to be approved by the state legislature as a condition of readmission to the United States.

BOX 2.2 SOUTHERN STATE CONSTITUTIONS

Given the conditions enforced for readmission to the Union, it is perhaps no surprise that southern states have a higher number of state constitutions. To be clear, at any moment in time, a state only has one approved and operating constitution, and historically southern states have enacted a higher total. In addition to creating new constitutions during Reconstruction, after Reconstruction ended and the erstwhile native white ruling class managed to “redeem” political power from northern carpetbaggers and their southern scalawag co-conspirators, additional state constitutions were drawn up throughout the southern states. Because of accusations of real and perceived abuses leveled upon southern Democrats by overzealous Reconstruction-era Republican governors, in most southern states the post-Reconstruction constitutions purposely weakened the power and autonomy of the executive branch.

For instance, Florida and Texas governors share power with several statewide elected members of the executive branch, including a very powerful lieutenant governor in the latter state (the Texas lieutenant governor essentially runs the state senate). Historically, the North Carolina governor was not given the veto power, and to this day the governor cannot veto redistricting plans drafted by the state legislature (in 2012, Republicans controlled the legislature and approved a congressional map that heavily favored their party, while the Democratic governor had no power to block the plan). As V. O. Key (1949) pointed out, South Carolina’s state senators ruled the Palmetto State for most of the post-Reconstruction era because each of the state’s forty-six counties was represented by a single senator (since 1918; see Dubin 2007, 171) who controlled their county’s local politics and combined forces with other senators to prevent ambitious governors from achieving their political objectives.

Table 2.4 shows that compared to northern states, southern states have averaged three times as many constitutions (six versus two). Of course, many northern states were recently added to the Union (e.g., Alaska, Arizona, and Hawaii) and therefore have only had one constitution since achieving statehood. Nonetheless, southern states have considerably more constitutions, even if we narrowed the comparison to northern states as old as or older than their southern counterparts. Indeed, the highest number of state constitutions in a northern state is five, in Pennsylvania, one of the original thirteen colonies. By comparison, the younger southern state of Louisiana tops them all, with a total of eleven state constitutions.

Not only do southern states typically have a higher number of state constitutions because of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the southern response to northern Republican rule, but their constitutions also tend to be much longer, and this is partly explained by the desire to limit the powers of the state government. That is, southern state constitutions use more words to explicitly constrain the power of elected officials. The median southern state constitution contains 42,100 words, about 60 percent more than in the median northern state constitution (at 26,360 words). At close to 400,000 total words, the Alabama Constitution is an extreme outlier. The Yellowhammer State has the world’s longest constitution in existence today. Perhaps surprisingly, with respect to the median number of amendments, southern states and northern states do not exhibit any notable difference (122 versus 120), but Alabama sticks out again for far exceeding its counterparts with almost 900 changes to its current constitution.

TABLE 2.4 ■ Comparing Southern and Northern State Constitutions

State/Region	Total Constitutions	Length (Words)	Amendments
Alabama	6	388,882	892
Arkansas	5	65,700	102
Florida	6	43,514	122
Georgia	10	42,100	75
Louisiana	11	73,224	184
Mississippi	4	26,229	126
North Carolina	3	17,177	32
South Carolina	7	27,421	500
Tennessee	3	13,960	43
Texas	5	86,936	491
Virginia	6	21,899	49
South	Average = 6	Median = 42,100	Median = 122
North	Average = 2	Median = 26,360	Median = 120

Source: Data are from the Council of State Government's *2016 Book of the States* (<http://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/content/book-states-2016-chapter-1-state-constitutions-0>).

Table 2.5 shows the date each southern state approved the Fourteenth Amendment, the date of readmission to the Union, and the rank order of readmission (a lower number means an earlier readmission date). Tennessee, the only state to escape military Reconstruction, was readmitted almost two years before the next state (Arkansas) rejoined the Union. Perhaps not surprisingly, because of its outright defiance of the Reconstruction Acts, Georgia was actually readmitted twice; by the time of its second readmission, it was the last southern state to reenter the Union. With their readmission to the United States, the southern congressional delegation was once again seated as full-fledged voting members. Curiously though, despite their readmission, military Reconstruction was not lifted. Perhaps the fear of an impending Democratic majority, led by an increasingly unified southern Democracy, compelled northern Republicans to continue their martial oversight of Dixie, but as time passed it became evident that a Republican advantage was fast deteriorating. Further, the North grew weary and disenchanted of their investment in overseeing the South's public affairs. And soon, a presidential election would provide the opening to end the nation's boldest social experiment.

TABLE 2.5 ■ Approval of Fourteenth Amendment and Readmission to United States

State	Fourteenth Amendment	Readmission Date	Order of Readmission
Alabama	July 13, 1868	July 13, 1868	6
Arkansas	April 6, 1868	June 22, 1868	2
Florida	June 9, 1868	June 25, 1868	3
Georgia	July 21, 1868	July 15, 1870	10
Louisiana	July 9, 1868	July 9, 1868	5 (same as SC)
Mississippi	January 17, 1870	February 23, 1870	8
North Carolina	July 4, 1868	July 4, 1868	4
South Carolina	July 9, 1868	July 9, 1868	5 (same as LA)
Tennessee	July 19, 1866	July 24, 1866	1
Texas	February 18, 1870	March 30, 1870	9
Virginia	October 8, 1869	January 26, 1870	7

Sources: Fourteenth Amendment approval dates were retrieved from www.14thamendment.us/amendment/14th_amendment.html. Readmission dates were retrieved from www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0194016.html.

Notes: The Fourteenth Amendment was ratified on July 9, 1868, after 28 of the 37 states approved it. Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia approved the amendment after it became law. The readmission date denotes the time of restoration of representation in the U.S. Congress. The second date for Georgia's readmission is displayed. Georgia was first readmitted on July 21, 1868, but its representatives were then unseated on March 5, 1869.

THE END OF RECONSTRUCTION

The greatest threat to Republican control of southern politics was the re-enfranchisement of native white southerners who overwhelmingly aligned with the Democratic Party and could not bring themselves to acknowledge the legislated and enforced equality of the races. The sheer size of this population of southerners placed white Republicans in a bind that offered little escape over the long run. As long as the share of “unreconstructed” southern whites participating in elections could be kept at bay, then the coalition of carpetbaggers, blacks, and scalawags would prevail. But southern whites disfranchised by the Reconstruction Acts refused to go away quietly. Between 1868 and 1871, the Ku Klux Klan executed a reign of terror that inflicted unspeakable physical and psychological damage upon targeted African Americans and whites aligned with the Reconstruction program. According to Foner (1988, 425), “the Klan was a military force serving the interests of the Democratic party, the planter class, and all those who desired the

restoration of white supremacy.” By 1872, President Grant’s administration exhibited vigorous intervention and enforcement to finally quell this episode of the most pervasive domestic terrorism in the United States. As the violence tamped down, the road to Redemption, the term used to describe the return of the political system to southern whites opposed to Reconstruction, had become decidedly shorter.

As early as 1871, “only Arkansas among the reconstructed states still retained suffrage restrictions based on Civil War loyalties” (Foner 1988, 347). And a year later, Congress nullified virtually all of the Fourteenth Amendment disabilities serving as the basis for white disfranchisement.⁹ The growing number of southern white Democrats participating in elections eventually overwhelmed Republican control, and where it did not, Republicans found it politically expedient to cut deals with the Democratic opposition as the only way to remain in power. The Democratic Redeemers were forcefully taking back their governments despite the continuing presence of northern Republican oversight of southern affairs. Indeed, as pointed out by Foner (1988, 539),

As 1873 began, however, Republicans enjoyed undisputed control of state government only in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Tennessee, Georgia, and Virginia had been “redeemed,” while in Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, and Texas, Republican governors confronted hostile or divided legislatures.

The 1874 midterm marked a stunning electoral reversal in the House of Representatives. Prior to the election, the Republican majority stood at 68 percent (199 out of 292 seats). After the 1874 contests, Democrats controlled 62 percent of House seats (182 out of 293).¹⁰ More than any other factor, the GOP was punished for holding the reins of power when the economic panic broke out in 1873—an economic downturn that would last through the end of the decade. In the South, for the first time since the end of the Civil War, Democrats constituted a majority of the U.S. House delegation—a position they would hold until 1994. Despite the resounding Democratic victory in the 1874 House elections, in 1875 large-scale violence erupted in the Deep South states of Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Democrats perpetrated vicious attacks on blacks and white Republicans who were bold enough to show up at the polling place.¹¹ And if intimidation failed to keep Republicans from the polls, then Democrats were satisfied with stuffing the ballot box in their favor. Mississippi fell to the Redeemers in 1875, mainly because of Democratic violence and electoral fraud that the Grant administration refused to counter (Foner 1988). Despite the rampant undermining of the democratic process in Louisiana and South Carolina, these states did not succumb to Democratic control—a result that would materialize one year later.

Although Reconstruction had, for all political intents and purposes, run its course in most southern states by the mid-1870s, the presidential election of 1876, and its politically motivated resolution in 1877, sounded its official death knell. Republicans

nominated Rutherford Hayes and Democrats chose Samuel Tilden. The major parties monopolized the Electoral College, and the official outcome was 185 votes for Hayes versus 184 for Tilden. Out of more than eight million Democratic and Republican presidential ballots, the popular vote favored Tilden by a 252,666 margin, only adding to the controversy engulfing the contest. A dearth of honest election administration in numerous southern localities cast considerable doubt as to who really won. Specifically, along with Oregon, the electoral results in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina were in dispute. To win the White House, Hayes would need to prevail in all four states. Given the closeness of the race, a commission was formed in February of 1877 and its job was to finally decide the victor. In the interim between Election Day and the final decision rendered by the commission, a deal was struck. In exchange for ending what remained of Reconstruction in the South, southern Democrats were agreeable to the Republican Hayes winning the presidency. Hence, the commission awarded the electoral votes of Florida, Louisiana, Oregon, and South Carolina to Hayes, which resulted in his one-vote margin Electoral College victory.

AN UNSTABLE INTERLUDE

There are two widely held myths surrounding the period following the end of Reconstruction. First, that once the northern occupation of the South ended as a result of the 1877 compromise, the Jim Crow system of racial segregation immediately took hold. Second, and closely tied to the first myth, that Jim Crow was a southern invention. In *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (2002), C. Vann Woodward busted both of these myths. On the first point, it took decades for the Democratic Redeemers to implement the elaborate set of laws that disfranchised African Americans. On the second, Jim Crow originated in the North, not in the South. With the exception of the border states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri, northern abolition of slavery was nearly absolute twenty years before the Civil War. Although they were generally free to choose their occupation in the marketplace, in most northern states African Americans were denied suffrage, and in various settings their movements were restricted by ordinances enforcing racial segregation.¹²

The return of southern state governments to the hands of white Democrats did not guarantee Democratic hegemony and certainly not into perpetuity—a condition desired by the recently reinstated native white elites who generally resided in the black belt. For this best possible political scenario to be realized, it became clear that blacks would have to be disfranchised because their overwhelming preference for the GOP undermined Democratic rule. The continuing presence of the black vote was an obvious affront to the establishment of a white supremacist southern Democracy. Further, the black vote was often pivotal—holding the balance of power between Republicans and Democrats. White Republicans also had to consider the complicated presence of black voters. African Americans naturally aligned with the Republican Party, but some GOP leaders actually sought the support of white

Democrats if they believed such a coalition was possible while still allowing the GOP to retain the upper hand. But this sort of alienation of the black vote could backfire, with African Americans actually shifting their support to white Democrats if they were promised a better deal. If, instead, white Republicans cultivated the black vote—the most common strategy—it typically resulted in wholesale rejection of support from white Democrats, who refused to enter such a coalition. If the black vote was necessary to control offices, then white Democrats might seek it through persuasive promises or blatant ballot fraud.

In short, the large presence of African American voters injected instability into southern electoral politics. For the GOP, black voters contributed to the party's political viability. For Democrats, black voters made the dream of a one-party Solid South unattainable. With the close of Reconstruction, southern Democrats busied themselves with shaping a political system that would ultimately revoke black suffrage and, thereafter, lead to an easy victory over the smaller segment of white Republicans. Such a plan was certainly not preordained nor a foregone conclusion. As Woodward (2002) argued, the success of Jim Crow was decades in the making and events could have led to alternative political outcomes, especially if the North had instead chosen to intervene in southern affairs as opposed to turning its back on the wanton undermining of black civil rights.

As late as 1898, South Carolina had yet to succumb to the complete separation of the races in all customs and places of public accommodation. The Charleston *News and Courier* editor made a mockery of the notion that Jim Crow would someday overwhelm all aspects of race relations, by penning the following (presumed) far-fetched scenario:

If there must be Jim Crow cars on the railroads, there should be Jim Crow cars on the street railways. Also on all passenger boats. . . . If there are to be Jim Crow cars, moreover, there should be Jim Crow waiting saloons at all stations, and Jim Crow eating houses. . . . There should be Jim Crow sections of the jury box, and a separate Jim Crow dock and witness stand in every court—and a Jim Crow Bible for colored witnesses to kiss. It would be advisable to also have a Jim Crow section in county auditors' and treasurers' offices for the accommodation of colored taxpayers. The two races are dreadfully mixed in these offices for weeks every year, especially about Christmas. . . . There should be a Jim Crow department for making returns and paying for the privileges and blessings of citizenship. Perhaps, the best plan would be, after all, to take the short cut to the general end . . . by establishing two or three Jim Crow counties at once, and turning them over to our colored citizens for their special and exclusive accommodation. (Woodward 2002, 68)

But as Woodward pointed out, almost the entirety of the editor's intended elaborate hyperbole came to fruition.

In resorting to the tactics of *reductio ad absurdum* the editor doubtless believed that he had dealt the Jim Crow principle a telling blow with his heavy irony. But there is now apparent to us an irony in his argument of which the author was unconscious . . . Apart from the Jim Crow counties and Jim Crow witness stand, all the improbable applications of the principle suggested by the editor in derision had been put into practice—down to and including the Jim Crow Bible. (Woodward 2002, 68–69)

POPULIST THREAT AND ITS REMOVAL

In the 1890s, when Democrats had made considerable progress in legislating into existence a Jim Crow South, another threat emerged. Starting with farmers in east Texas and soon spreading throughout various sections of Dixie and across the Midwest and western United States, an agrarian movement took hold and threatened redistribution and economic relief for indebtedness exacerbated by the financial panic of 1893. In its most successful political form, the unrest of organized farmers manifested itself in the Populist Party. The Populist movement or, as a leading scholar of the phenomenon fittingly labeled it, *The Populist Moment* (Goodwyn 1978), did not have staying power but it was the last significant obstacle to the construction of a one-party Democratic Solid South.

Similar to the ruling class predating Reconstruction and the one emerging after its conclusion, the southern political hierarchy resembled a pyramid in which only those situated within the narrower top (the “haves”) controlled the vast mass of blacks and whites residing within the broader base (the “have-nots”). Populism, if it were to take hold, could prove the greatest threat to Democratic hegemony, particularly where its adherents were willing to form biracial coalitions. The unification of impoverished black and white farmers and laborers could easily overwhelm the core of southern Democratic adherents consisting primarily of planters, merchants, businessmen, and other professionals (e.g., doctors and lawyers). Indeed, nothing would upend Democratic rule faster and more resoundingly than the embrace of poor blacks and whites organizing under a single party label. This worst-case scenario never materialized because most African Americans and a smaller number of whites continued to seek representation from the GOP. Nonetheless, the influence of Populism was great enough to bring about fusion tickets, particularly when southern Republicans and Populists would unite behind a single candidate.

Nationally, in the 51st Congress (1889–1891) only Democrats and Republicans populated the Senate, whereas the House of Representatives contained only one member not affiliated with the Democratic or Republican parties—a Labor Party adherent. From the 52nd Congress (1891–1893) to the 57th Congress (1901–1903), a total of 60 members who ran under the Populist Party label served in the House of Representatives while 21 served in the Senate. By the 58th Congress (1903–1905) not a single Populist remained.¹³

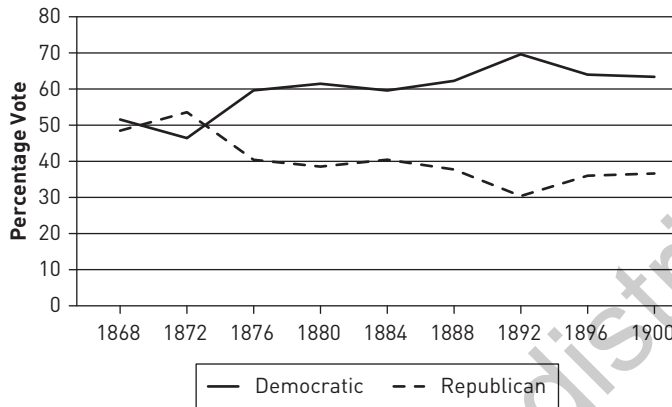
The Populist intervention peaked in 1896 when a true believer, William Jennings Bryan, managed to secure the Democratic presidential nomination (Bensel 2008). His opponent for the open presidential contest was Republican William McKinley. Bryan sought to assemble a majority coalition consisting of the working class from northeastern cities and farmers from the Midwest, West, and South. With a severely diminished Republican presidential presence in the South, Bryan swept Dixie's electoral votes and those of the interior West. But the workers of the more populous Northeast and parts of the upper Midwest did not unite behind Bryan; rather, these most vote-rich sections coalesced in favor of McKinley, delivering him the White House and in the process delivering a mortal blow to the farmers' movement.

The 1896 popular presidential vote was competitive: 51 percent for McKinley and 47 percent for Bryan (out of 13,622,945 Democratic and Republican votes). The Electoral College vote was not: 61 percent for McKinley (271 votes) and 39 percent for Bryan (176 votes). Some scholars (e.g., Burnham 1970) have interpreted the 1896 contest as a critical election because it solidified the partisan divide between the North and South, strengthening Republican loyalties in the former region and further steeling Democratic fealty in the South. The irony is that most southern Democrats did not welcome the populist agenda of William Jennings Bryan; it was as though he hijacked the Democratic presidential ticket because, at least in Dixie, the Democratic Party was actively involved in extinguishing the Populist Party. So, despite the fact that the 1896 presidential election polarized the partisan divide between the North and South, within the South, 1896 marked the apex of Populism, a height from which it would quickly topple.

In the 1896 gubernatorial election in Texas, the birthplace of southern Populism, "the Populist candidate for governor in that year polled the highest vote of any candidate in the party's history, 44.2 per cent of the total" (Key 1949, 534). And seventeen third-party candidates who aligned with the Populist movement won southern U.S. House elections. But just four years later, southern Populism, especially in the form of a party label for contesting elections, was swiftly passing from the scene. For instance, in 1900, the southern U.S. House delegation contained zero members espousing the Populist Party label. Its ninety-two members included four Republicans and eighty-eight Democrats. To be sure, at the turn of the twentieth century, southern Populism was not wholly moribund because many sympathetic to its principles simply ran as Democrats. Additionally, the Democratic Party coopted the Populist agenda in those parts of the South where the movement's ideas remained popular.

SUMMARY OF A MOST POLITICALLY VOLATILE PERIOD

This section summarizes (primarily in graphical form) the general patterns of electoral change taking place in the South from 1868 to 1900. The purpose of this review is to show the movement from a brief Republican-advantaged period to the eventual realization of a Solid South under nearly complete Democratic control. Figure 2.3

FIGURE 2.3 ■ Popular Presidential Vote in the South, 1868–1900

Source: Data compiled by the author from Dave Leip's *Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections* (<http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/>).

tracks the popular presidential vote (two-party) in the South from 1868 to 1900. Interestingly, the popular vote slightly favored the Democratic Party in 1868, in the midst of Reconstruction. Only in 1872 does the GOP win the southern presidential vote. After 1872, the difference in support of the major parties considerably widens and Democratic ascendancy becomes readily apparent. For the last four contests (1888–1900) the Democratic share of the popular presidential vote is above 60 percent and just under 70 percent in 1892.

Table 2.6 presents presidential election data based on the votes cast in the Electoral College (EC). The picture looks very different from the popular vote, strongly favoring the GOP in the South in 1868 and 1872, awarding Grant 72 and 62 percent of the EC vote in these respective contests. In 1876, the last Reconstruction election, Democratic strength is on full display—even with the EC votes of Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina going to Hayes—80 percent of the southern EC votes are won by Tilden. After 1876, Dixie assumes its status as a Democratic bastion in southern presidential elections, granting all of its EC votes to the Democratic nominee from 1880 through 1900. The solidarity of the southern Democratic presidential vote contributes to an increasingly competitive national scene as Cleveland wins in two of his three consecutive runs for the White House.

Table 2.7 tracks the presence of Populists in southern state legislatures between 1890 and 1900. In state legislatures, Populism is completely absent in 1890, but then it shows up two years later in six southern states. Alabama, in particular, experienced a notable uptick in Populist lawmakers that would gradually fade by 1900. Interestingly, in the most race-conscious states, Mississippi and South Carolina (which had the highest percentage of black residents), not one Populist served in the state legislature. Populists were most successful in North Carolina, where briefly

TABLE 2.6 ■ Electoral College Votes in the South, 1868–1900

Election	Democrat	Republican	Dem % (Votes)	Winner
1868	H. Seymour	U. Grant	28 (57)	Republican
1872	H. Greeley	U. Grant	38 (81)	Republican
1876	S. Tilden	R. Hayes	80 (95)	Republican
1880	W. Hancock	J. Garfield	100 (95)	Republican
1884	G. Cleveland	J. Blaine	100 (107)	Democrat
1888	G. Cleveland	B. Harrison	100 (107)	Republican
1892	G. Cleveland	B. Harrison	100 (112)	Democrat
1896	W. Bryan	W. McKinley	100 (112)	Republican
1900	W. Bryan	W. McKinley	100 (112)	Republican

Source: Data compiled by the author from Dave Leip's *Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections* (<http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/>).

TABLE 2.7 ■ Populists in Southern State Legislatures, 1890–1900

State	1890	1892	1894	1896	1898	1900
Alabama	0 0	21 38	24 34	27 23	15 10	3 6
Arkansas	0 0	6 9	3 9	3 13	0 0	0 1
Florida	0 0	0 0	3 0	3 0	0 0	0 0
Georgia	0 0	2 6	11 27	14 17	0 3	0 5
Louisiana	0 0	0 0	0 0	3 14	0 0	0 0
Mississippi	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
North Carolina	0 0	6 8	48 30	48 29	20 22	6 2
South Carolina	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
Tennessee	0 0	3 5	9 7	0 4	0 0	0 0
Texas	0 0	3 6	6 17	6 5	0 7	0 1
Virginia	0 0	0 0	0 12	3 0	0 0	0 0

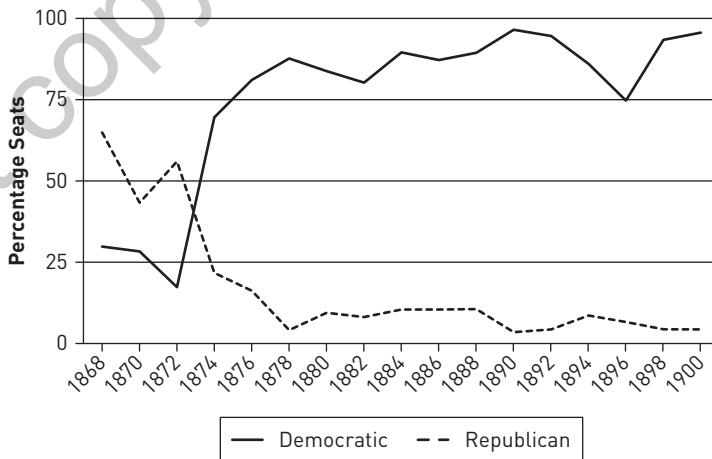
Source: Data compiled by the author from Dubin (2007).

Notes: Entries show the percentage of the state senate and state house, respectively (and separated by a vertical line), that consists of Populist legislators. For instance, in 1894 in Alabama, Populists were 24 percent of the state senate and 34 percent of the state house [24 | 34]. For most states, the data correspond on the even year at two-year intervals, but this is not true for Louisiana (even years spaced out by four-year intervals), Mississippi (odd years spaced out by two- and then four-year intervals), and Virginia (odd years spaced out by two-year intervals). The data for Mississippi and Virginia match the odd year that precedes the even year in these states (e.g., 1897 corresponds with 1896). In Louisiana, 1896 was an even year with recorded data, and there were no Populists recorded before (in 1888 and 1892) and after this year (in 1900).

they fused with Republicans to gain control of the legislature and the governorship. In 1894 and 1896, Populists were a strong plurality of the North Carolina Senate (48 percent in both years). Indeed, so successful was the coalition of Populists and Republicans in North Carolina that Democrats halted their brief reign by executing a violent reprisal. Most notorious was the 1898 Wilmington race riot, in which white Democrats used deadly force to wrest political power from local black Republicans (Cecelski and Tyson 1998; Woodward 2002).

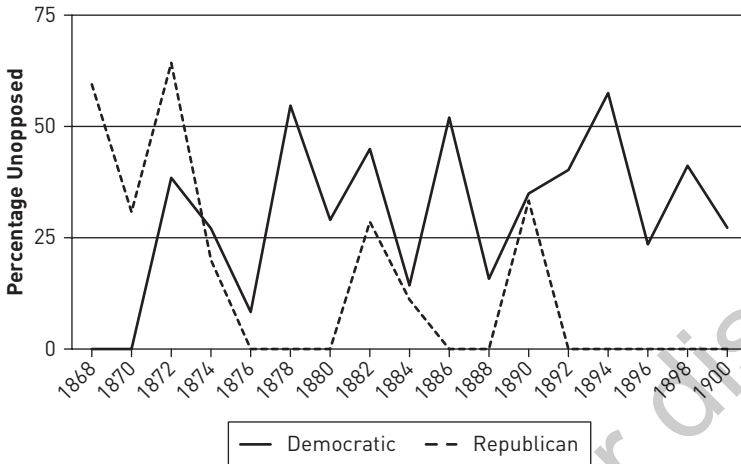
Figure 2.4 shows the percentage of U.S. House seats held by Democrats and Republicans out of the entire southern congressional delegation. The benefit of examining data on the House of Representatives is that the entire body faces an election every two years, which provides a sensitive barometer for assessing political change. Unlike the House, not only were Senators not popularly elected until 1913 (Seventeenth Amendment), the much smaller number of Senators and their longer terms (six years) results in a poor gauge of electoral dynamics. The Republican advantage in southern House elections is evident during most of the Reconstruction period (1868–1872). Nonetheless, even in these years Republicans did not dominate the southern delegation. Between 1872 and 1874, the Democratic seat share vaulted from 17 to almost 70 percent. After 1872, the Republican presence in southern House elections exhibits a pronounced decline until around 1878, when thereafter the GOP is no longer a viable opposition to the Democratic Party. Southern Democrats gradually build upon their impressive 1874 performance until the 1896 elections, when Populist candidates put a dent in Democratic hegemony, dropping their seat share below 80 percent for

FIGURE 2.4 ■ Southern U.S. House Seats Controlled by the Major Parties, 1868–1900



Source: Data compiled by the author from CQ Press (2005).

Note: The percentage of Democratic and Republican seats is out of the total southern U.S. House seats.

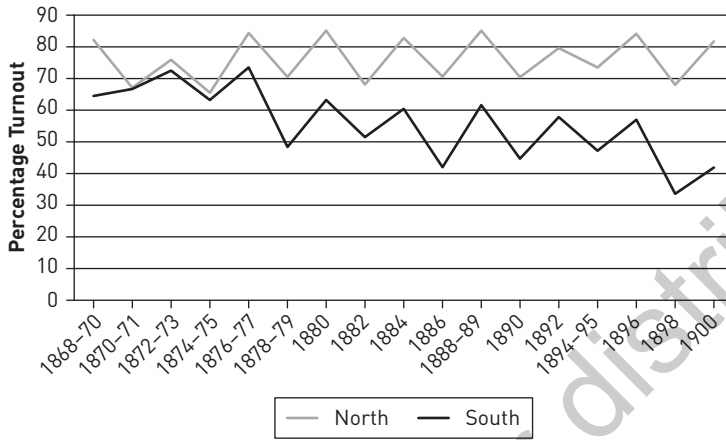
FIGURE 2.5 ■ **Unopposed Southern U.S. House Seats, 1868–1900**

Source: Data compiled by the author from CQ Press (2005).

the first time since 1874. The Democratic rebound is substantial in 1898 (93 percent) and reaches more than 95 percent in 1900, signaling the advent of a Solid South.

Figure 2.5 presents another way to assess electoral competition, by displaying the percentage of unopposed southern House seats held by the major parties. *Unopposed* is defined as the absence of a major party opponent (Democrat or Republican) in the general election. Bear in mind that the GOP holds a small number of southern House seats after 1876 (typically less than 10 percent), and thus the percentage of unopposed GOP seats is out of a modest total. The jagged pattern of unopposed seats closely tracks on-year (presidential) and off-year (midterm) elections, with midterms generally translating into more unopposed races. During the first three Reconstruction-era elections (1868 to 1872), Republicans were the beneficiaries of a higher percentage of unopposed contests. But after 1872, Democrats always possess a higher percentage of races without an opponent, and this is true even though Democrats hold the lion's share of House seats. From 1892 to 1900, all of the southern Republican House seats are contested.

Figure 2.6 concludes this section with a comparative examination of participation in House elections. Specifically, the turnout percentage in northern and southern House elections is tracked from 1868 to 1900. The turnout rate is a particularly important indicator of the health of electoral competition because it is generally higher when the major parties are more competitive. Similar to Figure 2.5, the zigzag pattern closely follows presidential and midterm years and unsurprisingly, turnout is higher in presidential years. In 1868–1870, turnout is higher in northern House races, but from 1870 to 1875 the regional gap is negligible. With the end of Reconstruction

FIGURE 2.6 ■ U.S. House Turnout in the North and South, 1868–1900

Source: Data compiled by the author from Burnham (2010).

in 1876–1877, a clear pattern emerges, with the northern turnout rate maintaining a steady level in the 70 and 80 percentiles, whereas the southern turnout rate embarks on a gradual and substantial descent. In 1900, the North-South gap (39.8 percentage points) in House turnout reached its widest for the entire span of elections. This gap would become even more pronounced in the coming years as the southern Democracy essentially locked down its one-party system. Hence, the notable decline in southern House turnout is strongly reflective of Democratic dominance—the dearth of two-party competition translates into a reduction in participation.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Congressional Reconstruction in the South was a truly radical social, economic, and political undertaking. It is remarkable to comprehend the revolutionary changes affecting southern blacks, almost all of whom were slaves before their freedom was secured by the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865. And thanks to vigorous enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, for a brief period African Americans were not only exercising the franchise but also winning elective offices in state and federal contests. This progress was all the more impressive because in “1868, only eight Northern states allowed blacks to vote” (Foner 1988, 448). For a short time it did, indeed, appear as though the bottom rail had ascended to the top. But even as Reconstruction began, “a North Carolina Democrat” proved prescient: “When the bayonets shall depart . . . then look out for the reaction. Then the bottom rail will descend from the top of the fence” (Foner 1988, 588).

Reconstruction was doomed from within and from without. Internally, southern Democrats had no intentions of going away quietly and taking a backseat to a biracial Republican coalition of blacks, carpetbaggers, and scalawags. Southern Democrats' rapid re-enfranchisement—as a consequence of generally accommodating, newly written state constitutions—directly undermined the desire of northern Republicans to maintain a southern party system controlled by the GOP. If sheer numbers in the political arena were not enough to defeat Republicans, then extra-constitutional means were generously employed, especially violence and election fraud. From without, the North tired of enforcing the Reconstruction Acts and exercising martial law to quell disturbances. Over time, legal enforcement became less and less forthcoming, and by the time of President Grant's second term, the Republican North had become more interested in its own problems, particularly labor strife (Foner 1988).

With the end of Reconstruction secured by the bargain struck in 1877, the Redeemers busied themselves with the monumental task of locking down the political system in favor of a one-party Democratic Solid South. As discussed, it took more than two decades to remove black voters from the electorate and relegate them, in almost every way, to a second-class citizenship (Woodward 2002). And just as things appeared increasingly promising for the Redeemers and their allies, in the mid-1890s the Populist movement briefly derailed the advancement of Democratic hegemony. Because of their lengthy experience countering Republican power, southern Democrats were prepared in their response to the Populist threat and resorted to the same playbook for neutralizing the farmers' revolt: a heavy dose of intimidation, violence, and election fraud and sometimes even social ostracism (Key 1949, 553). The particulars of ushering in a Solid South will be covered at greater length in the next chapter.