Race, Trade, and the Demise of Southern Support for Multilateralism, 1945-62

Abstract

Through the 1940s, Southern members of Congress strongly supported multilateralism in U.S. foreign policy, nearly unanimously backing the United Nations and other multilateral initiatives. By the end of the 1950s, though, many of them had turned against this institutional form. This shift bolstered domestic opposition to multilateralism, with lasting consequences for both U.S. foreign policy and world order. This paper assesses two complementary explanations for the change. First, changes in the region's economy made multilateral cooperation less valuable. Export-oriented agriculture, especially cotton, became less important. Labor-intensive industries, especially textiles and apparel, became more sensitive to international competition. Second, multilateral rules on human rights increasingly threatened Southern racial hierarchy. White supremacy provided material benefits to white elites through voter suppression, legal impunity, and labor-repressive agriculture that were much like those they derived from trade protection or access to foreign markets. Integrating the two explanations strengthens them both.

Benjamin O. Fordham
Department of Political Science
Binghamton University (SUNY)

Multilateralism plays an important but equivocal role in American foreign policy. John Ruggie defines the term as "an institutional form which coordinates relations among three or more states on the basis of 'generalized' principles of conduct."[1] The key feature of multilateral rules is that while they may implicitly advantage some states, they bind all parties to them. Many scholars and policymakers argue that multilateral rules are among the most important ways the United States has exercised influence since World War II, setting up a system that institutionalizes key American priorities.[2] Nevertheless, the United States has refused to accept many multilateral rules--including some that Americans pioneered--and has backed out of some important multilateral agreements that it initially supported. U.S. ambivalence arises from domestic political division. Support for multilateralism reflects a specific kind of internationalism, one focused on rules-based cooperation rather than the exercise of unilateral power. American politics includes both powerful advocates of multilateralism and powerful skeptics. Neither faction is unambiguously dominant.

The strength of domestic opposition to multilateralism in the United States is thus important for both United States foreign policy and international order. A substantial faction of Republicans had been skeptical of multilateralism since the early 20th Century but was unable to block the major multilateral initiatives of the 1940s, including the creation of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).[3] Opposition to multilateralism became more potent when Southern Democrats began to join it in the 1950s. Working with conservative Republicans, they were able to prevent American participation in multilateral initiatives ranging from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to the International Criminal Court. The alliance between these two factions, which deepened as Southern conservatives gradually moved from the Democratic to the Republican Party, is largely responsible for the peculiar fact that while the international order that United States

[1] Ruggie 1992, 571.

[2] See, for example, Ikenberry 2012.

[3] Fordham and Flynn 2023.

policymakers have promoted since World War II may be "rules-based," the United States formally rejects many of the rules that constitute it.

The Southern turn against multilateralism is puzzling. During the first half of the 20th Century, Southerners were among the leading advocates of ordering the international system through multilateral rules. The efforts of Woodrow Wilson, a Virginia native, to establish the League of Nations is perhaps the most famous example. Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, a former Senator from Tennessee, was more successful, receiving the 1945 Nobel Peace Prize for his role in establishing the United Nations. Southern members of Congress nearly unanimously supported the creation of both these international organizations. Alfred Hero's extensive examination of newspaper editorials and public opinion polls from the early postwar era shows that the broader public in the South generally took the same position.[4] Things began to change during the 1950s. Southern skepticism of human rights agreements is well known but, as we shall see, it extended to nearly all multilateral rules.[5] Hero found that the move away from multilateralism eventually included Southern newspapers and civic organizations by the late 1950s, spreading to public opinion in the region during the early 1960s.[6] The change was widely discussed at the time but has received less attention in recent years.[7] Previous research suggests several possible explanations but has not fully developed or systematically tested them.

Explaining this development is important for theoretical as well as historical reasons. Like other shifts in the positions political factions take on foreign policy, it is a window onto the forces that shape different conceptions of the national interest. Borrowing from the open economy politics research program, many accounts of political conflict over foreign policy have focused on changing exposure to the international economy.[8] This process played a role in changing Southern foreign policy positions.

---

[4] Hero 1965, 223-32; see also Lerche 1964, 28-29.

[5] On human rights agreements, see Brucken 2013; Kaufman 1990; and Moravcsik 2005.

[6] Hero 1965, 232-43.

[7] Contemporary commentary includes Hero 1965, Lerche 1964, Seabury 1957, and Smith 1965.

[8] For reviews of the open-economy politics approach, see Lake 2009 and Oatley 2011. Applications to the politics of United States foreign policy include Broz 2008; 2011; Milner and Tingley 2013; 2016; Trubowitz 1998; Fordham 1998; 2019.

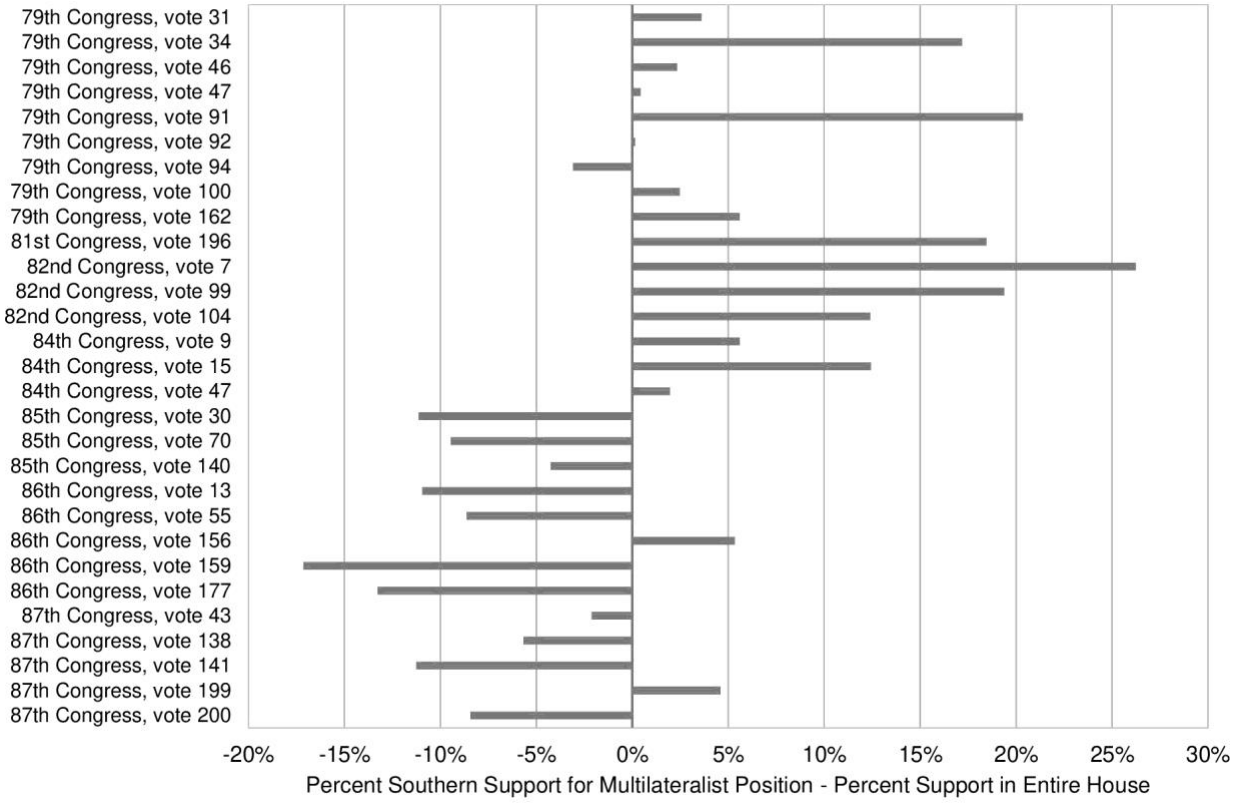
However, Southern concerns about racial hierarchy also made a difference and must be integrated with these economic considerations. Depending on how one understands the effects of racial hierarchy, they might appear to fit awkwardly into a political economy model. On closer examination, though, they rest on nearly identical causal mechanisms. Research on the political economy of foreign policy can and should incorporate interests rooted in racial and other social hierarchies alongside more conventional economic concerns.

Changing Southern Positions on Multilateralism

Roll-call votes in the House of Representatives reflect the changing Southern position on multilateralism. There were 29 of these votes on measures concerning membership, participation, and financial support for a range of multilateral organizations between the 79th and 87th Congresses, which met between 1945 and 1962.[9] Figure 1 depicts the difference between the proportion of Southern members supporting multilateralism on each roll call and the proportion of the whole House taking this position. Bars to the right of center thus indicate greater support among Southerners than in the House as a whole, while bars to the left indicate less support. Through the 84th Congress, which met in 1955 and 1956, Southern members were nearly always more supportive of multilateralism than the House as a whole. Beginning with the 85th Congress, this pattern was reversed, with Southerners nearly always less supportive of multilateralism. This pattern is especially striking in view of the stability in the positions of other major political factions. Republicans lagged the House as a whole in their support for multilateralism on all 29 roll calls, while non-Southern Democrats were always more favorable. As a group, only the Southerners changed.

[9] The appendix provides information on each roll call. Data are from the Voteview project (Lewis, et al. 2021).

Figure 1.
Southern Support for Multilateralism Compared to Entire House, 1945-62



Perhaps because of the intensity of more recent Southern opposition to multilateralism, some scholars question the sincerity of Southern support before the 1950s. While acknowledging Southern backing of the League of Nations, the World Court, and the United Nations, Joseph Fry argues that "these actions did not reflect an abstract understanding of and dedication to internationalism."[10] Similarly, Alexander DeConde argues that apparent Southern internationalism in the years before World War II "reflected special ethnic, cultural, economic, and political conditions that prevailed among its people" and was bound to disappear once these conditions changed. "The seeds of isolationism were always embedded in Southern soil."[11]

[10] Fry 2002, 220. Fry regards the change in the Southern position during the Cold War as evidence of the "absence, or at least relative weakness of a genuine southern commitment to internationalism…" (221).

[11] DeConde 1958, 333; 346. See also Herring and Hess 1981.

Specific historical conditions undoubtedly influenced Southern positions on foreign policy, as they always do, but it is hard to doubt Southern commitment to multilateralism through World War II. Southern political leaders were not merely going along with a policy formulated by others. The South provided many of the architects of the postwar multilateral order. These included not only Secretary of State Cordell Hull, but also other less famous policymakers such as William Clayton and members of Congress such as the longtime chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Tom Connally (D-TX), and the chair of House Committee on Currency and Banking, Brent Spence (D-KY). Connally served as vice chair of to the 1945 San Francisco conference that finalized the UN Charter. Spence was a delegate at the 1944 Bretton Woods conference that designed the IMF and the World Bank. Southern enthusiasm for multilateral institutions was evident in the floor debates surrounding the 1945 roll-call votes on legislation to participate in these organizations. Support for the United Nations in 1945 extended even to the most virulently racist Southern members of Congress such as Rep. John Rankin (D-MS), who dismissed Republican concerns about American sovereignty. "This United Nations Organization which is coming to America--they say it is coming here--is not going to have the power of a super government, as some people fear. Congress will see to that. It cannot expend the moneys of this country, or use the armies of this Nation, without the Congress of the United States voting both the authority and the appropriation; nor can it exercise power over the internal affairs of this country."[12] No Southerner spoke against either the UN or the IMF in these 1945 debates.[13]

When Southern opposition to multilateralism first emerged, it was less rhetorically aggressive than that of conservative Republicans, who had held the position much longer. A 1960 debate on establishing a commission of private citizens from members

---

[12] *Congressional Record*, 16 December 1945, p. 12283. Rankin's support for the UN was short-lived. In March of 1948 he introduced a bill to withdraw the United States from the organization, apparently in reaction to Eleanor Roosevelt's work on human rights there, which he characterized as a "drive to prejudice the other nations of the earth against the white people of the South." *Congressional Record,* 15 March 1948, p. 2846.

[13] No Southern Democrat or representative of a former Confederate state voted against the UN or the IMF on the three roll calls the took place during in these debates (79th Congress, votes 46, 47, and 100). A few Republicans from border states did, however.

of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to promote greater cooperation within the alliance illustrates the difference. The commission had no authority to bind the United States and involved only cooperation with close American allies. As the internationalist Republican Walter Judd (R-MN) put it, "I cannot see how anybody can find any danger in this proposal to appoint 20 distinguished, public-minded, public-spirited citizens of the United States to sit down with 80 citizens of other NATO countries to study our relations with the other countries of the NATO area in terms of the present world situation."[14]

In spite of Judd's incredulity, many of his fellow Republicans did indeed find danger in the commission. They feared it would create political pressure for deeper multilateralism that would threaten American sovereignty. Rep. Clarence Brown (R-OH) noted that one proposed member of the commission favored "some sort of a plan of union now, or an Atlantic Union, or something of that sort, in which there was some question involved as to whether or not the Government of the United States, by joining such a movement, might not surrender some of its sovereignty."[15] Rep. Clare Hoffman (R-MI) added that the commission "was but another enlargement of what since 1942 and perhaps before has been an ever-growing and continuing effort to give away parts of our national sovereignty."[16] Arguing that the commission would amount to a government-funded lobby, Rep. Edwin Thomson (R-WY) wondered aloud "if there are going to be some recommendations for more economic cooperation whereby this country opens further its trade doors and other countries shut theirs to us. I wonder which one of these NATO countries it is that needs this economic help I heard mentioned."[17]

Southern Democrats also spoke out against the commission and were substantially more likely to vote against it than the House as a whole.[18] However, none raised the issues of national sovereignty that Republicans did during the floor debate.

---

[14] *Congressional Record*, 24 August 1960, p. 17509.

[15] *Congressional Record*, 24 August 1960, p. 17489.

[16] *Congressional Record*, 24 August 1960, p. 17490.

[17] *Congressional Record*, 24 August 1960, pp. 17507-8.

[18] The roll call is number 177 in the 86th Congress.

Instead, they charged that the commission was an unnecessary expense. Otto Passman (D-LA), the most vocal Southern Democratic critic, persistently questioned Clement Zablocki (D-WI), one of the managers of the debate, about the likelihood that the commission would "recommend large additional expenditures within the United Nations." He noted that "most of these commissions, as history will reveal, almost without exception have come back and recommended huge additional expenditures."[19] Public opinion in the South had not yet changed, and many senior Southern Democrats still supported multilateralism, giving its emerging Southern opponents little reason to stake out extreme positions or to play to the galleries.

Southern opposition to multilateralism began with concern about specific sets of rules but eventually spread to multilateralism in general. As we shall see, the emerging opposition applied across the wide range of issues and organizations involved in the votes depicted in Figure 1. Republican opponents of multilateralism had earlier followed the same path, opposing the institutional form even when it was used to advance goals they otherwise supported.[20] There are at least two reasons for the comprehensive character of domestic opposition to multilateralism. First, opponents worried that they would be unable to control the interpretation of multilateral rules, however carefully they might be framed. This was at the heart of longstanding Republican concerns about the threat multilateral rules posed to American sovereignty: the nation's ability to have the final say on issues they considered important. Southerners shared this concern, even if they were initially reluctant raise it publicly. Their comments in closed deliberations on the Genocide Convention offer a good example. Senator Walter George (D-GA), a senior member of the Foreign Relations Committee, explained the problem in a September 17, 1951, executive session on whether to report the Convention out of committee. He contended that the Genocide Convention and other UN human rights measures would inevitably challenge domestic law. "And then there is the human rights thing [the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights]. Both of them are filled with subtle and obscure and double meaning things that really aim to attack the

[19] *Congressional Record*, 24 August 1960, pp. 17497.

[20] Fordham and Flynn 2023, 64-5.

constitutional setup that we have under our dual system. I am just against it." In his view, the Genocide Convention would eventually result in the prosecution of Americans--"a Governor of Massachusetts or Georgia"--by an international tribunal.[21]

Second, opponents also worried that even apparently innocuous multilateralism would create domestic and international pressure for more extensive and binding rules. This was the main reason Republicans opposed the citizens commission on the NATO alliance in 1960. For supporters of multilateralism, the expected expansion of the rules was welcome. The Genocide Convention was intended to be the first of a series of human rights treaties negotiated under UN auspices.[22] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights embodied this ambitious agenda, something that especially antagonized Walter George in the closed hearings on the Genocide Convention. "We are just not careful enough, gentlemen, in these treaties, and [the Genocide Convention] is one of those loose treaties that should never have been made, and the only thing you can say about it is that it is just not quite as bad as the other one that they drew up on human rights or the universal bill of rights, or whatever you call the thing." When Senator Brien McMahon (D-CT) disputed George's claim that Americans might be tried for genocide before an international tribunal, George asked "What answer would we have, Senator McMahon, to make to the other countries, who said, 'Now the time has come to set it up, and the United States is the most enlightened nation in the world standing in the way of it.'? You would set it up. You would have to set it up."[23] For George, this potential expansion of multilateral rules overrode the otherwise laudable goal of the Genocide Convention. "Of course it has a good purpose. Lord Heavens, that's where the trouble comes in this world, that you set up a good purpose and everybody is for it, regardless of how you are going to do it."[24] In the end, the committee acceded to George's demands and did not send the Genocide Convention to the Senate floor. It remained unratified until 1986.

---

[21] U.S. Senate 1976b, 381-2.

[22] Concerning the role of the Genocide Convention in the broader planned UN human rights treaties, see Brucken 2013, esp. 171-209; and Kaufman 1990, 37-62.

[23] U.S. Senate 1976b, 381.

[24] U.S. Senate 1976b, 382.

Explaining the Demise of Southern Support for Multilateralism

The fact that so many members changed their position at the same time suggests that broader social and political forces were behind it. The way individual members reacted to these forces remains interesting but must be understood in the context of regional, national, and international processes. Previous research suggests two sources of explanation. The first involves changes in the region's exposure to the global economy. The second, common in recent research on human rights agreements, involves the implications of multilateralism for white supremacy.[25] These two lines of argument are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, on closer examination, the causal mechanisms involved turn out to be fundamentally similar and deeply intertwined.

Multilateralism and Exposure to the Global Economy

Previous research on how exposure to the global economy shapes foreign policy preferences suggests that this consideration probably affected declining Southern support for multilateralism. Many accounts of the change in Southern foreign policy positions, particularly those written around the time it was taking place, also accord some role to economic considerations, though rarely a decisive one.[26] More recent work on the political economy of U.S. foreign policy suggests a greater role. Nationwide, members of Congress representing areas where internationally competitive sectors of the economy predominated were more likely to support key elements of American foreign policy, including those associated with multilateralism.[27] Before World War II, the

[25] Research stressing the role of race in changing Southern views on multilateralism includes Hero 1965, Smith 1965, and Ulin 2016. Research stressing the role of race in generating Congressional opposition to human rights agreements includes Brucken 2013; Kaufman 1990; Moravcsik 2005; and Ruggie 2005. Because it focuses on a different research question than the one considered here, this work does not always distinguish between conservative Republican opposition to these agreements and that of Southern Democrats.

[26] Although Hero 1965, esp. 139-47, concluded that concerns about racial hierarchy were the most important drivers of the change, he noted that a commitment to free trade had long pushed Southern elites in an internationalist direction on many issues, a tendency that weakened in the 1950s. Seabury 1957, 21-4, and Lerche 1964, 319-21, accorded a greater role to economic change, though only part of this concerned exposure to the global economy. The export interests of cotton and tobacco are among what DeConde 1958, 339-40, offers as reasons for the South's superficial internationalism during the interwar period.

[27] See, for example, Broz 2011; Fordham 1998; 2008; Trubowitz 1998.

economic importance of export-oriented agriculture, especially cotton, helps explain Southern support for multilateralism.[28] An effective multilateral order would help keep the peace and facilitate access to markets in developed countries. A close look at changes in the position of the South's leading export, cotton, and its most important manufacturing sector, textiles and apparel, suggests that they may help account for the decline in this support after 1945.

Cotton was the region's most important export crop and had been the central pillar of Southern agriculture since the 19th Century. In 1949, it still accounted for 52% of the total value of all crops harvested in the region.[29] One important Southern Senator told Woodrow Wilson during World War I that it was dangerous "to tell my constituents I can see something else besides cotton."[30] Cotton producers and their representatives in Congress hoped a multilateral system would protect their interests in an open and peaceful international economy. The world wars and the economic crisis of the 1930s had been enormously disruptive to the cotton economy. In the 1945 debate over the IMF, Rep. Paul Brown (D-GA), who represented the largest per capita cotton-producing district in Georgia, noted that "cotton farmers have suffered severely in the past from disorderly currency practices. Exchange depreciation forced down the price of cotton. Exchange controls and clearing agreements kept American cotton out of many countries. We cannot maintain American cotton production and sell our cotton at a fair price without markets in foreign countries."[31]

Several changes in cotton production after World War II might have contributed to declining Southern support for multilateralism. First, cotton became less export dependent. Figure 2 shows the share of the cotton crop exported annually during the century after the Civil War. The dotted line shows a ten-year moving average to give a better sense of the long-term trends. The export share varied between 60 and 70% until World War I. It collapsed during the Great Depression and World War II and only

---

[28] See, for example, Flynn and Fordham 2017; Trubowitz 1998, pp. 96-168.

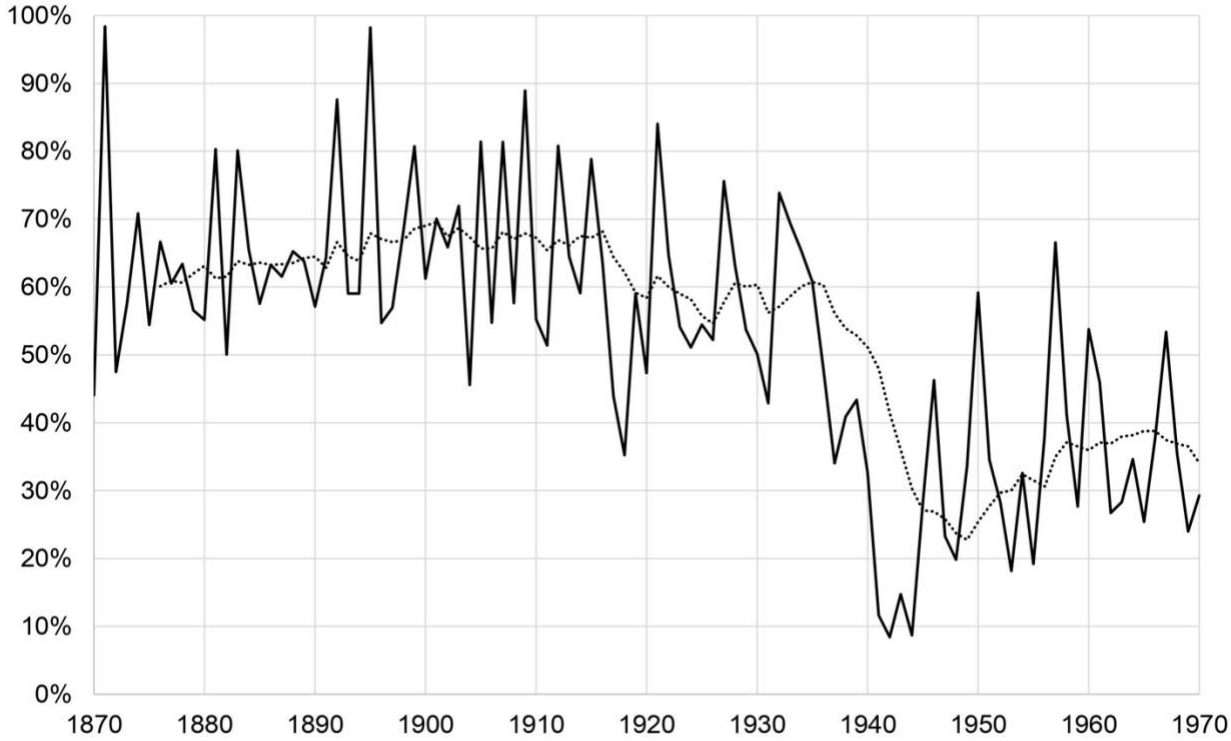
[29] U.S. Department of Agriculture 2021.

[30] Fry 2002, 152.

[31] *Congressional Record*, 5 June 1945, p. 5571. Data on cotton production come from the census statistics cited in the research design section and used in the analysis that follows.

recovered to around half of its pre-Depression level after 1945. Cotton remained an export crop, but less so than it had been before World War II.

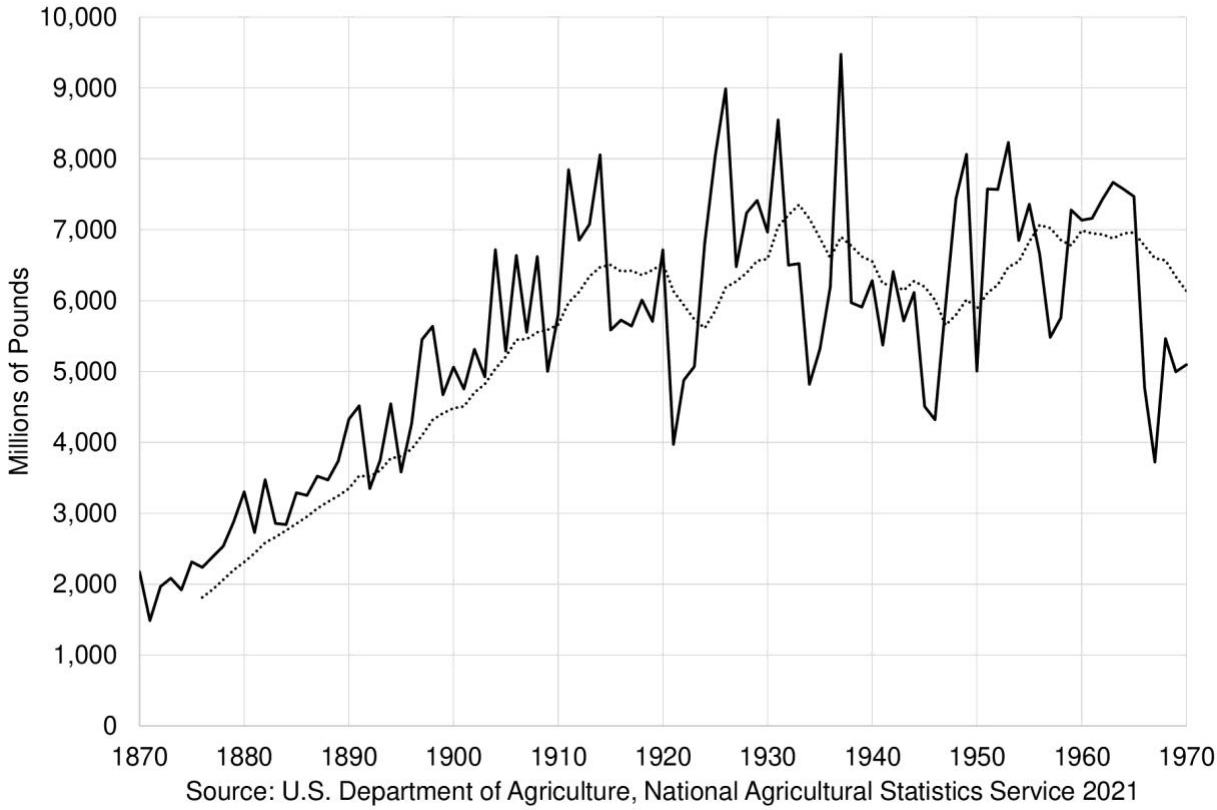
Figure 2.
Percentage of Cotton Crop Exported, 1870-1970



Source: Cotton crop: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service 2021 ; Exports: Carter, et al 2006, series Ee570

As cotton was becoming less export-dependent, its overall role in the Southern economy also declined. Figure 3 shows the size of the annual cotton crop from 1870 though 1970. Through World War I, the cotton harvest grew steadily. An optimistic view of the future centered around cotton production would have made sense in 1914. After the war, however, production leveled off. As late as eve of World War II, cotton producers and their political representatives might have held out hope that growth would resume. After all, the largest cotton harvest occurred in 1937. By the early postwar era, though, it was becoming clear that the old rate of growth in cotton production would not return. Cotton remained important but it was not the expanding sector it had been before 1914. It was now politically safer to "see something else besides cotton."

Figure 3.
U.S. Cotton Production, 1870-1970



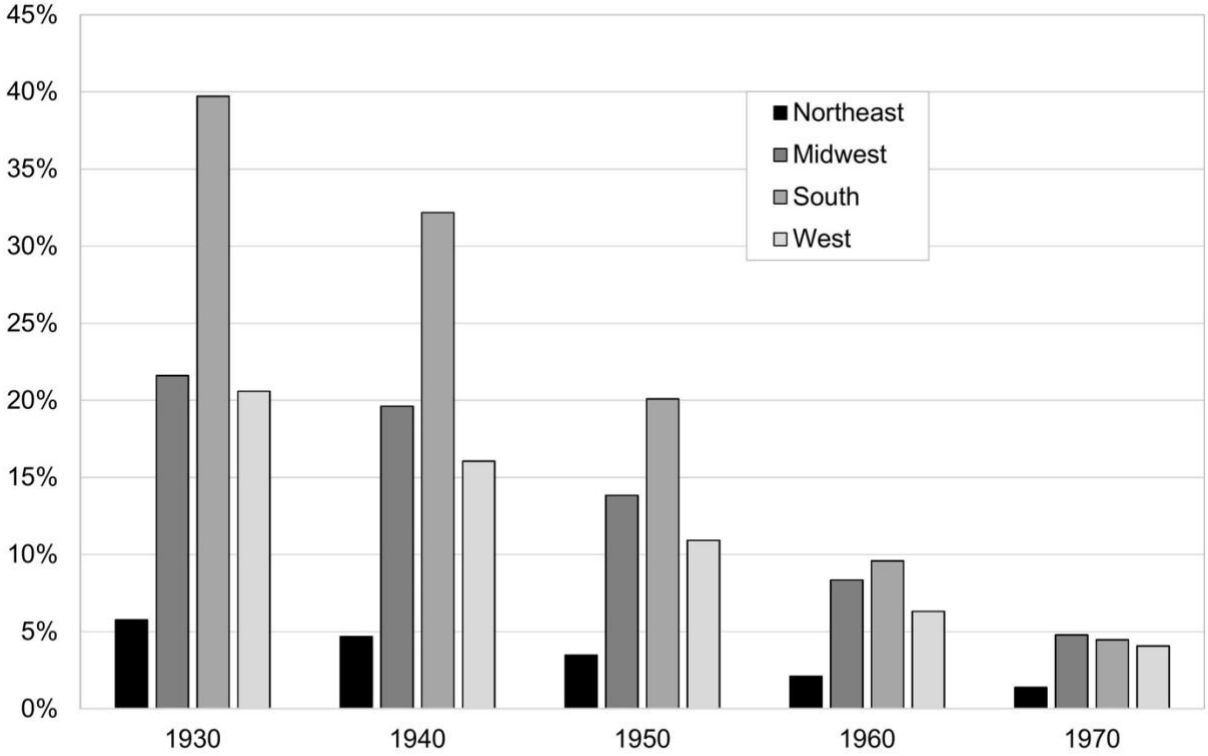
Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service 2021

The geography of cotton production also changed in ways that reduced its political importance in the South. The geographic center of production shifted west over time, reducing its economic role in much of the region. The share of the crop grown in the South Atlantic region--mainly Georgia, Florida, and the Carolinas--dropped substantially. It had been 33% on the eve of World War I, but fell to 19% by 1939 and 9% by the end of the 1950s. At the same time, the share grown in the West and Mountain regions, especially New Mexico, Arizona, and California, grew from less than 10% before World War II to 20% by 1959.[32] To be sure, cotton remained important in much of the South--the shares of the crop produced in Southern states outside the South Atlantic region remained roughly stable--but important exceptions emerged after World War II.

[32] U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service 2021.

Cotton production also became more mechanized after World War II, employing fewer workers in all regions. Mechanical picking technology, the main barrier to full mechanization before the war, greatly improved. The share of the crop harvested by machines rose from 5% in 1950 to 50% by 1960, and to 90% by the end of the 1960s.[33] As Figure 4 suggests, this development greatly reduced demand for agricultural labor. The share of the Southern workforce employed in agriculture fell to roughly one quarter of its 1930 level by 1960. The South had been distinctively agricultural compared to the rest of the country in 1930, but this regional characteristic disappeared almost entirely in the 25 years after the war.

Figure 4.
Percentage of Workforce in Agriculture by Region, 1930-1970



Figures reflect employed workers, aged 14 and over, employed in agriculture, forestry, and fishing in the U.S. Decennial Censuses for the indicated year

The declining importance of cotton exports undercut the economic basis of Southern support for multilateralism. Before World War I, the principal economic benefit

[33] Wright 1986, 243. See also Fite 1980.

for the South of multilateral cooperation with other developed countries was that these states imported large and growing amounts of the region's leading product. Cooperative and peaceful relations with and among them were vital. After World War II, however, cotton production was a diminishing source of wealth and employment in the region. Support for multilateralism by Southern members of Congress should still be positively related to the role of cotton in their district's economy but its decline over time should contribute to their turn away from multilateralism. This leads to a testable hypothesis.

> H1. Support for multilateralism should be positively associated with the per capita size of the cotton crop in the district.

The rise of import-sensitive manufacturing industries, especially textiles and apparel, parallels the declining importance of cotton exports. Textile manufacturing had been gradually increasing in the South since the late 19th Century, but it did not take off until the interwar period.[34] By 1950, the industry accounted for 26% of manufacturing employment in the region.[35] During the decade after World War II, U.S. textiles became acutely sensitive to possible foreign competition. The industry relied on a mature suite of technologies that countries with relatively abundant low-wage labor could easily adopt. Concern about potential Japanese competition led the U.S. government to push Japan to accept "voluntary" export restraints beginning in the early 1950s. This concession violated the multilateral rules of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).[36] Alfred Hero interviewed 28 Southern textile manufacturers between 1959 and 1961. Not surprisingly, they supported measures to protect their industry against Japanese competition. They also objected to U.S. participation in the GATT and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which was then formulating standards for development assistance.[37] These patterns suggest that the

---

[34] Wright 1986, 129.

[35] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1952.

[36] Aggarwal 1985, 8-12.

[37] Hero 1965, 153-62. He found that apparel manufacturers were somewhat less vehement in their protectionism, though they generally aligned with the textile industry (162-4).

local importance of the textile industry should contribute to Southern politicians' growing opposition to multilateralism. This leads to a second testable hypothesis:

> H2. Support for multilateralism should be negatively associated with the share of employment in the textiles and apparel sectors in the district.

Is it possible that there is an endogenous relationship between members' support for multilateralism and the importance of cotton or textiles in their district? After all, the postwar economic order certainly affected these industries. It is not plausible that an individual member's vote on one roll call had a contemporaneous effect on the economy of their district. However, if they were successful often enough, a member's past positions might have affected the economy of their district. In some respects, their district may have looked the way it did because of the positions they took in the past. While this possibility might raise some concern about endogeneity, the relationships necessary to create this problem are indirect, running through past positions rather than the current ones being modeled. It is also likely to be confined to highly influential, long-serving members. There are certainly some of these people in the data, but they are not typical. Moreover, even if one attributed the postwar multilateral order and its effects on cotton and textiles to the political support of Southerners in general, that order did not emerge and have economic effects that might have shaped their districts until long after war ended. Indeed, because of the time it took Europe and Japan to recover, U.S. imports were no higher in 1965 than they had been in 1950, around 3% of GDP.[38]

Multilateralism and White Supremacy

A second explanation for the Southern turn against multilateralism concerns its implications for the region's system of racial hierarchy. In the aftermath of World War II, there was a concerted effort to incorporate human rights into international law. It soon became clear that the new rules were incompatible with the institutions and practices upholding white supremacy in the South. Scholarship on postwar human rights treaties nearly always identifies this issue as a major source of congressional opposition to the

[38] Irwin 2017, 518, 534.

treaties, as well as motive for weakening them during the negotiation process.[39] It also plays a major role in nearly every account of the Southern turn against multilateralism.[40]

The postwar linkage between human rights and multilateralism was new. The League of Nations had no commitment to racial equality comparable to that of the United Nations. The British, in deference to the demands of their white settler colonies and with the cooperation of Woodrow Wilson, had thwarted Japanese efforts to include a racial equality clause in the League Covenant at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference.[41] Some Southern supporters of the League, like Mississippi Senator John Sharp Williams, even hoped it would serve as a vehicle through which the United States and Britain could maintain global white supremacy.[42] Concern over the League's implications for racial hierarchy focused on people of Asian descent on the West Coast because China and Japan, as sovereign states, had the standing to take action. There were just two independent African states in 1919, and none with ties of recent immigration to the United States comparable to those of China and Japan. Multilateralism posed no threat to Southern racial hierarchy in the early 20th Century. Even the human rights rules promulgated by the UN were not necessarily a cause for concern until decolonization brought a growing number of predominantly non-white states into the organization. This development insured that diplomats unsympathetic to white supremacy would be involved in the development and interpretation of these multilateral rules.

Southern members of Congress also worried about the application of multilateral human rights commitments in U.S. courts. A California state appeals court struck down a law prohibiting land ownership by Japanese non-citizens on the grounds that it violated Article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The court issued its decision on April 24, 1950, during the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's consideration of the Genocide Convention. The committee chair, Tom Connally (D-TX), who had participated in the 1945 conference that drafted the UN Charter, attacked the California decision on the Senate floor, citing legal arguments against this use of the

---

[39] See, for example, Anderson 2003; Brucken 2013; Kaufman 1990; Moravcsik 2005; and Ruggie 2005.

[40] See, for example, Hero 1965, Smith 1965, and Ulin 2016.

[41] Füredi 1998, 41-4; Lake and Reynolds 2008, 284-309; MacMillan 2001, 316-21.

[42] Seabury 1957, 10-11; on Williams' racialized view of cooperation with Britain, see Fry 2002, 154.

Universal Declaration. "I cannot conceive that the United Nations had any conception that any doctrine like this would be invoked, and if we had thought so we would not have ratified the Charter. We never dreamed of such a thing."[43] Connally could dismiss concerns about the Universal Declaration but not the Genocide Convention, which would have the force of law. He refused to allow the Convention out of Foreign Relations Committee, explaining in executive session that "[t]his is not a frivolous matter. This is not just a campaign document. This is not just a gesture to Europe. This is a vital constitutional matter, and it is more applicable to us in the constitutional question than it is to these foreign governments that do not have any constitutions, or at, least that do not have any constitution such as we have."[44]

While the incompatibility of Jim Crow with the emerging rules on human rights became clear relatively early, Southerners did not immediately turn against multilateralism. Throughout the 1950s, the most prominent opponents of multilateralism, including human rights agreements, remained conservative Republicans from the North and West.[45] For Southerners, unlike conservative Republicans, adopting this position meant reversing a stance that political leaders in their party and region had taken for decades. Doing so carried potential political costs. Public opinion in the South remained at least as supportive of the United Nations as was opinion in the rest of the country through the 1950s. A cautious Southern member of Congress might wonder whether publicly attacking highly visible and popular elements of multilateralism like the United Nations was really necessary. Remaining silent, at least in public, was safer. Walter George and Tom Connally made their disparaging comments about UN human rights treaties, quoted earlier, in closed executive sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Publicly, George had built a reputation as an internationalist and supporter

[43] *Congressional Record*, 19 May 1950, p. 7326. See also Brucken 2013, 156.

[44] U.S. Senate 1976a, 651.

[45] A substantial faction of Republicans had opposed multilateralism since before World War I (Fordham and Flynn 2023). Frank Holman, the President of the American Bar Association, arguably the most prominent early opponent of the UN human rights agreements, was born in Utah and practiced law in Seattle. Senator John Bricker, Holman's most important congressional collaborator, was a Republican from Ohio. Both men had broader objections to the human rights treaties and to the United Nations in general than their impact on Southern segregation (Kaufman 1990, 16-36). Indeed, Bricker later voted in favor of the Civil Rights Act of 1957.

of the UN during World War II. By 1956, he was under attack on these grounds by a prospective primary opponent, Herman Talmadge, and chose not to run for reelection.[46] Tom Connally was in much the same position, remaining closely identified with the United Nations in spite of his concerns about the Genocide Convention. In his 1954 memoir, he praised the UN as "the greatest advance in international relations I have witnessed in my lifetime."[47] The fact that turning against multilateralism before public opinion and the views of party elites had changed was potentially costly for Southerners is useful for discerning the drivers of this process. Those who felt pressures to change more acutely should be more willing to pay the costs of changing their position, or, if they refused to do so, of being replaced by a new member who would.

Racial hierarchy is frequently discussed as a driver of white Southerners' foreign policy positions, but scholars do not always explicitly lay out the mechanism through which it worked. Most work on the topic treats support for racial hierarchy as an ideological commitment. This suggests an individual-level process. Southern members of Congress with a greater commitment to white supremacy should be more willing to set aside their support for multilateralism. Those who did not attach as high a priority to this position should be slower to do so.

There was certainly an ideological dimension to support for white supremacy but understanding the effects of racial hierarchy through this individual-level process is misleading. Individual views on race often failed to shape political action. Those who privately harbored relatively liberal opinions had to be careful in their public positions. For example, Representative Frank Ellis Smith of Mississippi, "a closet liberal and a secret integrationist" according to his biographer, went to great lengths to conceal his views from his constituents. He voted against civil rights legislation, signed the segregationist 1956 Southern Manifesto, and even suggested that some of his political opponents were themselves secret integrationists.[48] Smith may not have been a sincere white supremacist but social and political pressures more powerful than ideological

[46] Hero 1965, 8; Lerche 1964, 47; Mixon 1974, 39.

[47] Connally 1954, 364.

[48] Mitchell 2001, 85, 131, 164-5.

conviction led him to act like one. These pressures constitute the more fundamental roots of the system.

Focusing on the material benefits that white supremacy provided to members of Congress and their white constituents gets closer to these deeper social forces. Those who benefitted more should be more likely to take political action against threats to racial hierarchy. This process is the same as that linking the production of cotton and textiles to members' positions on multilateralism. Like those considerations, the stakes that members and their key supporters had in racial hierarchy arise from social and economic conditions, not individual ideological convictions.

Material interests in racial hierarchy came in many forms. Here I will focus on three of the most important. First, and most obviously, the system kept political power in the hands of a white elite, largely excluding blacks from effective participation. Racial restrictions on voting were the most obvious form of political exclusion but segregation also kept blacks out of other politically significant social institutions, including juries, country clubs, white churches, and schools. Robert Mickey lays out a wide range of additional restrictions on political activity that made Southern states into "enclaves of authoritarian rule" during this period.[49] These legal and extralegal measures suppressing black political participation were most important in areas with large black populations. Racial restrictions on voting were an immediate concern for members of Congress, who faced greater potential electoral challenges in these areas.[50] Large black populations threatened white control of other political institutions as well. The other social and political changes that might follow the undoing of racial hierarchy would also be more salient in areas where there was a larger black population. For instance, the integration of schools, transportation, and other public facilities would all be more visible in these cases. As the threat to racial hierarchy grew, members of Congress representing districts with larger black populations should be more likely to turn against multilateralism than those from predominantly white districts. This interaction between the growing threat to white supremacy and the African-American population of the

[49] Mickey 2015, 33-63.

[50] Hero 1965, 430, proposes this hypothesis, citing examples but not formally testing it.

district suggests two hypotheses. Berry, Golder, and Milton (2012) argue persuasively that both sides of an interactive relationship should be tested, as these hypotheses do.

> H3A. Support for multilateralism should be increasingly negatively associated with the African American share of district population as the threat to white supremacy grows, beginning near zero and becoming more negative over time.
>
> H3B. Support for multilateralism should be increasingly negatively associated with time as the African-American population of the district increases, beginning near zero and becoming more negative as the African-American population increases.

Second, because it helped maintain a system of labor-repressive agriculture, racial hierarchy benefitted white farmers. This system developed in part to maintain a quiescent agricultural workforce after the abolition of slavery. It did so by restricting the geographic mobility of black agricultural workers, denying them access to education and other job opportunities, and subjecting those who resisted to violence. As if more evidence of the system's repressive character were needed, recent research suggests that exogenous shocks separating black workers from the cotton economy led to better individual outcomes for those affected, while whites facing similar displacement had about the same life outcomes as other whites.[51] Labor-repressive agriculture was central to the political economy of the South. Large landowners provided much of the political support for it, their influence rooted in their central role in the region's economy and their disproportionate political representation.[52] Jim Crow extended to urban manufacturing industries as well, but it was more economically important to agricultural landowners.[53] Members of Congress representing districts where agriculture was most

[51] Clay et al. 2020; Feigenbaum, et al. 2020. Wilkerson 2010 vividly explains how Jim Crow helped motivate the Great Migration to Northern and Western cities.

[52] Feigenbaum, et al. 2020, 1; Mickey 2015, 35-37, 45.

[53] The system of racial hierarchy worked differently in agriculture and manufacturing, giving agricultural landowners benefits that manufacturing employers did not receive. The system held black agricultural workers in place under arrangements largely dictated by white employers and merchants. In effect, landowners enjoyed a larger labor force and more favorable terms of employment than they would have had otherwise. In manufacturing, the system restricted black workers to a limited range of occupations or excluded them altogether. This form of discrimination restricted the size of the labor force and forced

economically important should be more sensitive to threats to racial hierarchy, including those stemming from multilateral rules. This suggests two hypotheses testing both sides of the interaction between the growing threat to white supremacy and the size of the agricultural sector.

> H4A. Support for multilateralism should be increasingly negatively associated with the share of the district workforce engaged in agriculture as the threat to white supremacy grows, beginning near zero and becoming increasingly negative over time.
>
> H4B. Support for multilateralism should be increasingly negatively associated with time as the share of the district workforce engaged in agriculture increases, beginning near zero and becoming increasingly negative as the size of the agricultural sector increases.

Third, white Southerners were rarely prosecuted for acts of racial violence, which were shockingly common in the South during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. More than 4,000 African Americans were lynched in the region between 1877 and 1950.[54] Previous research suggests that there were many motives for lynching and other racial violence.[55] It was more prevalent in cotton-producing regions, though the precise reasons for this pattern remain controversial.[56] It does not appear to have been systematically related to black disfranchisement, but some incidents of racial violence had an immediate political purpose, as was the case in the bloody 1898 Wilmington coup.[57] Overall, lynching and other forms of racial violence were both an expression of white supremacy and a means of upholding various aspects of racial hierarchy. Protecting the legal impunity of those who carried it out was important to Southern members of Congress. They had long blocked anti-lynching legislation and quickly recognized that multilateral human rights rules might do much the same thing. Senate

---

manufacturers to pay white workers in the restricted occupations more than they otherwise would have (Becker 1971, 39-54).

[54] Equal Justice Initiative 2017, 4.

[55] For a relatively recent reviews, see Bailey and Tolnay 2015, 1-31, and Smångs 2017.

[56] See, for example, Beck and Tolnay 1990 and Christian 2017.

[57] On the relationship to black disfranchisement, see Tolnay and Beck 1995. On the Wilmington coup, see Zucchino 2020.

Foreign Relations Committee hearings on the Genocide Convention, held in closed executive sessions, focused heavily on this issue. As one State Department representative explained while unsuccessfully trying to reassure members of the committee, "the objection, that is, the practical objection, the thing that is behind a lot of people's minds on this convention is--is it aimed at lynching in the South? You have to face that. That is a thing that a lot of people are worried about."[58] Indeed, this was the principal reason that powerful Southerners like Tom Connally and Walter George prevented the Convention from coming to a vote. Like the other material benefits of racial hierarchy, the value of legal impunity varied. Lynching and other racial violence was more prevalent in some areas than in others. Members of Congress representing areas with a greater history of this brand of racial terrorism should be more likely to turn against multilateralism. Like the other two interactive arguments about the material benefits of racial hierarchy, this one implies two hypotheses.

> H5A. Support for multilateralism should be increasingly negatively associated with the historical number of lynchings in the district as the threat to white supremacy grows, beginning near zero and becoming more negative over time.
>
> H5B. Support for multilateralism should be increasingly negatively associated with time as the historical number of lynchings in the district increases, beginning near zero and becoming more negative as the number of historical lynchings increases.

These hypotheses about the material benefits of racial hierarchy are all conditional on growth in the threat multilateralism posed to white supremacy. Many domestic and international events contributed to white Southern elites' sense that racial hierarchy faced increasingly serious political challenges. Some were international, such as the collapse of European colonial empires and demands for racial equality from the leaders of newly decolonized states. Others were domestic, especially the legal and political successes of the civil rights movement during the 1950s. While it is tempting to

[58] U.S. Senate 1976a, 391. This was not the only potential genocide charge against the United States. As Senator H. Alexander Smith (R-NJ) noted, "I think the first charge they [the Soviets] would make is that we genocided the American Indian, and it is pretty nearly true, too. (U.S. Senate 1976a, 399).

select one of these developments and use it as a proxy for the threat to white supremacy, this approach risks overrating one particular set of events and conditions. The most I can say with confidence is that white Southern concerns about the future of white supremacy increased over the 1945-62 period. In the analysis that follows, I will use a linear time trend to represent this pattern. Of course, it is possible that the time trend reflects changes other than the increasing threat to white supremacy. The interaction effects are especially important for supporting my interpretation of it. If the results do not show that Southern elites with the greatest reasons to worry about white supremacy changed more over time than other members of Congress from the region did, it will falsify my argument about the meaning of the trend.

Estimating the effect of the black population share, the size of the agricultural workforce, and the history of racial violence--as well as their interaction with time--depends on controlling for cotton production. Conversely, estimating the effect of cotton production depends on controlling for the benefits that white landowners and politicians received from white supremacy. These variables are historically entangled. They are positively correlated but should have opposite effects. Cotton growers and their political representatives had to weigh access to global markets against multilateralism's threat to racial hierarchy. They received material benefits from both. Accurately assessing the impact of their political interests requires considering both these effects, just as they did.

Research Design

The empirical analysis focuses on Southern members of Congress, the only group to change its position on multilateralism. Many of the proposed causal processes, particularly those concerning racial hierarchy, did not apply in other parts of the country. Racial hierarchy outside the South worked differently, without widespread voter suppression, lynching, and labor-repressive agriculture. The states examined here include not only the 11 former Confederate states but also 6 additional border states that mandated racial segregation in public schools and prohibited interracial marriage.[59]

[59] This is the definition recommended by Katznelson and Mulroy (2012, 606-7).

Members of Congress from these 17 states should experience the pressures associated with the changing role of race in the international system.[60]

I will use the 29 House roll call votes shown in Figure 1 to measure support for multilateralism, the dependent variable. The votes, which are listed in the appendix, cover many different substantive issues, but all involved multilateral institutions. I examined the context of each vote in the *Congressional Record* to determine whether a "yes" or "no" vote supported multilateralism on each one. The unit of analysis is the individual member's vote on each roll call. Of course, the circumstances and content of each roll call differ. It would be better if they were perfectly comparable and focused strictly on the institutional form of multilateralism, but history rarely offers such data. To the extent that differences among the votes make estimation less efficient, they do not bias the analysis in favor of the hypotheses tested here but rather make null findings more likely. The appendix presents robustness tests estimating the model on subsets of votes limited by issue.

The U.S. decennial censuses from 1940, 1950, and 1960 provide county-level data on the race of the population, the size of the workforce, and employment in agriculture and manufacturing industries, including textiles and apparel.[61] The Census of Agriculture provides county-level data on the cotton crop at roughly 5-year intervals.[62] After aggregating population and economic data into congressional districts, I computed cotton production in bales per capita, the percentage of employed persons in agriculture and the textile and apparel sectors, and the African-American share of the population in 1940, 1950, and 1960. The value of these variables for each congress is a linear interpolation of the value for the year in which that congress was elected. The appendix provides more information on the aggregation of county-level census data into

[60] These states are Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.

[61] These data appear in U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 1943; 1952; 1963. As the appendix explains, county-level data can be aggregated into congressional districts using the information in Martis 1982.

[62] These data are from U.S. Department of Agriculture 2021.

congressional districts. The analysis will also use the county-level counts of lynchings of African Americans between 1877 and 1950 assembled by the Equal Justice Initiative.[63]

Individual-level factors, such as members' personal background and attitudes, might also influence their support for multilateralism. The same is certainly true for party and ideology, which are not strictly individual-level considerations. The trouble is that these variables are post-treatment with respect to the district characteristics that are the primary concern of this paper. Constituents use them to select members who reflect their interests. While they are not included in the models that follow for this reason, the appendix offers a preliminary analysis of them.

Empirical Analysis

Table 1 presents the results of three models of individual votes supporting multilateralism on the 29 roll-calls between 1945 and 1962. The first includes only variables testing the hypotheses on exposure to the international economy. The second includes only those concerning racial hierarchy. The third combines these two sets of variables.

[63] Equal Justice Initiative 2022.

Table 1.
Logit Models of Southern Support for Multilateralism on House Roll-Call Votes, 1945-62

	1. Exposure to international economy	2. Racial hierarchy	3. Combined model
Cotton production (500-pound bales per capita)	0.24 (0.18)		0.86* (0.33)
Textile and apparel employment (percentage of employed persons)	-0.03* (0.01)		-0.03* (0.01)
Years since 1945		-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)
African American population (percentage of district population)		0.04* (0.01)	0.05* (0.02)
African American population * Years since 1945		-0.005* (0.001)	-0.005* (0.001)
Agricultural employment (percentage of employed persons in district)		-0.002 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Agricultural employment * Years since 1945		-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Number of black lynching victims in district, 1877-1950		-0.009 (0.004)	-0.013* (0.004)
Number of black lynching victims * Years since 1945		0.0004 (0.0003)	0.0005 (0.0003)
Constant	1.14* (0.12)	1.63* (0.40)	1.85* (0.44)
n	3,555	3,555	3,555
BIC	4059.73	3746.61	3676.22

Note: Standard errors adjusted for clustering on the individual member reported in parentheses.
* $p < 0.05$

The results in Table 1 point to the importance of considering both the material stakes in racial hierarchy and those arising from involvement in the global economy. The table reports the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), a comparison statistic for non-nested models. Lower BIC scores indicate better fit.[64] Model 2, which includes only the independent variables associated with racial hierarchy, fits the data better than model 1, which includes only the economic variables. However, model 3, which combines both sets of variables, performs better still. Its superior performance is also reflected in the results concerning cotton production. As noted earlier, cotton production

[64] Long (1997, 110-2) notes that differences in the BIC score of less than 2 provide weak support for the lower-scoring model, differences between 2 and 6 provide positive support, differences between 6 and 10 provide strong support, and differences greater than 10 provide very strong support. See also Clarke 2001.

is positively correlated with the material benefits of white supremacy but has the opposite effect on support for multilateralism. The effect of each one is thus underestimated if the other is excluded from the model. Cotton product is not statistically significant when considered alone. Its coefficient in the combined model is more than three times larger. I will use the combined model to evaluate the results.[65]

Turning first to the effects of exposure to the international economy, both hypothesis 1, on the impact of the cotton crop, and hypothesis 2, about the textile and apparel industries, find support. Figure 5 depicts the relationship between cotton production and the probability of voting for a multilateral initiative in 1950 and in 1962. Most observations on this variable are at the lower end of its range, which is also where the most substantively important effects are. As the lower pane indicates, the effect of cotton production was small during the immediate postwar years, when nearly all Southern members of Congress supported multilateralism. It was more important later, when some began to turn against it. As expected, cotton production slowed this change for some representatives. In 1962, a one standard deviation increase in district cotton production from its mean of about 0.26 bales per capita to 0.77 bales per capita increased the probability that a representative would support multilateralism from 0.51 to 0.62, a substantively significant 22% shift. Members whose districts still produced large amounts of cotton were even more likely to remain reliable supporters of multilateralism. For instance, Rep. Paul Brown (D-GA), whose 1945 remarks on the importance of the IMF to cotton growers were quoted earlier, remained a supporter of the Bretton Woods institutions through his retirement in 1961. In the 1959 debate on increasing the U.S. subscription to the IMF, he observed once again that "the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development help substantially in building world markets for American exports."[66]

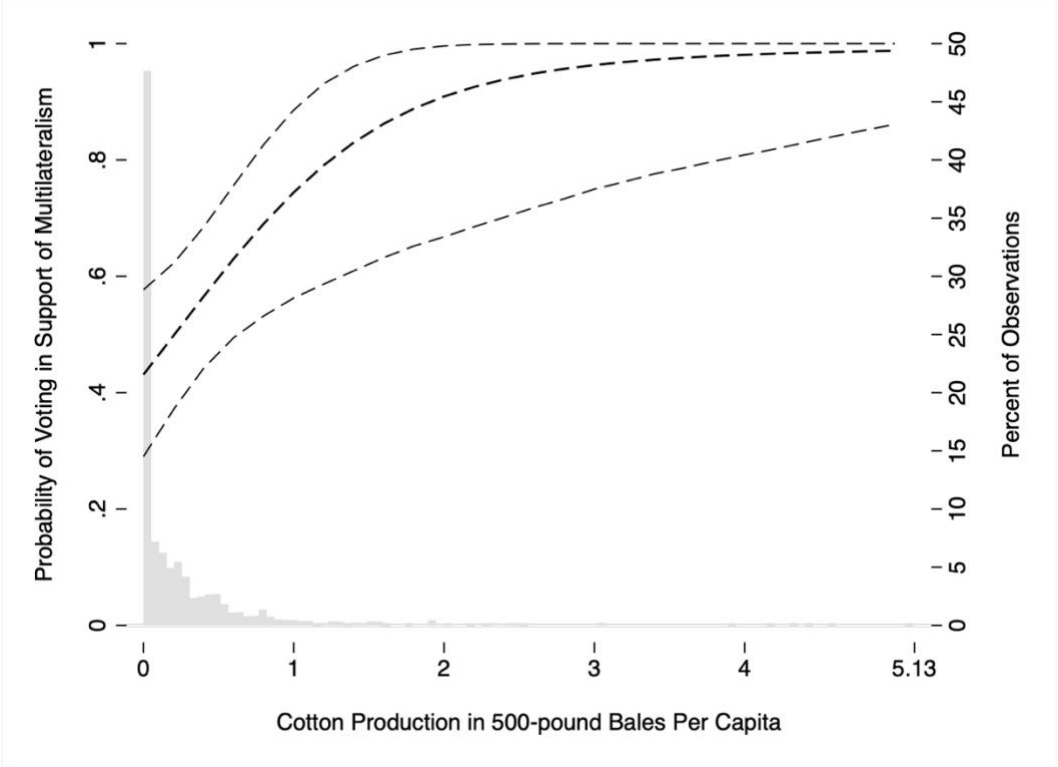
---

[65] The appendix presents robustness tests showing that these results are not greatly affected by changes in the composition of the roll call votes used in the analysis or the addition of state fixed effects.

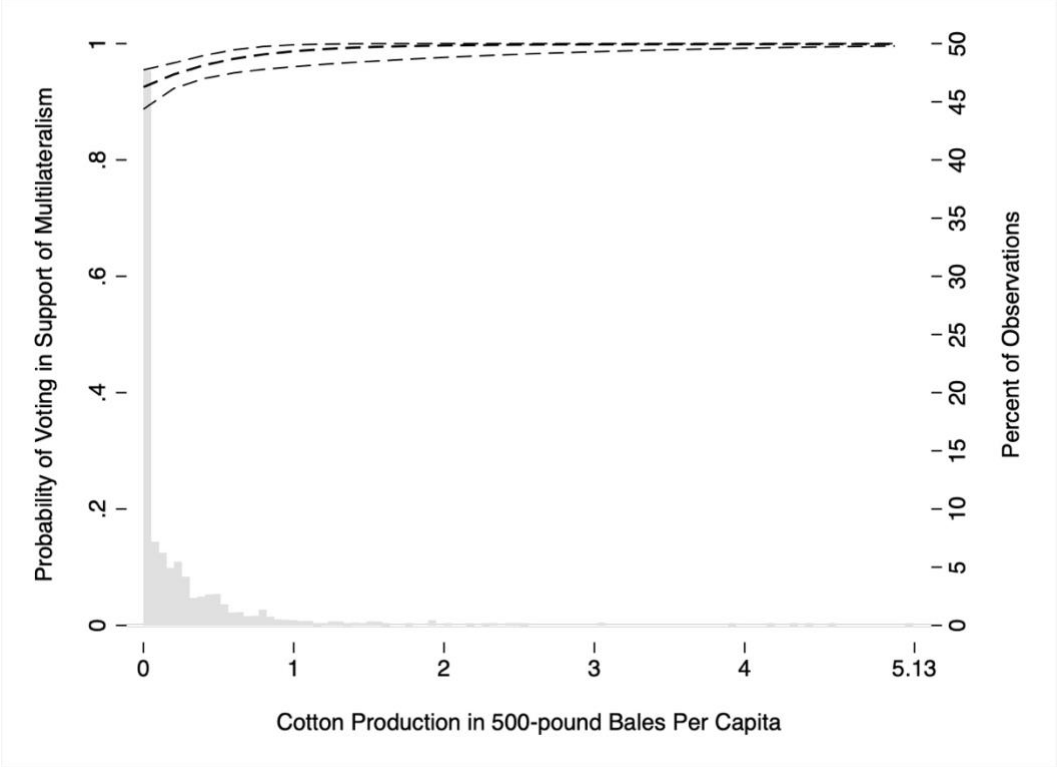
[66] *Congressional Record*, 25 March 1959, p. 5255. Although his district remained among the largest per capita cotton producing areas of Georgia, production per capita fell by roughly half between 1945 and the end of Brown's congressional career.

Figure 5.
Cotton Production and Support for Multilateralism

(a) 1962



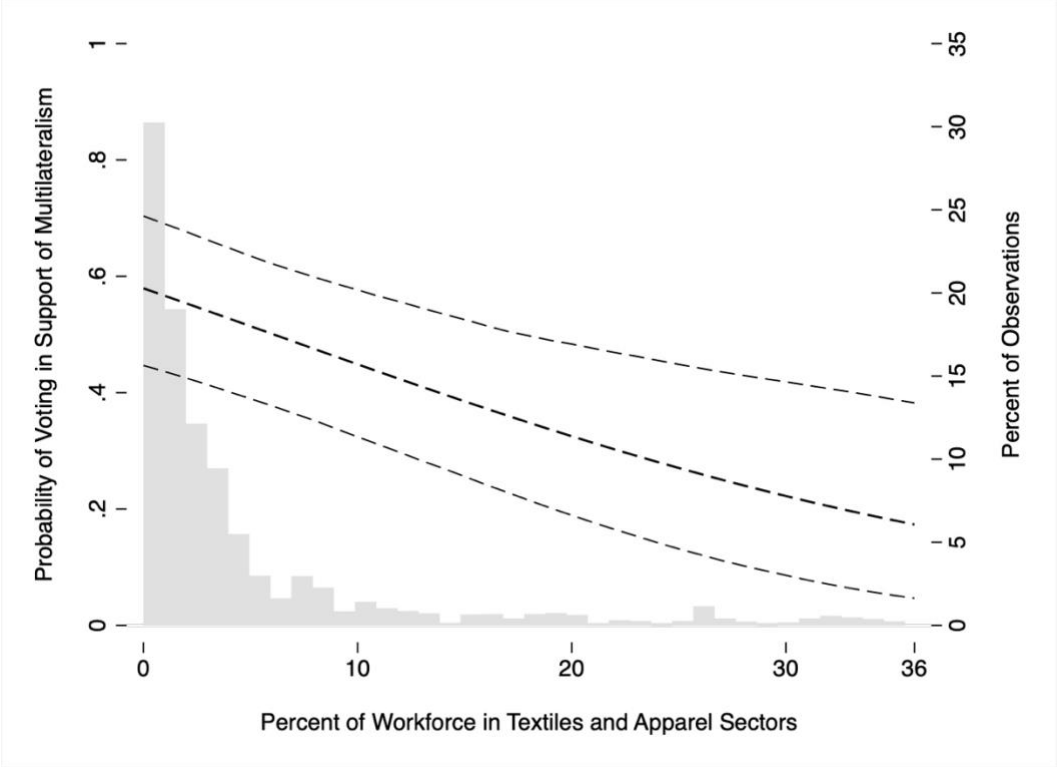
(b) 1950



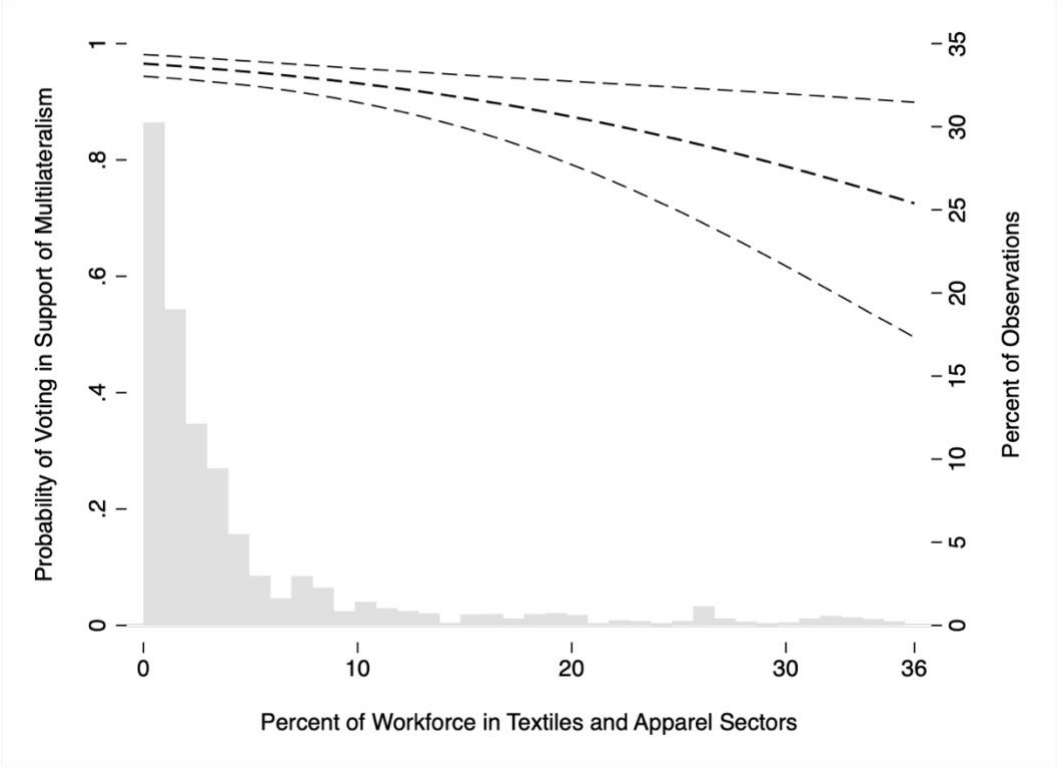
While cotton acted as a brake on the turn against multilateralism in some cases, the textile and apparel industries accelerated it in others. Figure 6 depicts the relationship between district employment in these industries and members' support for multilateralism in 1950 and 1962. As with cotton production, employment in textiles and apparel had greater effects later in the period, when the regional consensus in support of multilateralism had broken down. In 1962, a member from a district with the mean level of employment in textiles and apparel, about 4.7%, had a 0.51 probability of voting in favor of a multilateral initiative on the House floor. A member from a district with one standard deviation more employment in the sector, 11.7%, had a 0.45 probability of casting the same vote. This 12% change is substantively important but not as large as that associated with a similar change in cotton production. Even so, as Figure 6 indicates, representatives of districts with much greater levels of employment in textiles and apparel were reliable opponents of multilateralism by 1962. As the histogram at the bottom of Figure 6 indicates, there was a small but meaningful number of these districts.

Figure 6.
The Textile and Apparel Sectors and Support for Multilateralism

(a) 1962



(b) 1950



Because they involve an interactive relationship in a non-linear model, interpreting the results concerning racial hierarchy is more complicated. Neither their statistical significance nor their substantive effects can be inferred directly from the coefficients in Table 1 (Clark and Golder 2023, 365). For instance, it is not informative that the interaction term between time and the African American share of the district population is statistically significant, while the coefficient for the interaction between time and the share of the workforce engaged in agriculture is not. Brambor Golder, and Clark (2006) and Berry, Golder, and Milton (2012) recommend using a marginal effect plot for each constituent of the interaction, showing its effects across the entire range of the other constituent variable. These plots show graphically where each element of the interaction had a statistically significant relationship to the dependent variable over the range of the modifying variable.[67]

Figure 7 displays marginal effect plots for the interaction between time and the African American share of district population. The upper pane shows that the marginal effect of a one standard deviation increase in the African American share of the population across the 1945-62 period, as well as a 95-percent confidence interval. Substantively, this is a 14-point increase over its 20 percent mean value. The marginal effect had roughly the relationship to time anticipated in hypothesis 5a, which stated that the effect should begin near zero and become more negative over time. The marginal effect is unexpectedly positive and statistically significant in the early years after 1945. However, this positive effect is small compared to the negative marginal effect apparent by the early 1960s. Members from heavily African-American districts were indeed more likely to oppose multilateralism than members from other districts as the threat to white supremacy increased over time.

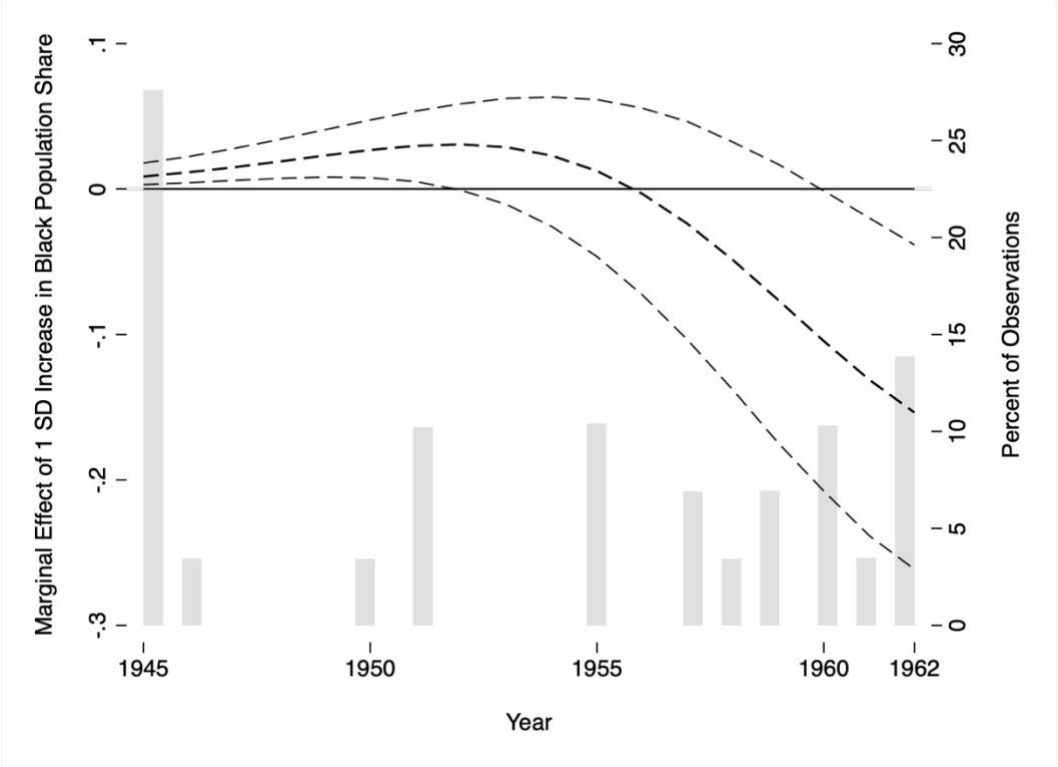
The lower pane in Figure 7 shows the marginal effect of time on members from districts with increasing African American populations, the other side of the interaction. It offers unambiguous support for hypothesis 5b, which held that the effect should be near zero where there was a very small black population, and become more negative as the

[67] The marginal effects and confidence intervals in Figures 7-9 were produced in accordance with the recommendations of Berry, Golder and Milton (2012) and Clark and Golder (2023, 361-97), using the Stata code provided by Golder (2024).

black population increased. Support for multilateralism among representatives from heavily white districts changed very little between 1945 and 1962. By contrast, those from districts with larger black populations were much more hostile to multilateralism by 1962 than they had been 17 years earlier. These effects are substantively quite large. The size of the black population in their district strongly influenced whether members changed over the early postwar era.

Figure 7.
Marginal Effects for Interaction between Black Population Share and Time

(a) Marginal Effect of Black Population Share over Time



(b) Marginal Effect of Time Across Black Population Share

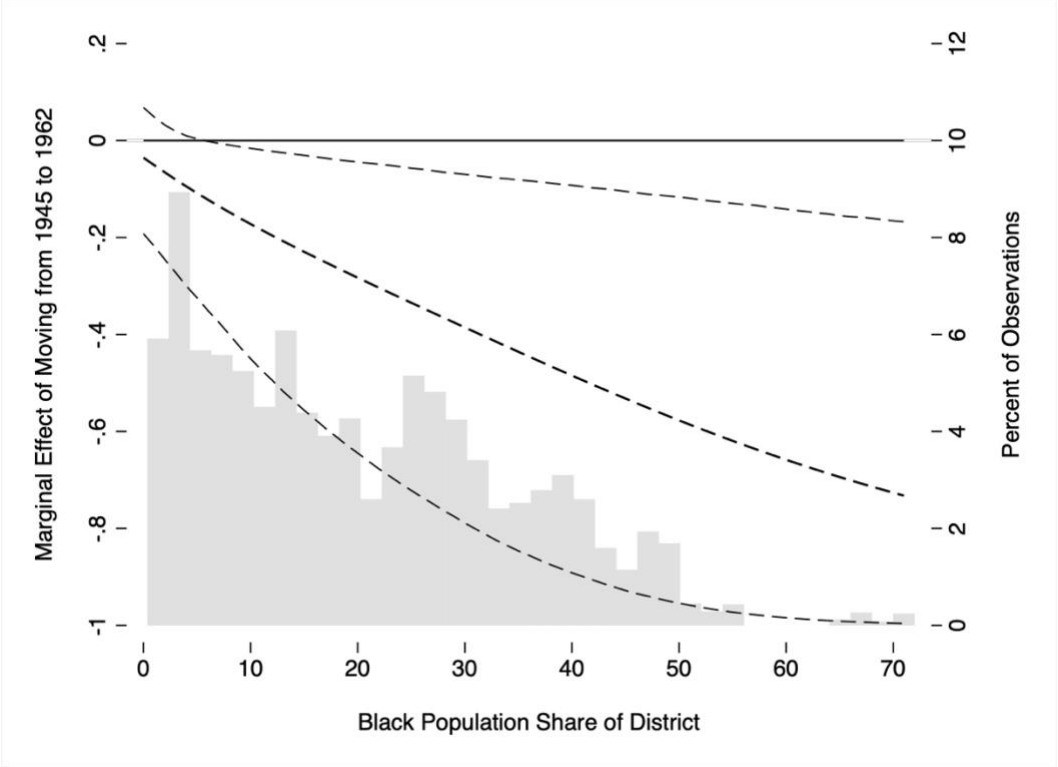
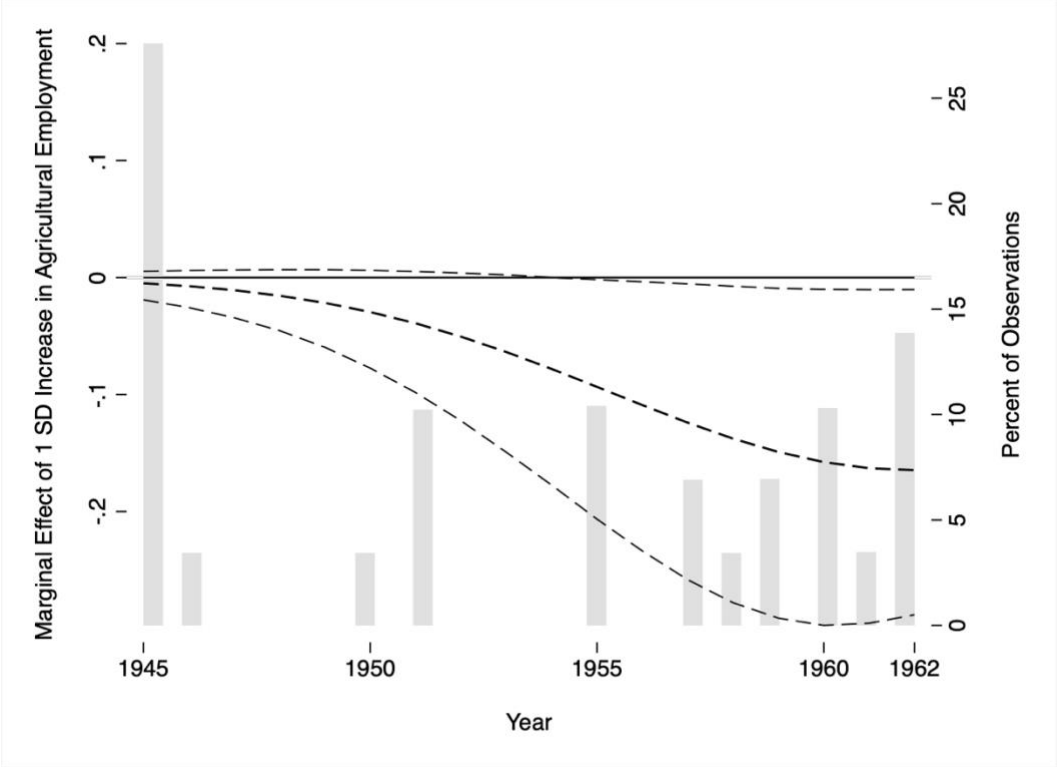


Figure 8 shows marginal effects plots for the interaction between time and the agricultural share of the workforce, testing hypotheses 6a and 6b. The upper pane shows the marginal effect of a one standard deviation increase in the percentage of the labor force employed in agriculture across the 1945-1962 period. Substantively, this is a 15-point increase over its 20 percent mean value. As anticipated in hypothesis 6a, the marginal effect was small or zero near the beginning of the period, but became increasingly negative by the middle of the 1950s. By the late 1950s, the marginal effect of agricultural employment was greater than -0.1, enough to offset a one standard deviation increase in the volume of cotton production. The lower pane shows the marginal effect of time across the full range of the agricultural workforce variable. Members from non-agricultural districts were only slightly less likely to vote in favor of multilateralism at the end of the period than they were at the beginning. On the other hand, those from heavily agricultural districts, like those from districts with large black populations, were far less likely to do so than they had been at the beginning of the period. This pattern supports hypothesis 6b. Once again, the change over time was concentrated in districts where the white elite had the most to lose if white supremacy were overturned.

Figure 8.
Marginal Effects for Interaction between Agricultural Workforce and Time

(a) Marginal Effect of Share of Workforce in Agriculture over Time



(b) Marginal Effect of Time across Share of Workforce in Agriculture

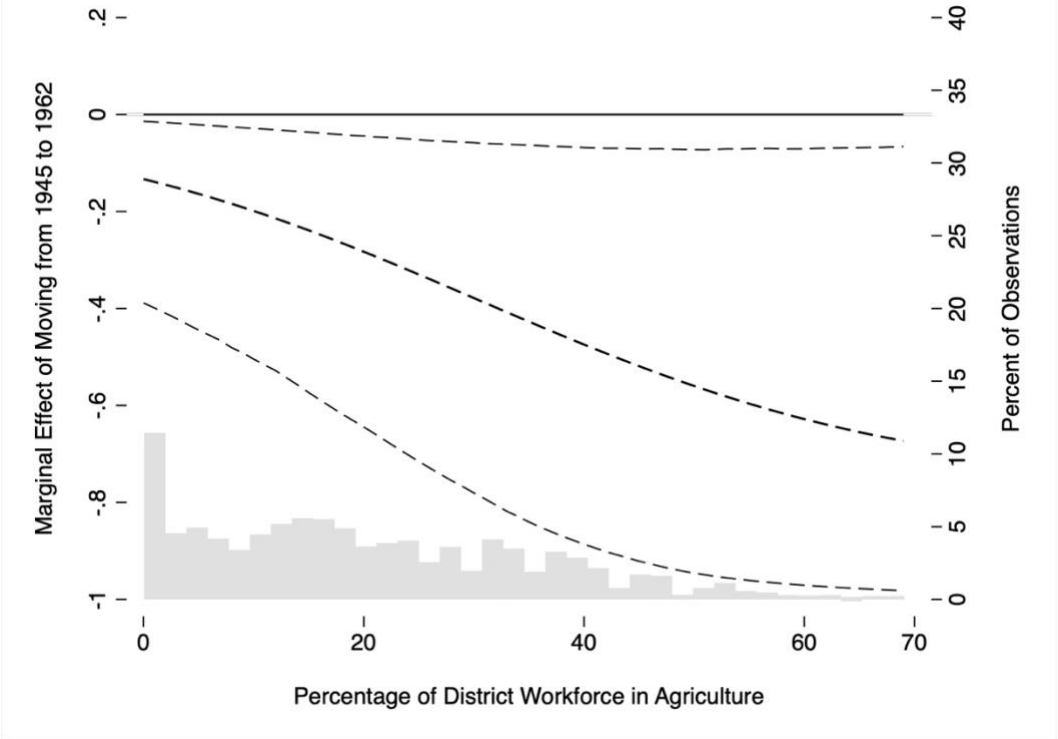
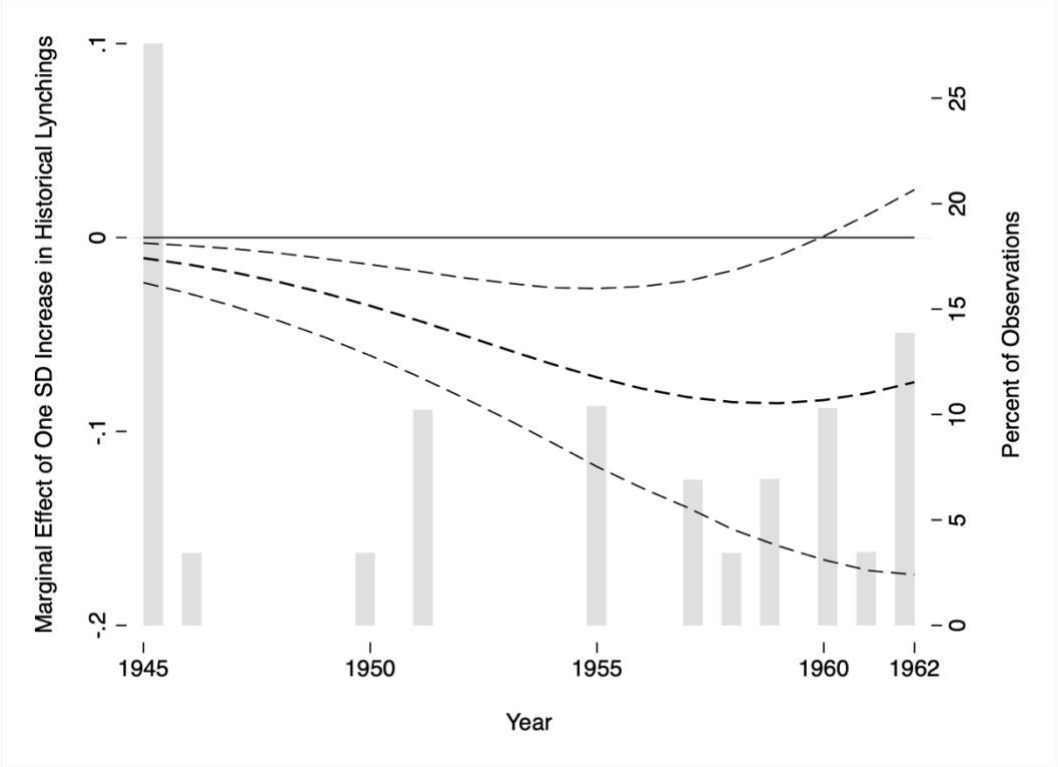


Figure 9 shows marginal effect plots for the interaction between time and the district's history of racial violence. The upper pane shows the marginal effect of a one standard deviation increase in the number of lynchings between 1877 and 1950 on support for multilateralism across the 1945-1962 period. Substantively, this is an increase of 40 lynchings over the mean of 30. The results only partially support hypothesis 7a. The marginal effect is near zero at the beginning of the period and becomes increasingly negative over the 1940s and 1950s. However, it is not statistically significant in the final three years. The lower panel in Figure 9 shows the marginal effect of time across the full range of the number of lynchings. The pattern does not support hypothesis 7b. Contrary to expectations, members from districts that had relatively few lynchings were no less likely to turn against multilateralism over the 1945-62 period than those from districts with a much more violent history. The marginal effect is roughly the same at most observed values of the lynching variable, becoming statistically insignificant for the small number of districts with the most violent histories. Overall, the evidence in Figure 9 suggests that while the history of racial violence in their district reduced support for multilateralism among some members, it did not interact with time in the hypothesized way.

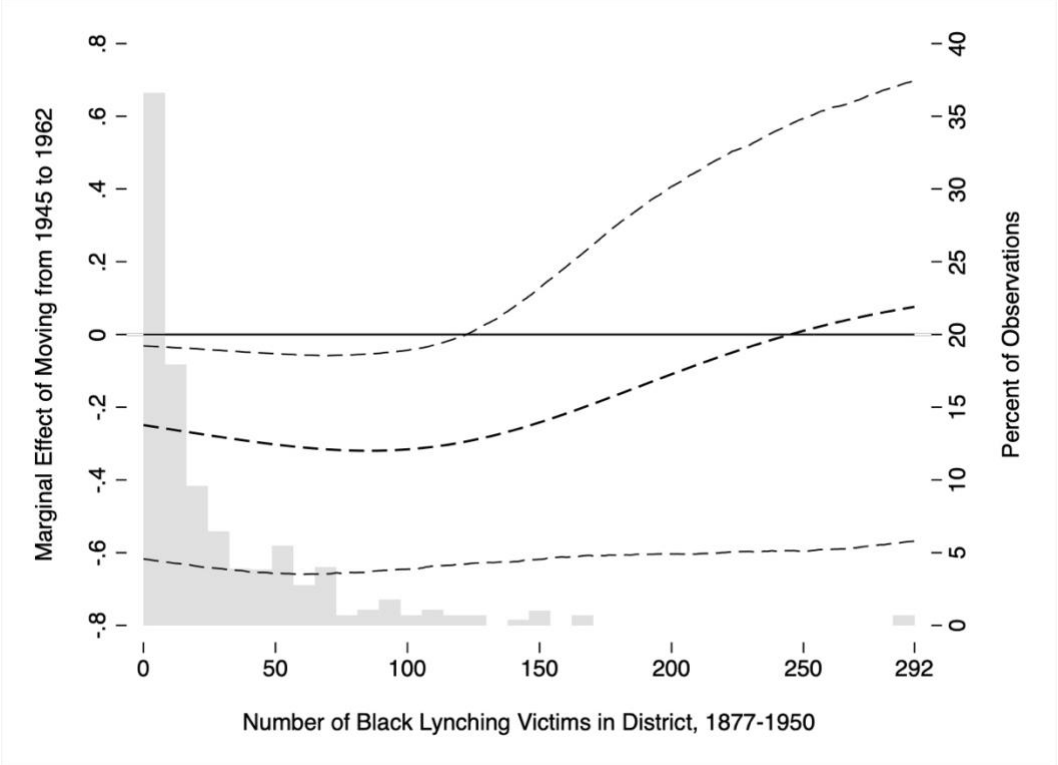
This null result is surprising in light of the archival evidence that important Southern Senators worried about the implications of the Genocide Convention for cases of lynching. One possible reason for it is that the history of lynching is correlated with the black population share at 0.57 across congressional districts. Black population share, which is related to many political and social benefits that whites drew from Jim Crow, thus probably diminished the effect of the history of racial violence. Excluding black population share from the analysis to estimate the effect of historical lynching would be unhelpful because then historical lynchings would then proxy the effects of the other considerations associated with black population size. The conclusion these data suggest is that concerns about legal impunity were not the primary driver of changing Southern positions on multilateralism once one controls for the many other stakes that Southern elites had in preserving white supremacy.

Figure 9.
Marginal Effects for Interaction of Historical Lynchings and Time

(a) Marginal Effect of Historical Lynchings over Time



(b) Marginal Effect of Time Across Historical Lynchings



Overall, the results support the argument that the benefits of white supremacy for Southern members of Congress and their white constituents influenced their positions on multilateralism during the early postwar era. Although the history of racial violence did not have the expected effects, both the black share of the population and the size of the agricultural sector did. These effects were substantively large by the end of the period. Moreover, the effect of time is also consistent with the claim that it reflects the increasing perception of a threat to white supremacy among these members of Congress. Time did not produce a general shift among all Southern members of Congress. Instead, change was concentrated among those with the greatest reasons to worry about the implications of multilateral rules for racial hierarchy: those with large black populations and large agricultural sectors. Members representing districts that were predominantly white and non-agricultural changed relatively little between 1945 and 1962.

Conclusion

In the years after 1945, the world changed in ways that altered the foreign policy interests of white Southern elites. Two sets of domestic and international processes drove this shift. First, the nature of Southern participation in the international economy changed. Cotton, long the export-oriented mainstay of the Southern economy, had helped motivate regional support for multilateral cooperation through World War II. After 1945, cotton production became less export-oriented, employed fewer workers, and moved out of some parts of the region. At the same time, the textile and apparel industries became both more important in the regional economy and more protectionist in the face of postwar international competition. Where cotton production remained economically important, it acted as a brake on the Southern turn against multilateralism but it had to compete with the influence of the textile and apparel industries, for whom multilateralism held few benefits.

Second, new rules about human rights promulgated under UN auspices threatened white supremacy in the South. Southern members of Congress worried that the United States would not be able to control the interpretation of these rules or prevent their further expansion and broader application, especially as growing numbers

of predominantly non-white, newly independent states entered the UN. Members of Congress from districts where they and their constituents drew the greatest benefits from the institutions and practices of white supremacy were especially sensitive to the growing threat to the system. Those from districts with large African American populations, who faced the greatest political threat from the enfranchisement of this group, and those from heavily agricultural districts, where large landowners benefits from labor repression, were especially likely to regard multilateralism differently by the end of the 1950s than they had at the beginning of the decade.

Racial hierarchy and participation in the international economy affected members of Congress through essentially the same mechanism. Both involved institutional arrangements that secured political and economic benefits for members and their constituents. Both were either threatened or advanced by the developing postwar order. Multilateralism made it more difficult for both textile manufacturers and segregationist politicians to maintain their positions after 1945, just as it made it easier for cotton producers to maintain theirs. Understood as a set of social and political institutions carrying material costs and benefits rather than as an ideological conviction in the minds of individuals, racial hierarchy fits well into political economy models of the politics of foreign policy. Indeed, even researchers who are only interested in one or the other of these sources of explanation may need to consider both when constructing models of political behavior because they are historically entangled. In this case, the effect of cotton production was only apparent in models that included the African American population of the district.

One final question that is beyond the scope of this paper nevertheless deserves a brief comment: why did Southern opposition to multilateralism persist even after the Jim Crow system had been largely dismantled? By the 1970s, Congress and the Supreme Court had effectively ended nearly all aspects of legal segregation, so continuing concern about the use of multilateral rules against these defunct institutions arguably made little sense. One possible explanation is the growing alliance between Southern conservatives and the Republican Party. Conservative Republicans had opposed multilateralism for far longer than Southerners had and for much broader reasons. Opposition to UN human rights agreements formed an early ideological bridge

between these new allies and appears to have become embedded in conservative ideology. Preventing the application of multilateral rules in domestic law also preserved political space for other socially conservative goals that could have been ruled out much as racial discrimination might have been. Public opinion might also have played a role in maintaining opposition to multilateralism. By the mid-1960s, public opinion in the South was more hostile to the UN than was opinion in the rest of the country, something that might have helped maintain this ideological position into the 1970s and beyond.

The emergence and persistence of Southern opposition to multilateralism has had enormous consequences for American foreign policy and the shape of world order. The conservative Southerners who moved into the Republican Party between the 1960s and 1990s reinforced the elements of that party that were most skeptical of multilateralism, shaping the foreign policy outlook of the Republican Party as a whole. As chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1995 through 2001, Jesse Helms (R-NC) was a vigorous opponent of multilateralism, blocking any U.S. participation in the International Criminal Court after President Clinton signed the Rome Statue in 1998. The two most recent Republican presidents have broken with multilateralism in previously unprecedented ways, including withdrawing from international arrangements the United States had previously supported and actively working to undermine others. Without the Southern turn away from multilateralism in the early postwar era, the politics of U.S. foreign policy might look quite different today.

References

Aggarwal, Vinod K. 1985. *Liberal Protectionism: The International Politics of the Organized Textile Trade*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Anderson, Carol. 2003. *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bailey, Amy Kate, and Stewart E. Tolnay. 2015. *Lynched: The Victims of Southern Mob Violence.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Beck, E. M., and Stewart E. Tolnay. 1990. "The Killing Fields of the Deep South: The Market for Cotton and the Lynching of Blacks, 1882-1930." *American Sociological Review* 55(4): 526-539. At https://doi.org/10.2307/2095805.

Becker, Gary S. 1971. *The Economic of Discrimination*, second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Berry, William D., Matt Golder, and Daniel Milton. 2012. “Improving Tests of Theories Positing Interaction.” *Journal of Politics* 74(3): 653-671. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381612000199.

Brambor, Thomas, William Roberts Clark, and Matt Golder. 2006. “Understanding Interaction Models: Improving Empirical Analyses.” *Political Analysis* 14: 63–82. At https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpi014.

Broz, J. Lawrence. 2008. "Congressional Voting on Funding the International Financial Institutions." *Review of International Organizations* 3(4): 351-74. At https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-008-9047-0.

Broz, J. Lawrence. 2011. "The United States Congress and IMF financing, 1944–2009." *Review of International Organizations* 6(3-4): 341-68. At https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-011-9108-7.

Brucken, Rowland. 2013. *A Most Uncertain Crusade: The United States, the United Nations, and Human Rights, 1941–1953.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Christian, Cornelius. 2017. "Lynchings, labour, and cotton in the US south: A reappraisal of Tolnay and Beck." *Explorations in Economic History* 66: 106-116. At https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eeh.2017.08.005.

Clark, William Roberts, and Matt Golder. 2023. *Interaction Models: Specification and Interpretation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Clarke, Kevin A. 2001. "Testing Nonnested Models of International Relations: Re-evaluating Realism." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(3): 724-44. At https://doi.org/10.2307/2669248.

Clay, Karen, Ethan J. Schmick, and Werner Troesken. 2020. "Changes in Black-White Inequality: Evidence from the Boll Weevil. NBER Working Paper 27101. http://www.nber.org/papers/w27101 [Accessed 27 December 2021.] At https://doi.org/10.3386/w27101.

Connally, Tom, as told to Alfred Sternberg. 1954. *My Name is Tom Connally*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

Equal Justice Initiative. 2017. *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*. Montgomery, AL: Equal Justice Initiative. https://eji.org/reports/lynching-in-america/ [Accessed 14 February 2023.]

Equal Justice Initiative. 2022. Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror. County Data Supplemental. Montgomery, AL: Equal Justice Initiative.

Feigenbaum, James J., Soumyajit Mazdumer, and Cory B. Smith. 2020. "When Coercive Economies Fail: The Political Economy of the US South after the Boll Weevil." NBER Working Paper 27161. http://www.nber.org/papers/w27161 [Accessed 27 December 2021.] At https://doi.org/10.3386/w27161.

Fite, Gilbert C. 1980. "Mechanization of Cotton Production since World War II." *Agricultural History* 54(1): 190-207.

Fordham, Benjamin O. 1998. "Economic Interests, Party, and Ideology in Early Cold War Era US Foreign Policy." *International Organization* 52 (2):359-95. At https://doi.org/10.1162/002081898753162857.

Fordham, Benjamin O. 2008. "Economic Interests and Congressional Voting on American Foreign Policy." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52(5): 623-40. At https://doi-org/10.1177/0022002708320

Fordham, Benjamin O. 2019. "The Domestic Politics of World Power: Explaining Debates over the United States Battleship Fleet, 1890-91." *International Organization* 73(2): 435-68. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818318000449.

Fordham, Benjamin O., and Michael E. Flynn. 2023. "Everything Old is New Again: The Persistence of Republican Opposition to Multilateralism in American Foreign Policy." *Studies in American Political Development* 37(1): 56-73. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898588X22000165.

Flynn, Michael E., and Benjamin O. Fordham. 2017. "Economic Interests and Threat Assessment in the U.S. Congress, 1890-1914." *International Interactions* 43(5): 744-70. At https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2017.1236925.

Fry, Joseph A. 2002. *Dixie Looks Abroad: The South and US Foreign Relations, 1789-1973.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press.

Füredi, Frank. 1998. *The Silent War: Imperialism and the Changing Perception of Race*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Golder, Matt. 2024. Interactions [website]. https://mattgolder.com/interactions [Accessed 18 July 2024].

Hero, Alfred O., Jr. 1965. *The Southerner and World Affairs*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Ikenberry, G. John. 2012. *Liberal Leviathan.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Irwin, Douglas A. 2017. *Clashing over Commerce: A History of U.S. Trade Policy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Katznelson, Ira, and Quinn Mulroy. 2012. "Was the South Pivotal? Situated Partisanship and Policy Coalitions during the New Deal and Fair Deal." *Journal of Politics* 74(2): 604-20. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381611001940.

Kaufman, Natalie Hevener. 1990. *Human Rights Treaties and the Senate: A History of Opposition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Lake, David. 2009. "Open economy politics: A critical review." *Review of International Organization* 4(3): 219-44. At https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-009-9060-y.

Lake, Marilyn, and Henry Reynolds. 2008. *Drawing the Global Colour Line*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lerche, Jr., Charles O. 1964. *The Uncertain South: Its Changing Patterns of Politics in Foreign Policy*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books.

Lewis, Jeffrey B., Keith Poole, Howard Rosenthal, Adam Boche, Aaron Rudkin, and Luke Sonnet. 2021. *Voteview: Congressional Roll-Call Votes Database.* https://voteview.com/ [Accessed 28 December 2021].

Long, J. Scott. 1997. *Regression Models for Categorical and Limited Dependent Variables*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

MacMillan, Margaret. 2001. *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*. New York: Random House.

Martis, Kenneth C. 1982. *The Historical Atlas of Congressional Districts, 1789-1983*. New York: Free Press.

Mickey, Robert. 2015. *Paths Out of Dixie: The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944-1972*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Milner, Helen V., and Dustin Tingley. 2013. "The choice for multilateralism: Foreign aid and American foreign policy." *Review of International Organizations* 8: 313-41. At https://doi.org/10.1007/s11558-012-9153-x.

Milner, Helen V., and Dustin Tingley. 2016. *Sailing the Water's Edge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mitchell, Dennis J. 2001. *Mississippi Liberal: A Biography of Frank E. Smith*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.

Mixon, Val G. 1974. "The Foreign Policy Statesmanship of Senator Walter F. George: 1955-56." *West Georgia College Review* 6: 29-41.

Moravcsik, Andrew. 2005. "The Paradox of U.S. Human Rights Policy." In Michael Ignatieff, ed., *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 147-97.

Oatley, Thomas. 2011. "The Reductionist Gamble: Open Economy Politics in the Global Economy." *International Organization* 65(2): 311-41. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081831100004X

Ruggie, John Gerard. 1992. "Multilateralism: Anatomy of an Institution." *International Organization* 46(3): 561-98. At https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027831.

Ruggie, John Gerard. 2005. "American Exceptionalism, Exemptionalism, and Global Governance." In Michael Ignatieff, ed., *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 304-338.

Seabury, Paul. 1957. The Waning of Southern Internationalism. Princeton University: Center of International Studies.

Smångs, Mattias. 2017. "The lynching of African Americans in the U.S. South: A review of sociological and historical perspectives." *Sociology Compass* 11(8): 1-13. At https://doi-org.proxy.binghamton.edu/10.1111/soc4.12500.

Tolnay, Stewart E., and E. M. Beck. 1995. *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Trubowitz, Peter. 1998. *Defining the National Interest: Conflict and Change in American Foreign Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ulin, Maxwell. 2016. "Dixie Turns Within: The United Nations and the Demise of Southern Internationalism." *Yale Historical Review* 5(2): 7-39.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service. 2021. Historical Census of Agriculture Publications. https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/ [Accessed 27 December 2021.]

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1943. *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population, vol. II: Characteristics of the Population.* Washington: Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1952. *Census of Population: 1950, vol. II: Characteristics of the Population*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. 1963. *Census of Population: 1960, vol. I: Characteristics of the Population*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

U.S. Senate. 1976a. *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series)*, vol. II (81st Congress, First and Section Sessions, 1949-1950). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

U.S. Senate. 1976b. *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series)*, vol. III, part II (82nd Congress, First Session, 1951). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Wilkerson, Isabel. 2010. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration.* New York: Random House.

Zucchino, David. 2020. *Wilmington's Lie: The Murderous Coup of 1898 and the Rise of White Supremacy*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.