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Sommario/riassunto

The transformation of the American South--from authoritarian to democratic rule--is the most important political development since World War II. It has re-sorted voters into parties, remapped presidential elections, and helped polarize Congress. Most important, it is the final step in America's democratization. Paths Out of Dixie illuminates this sea change by analyzing the democratization experiences of Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina. Robert Mickey argues that Southern states, from the 1890's until the early 1970's, constituted pockets of authoritarian rule trapped within and sustained by a federal democracy. These enclaves--devoted to cheap agricultural labor and white supremacy--were established by conservative Democrats to protect their careers and clients. From the abolition of the whites-only Democratic primary in 1944 until the national party reforms of the early 1970's, enclaves were battered and destroyed by a series of democratization pressures from inside and outside their borders. Drawing on archival research, Mickey traces how Deep South rulers--dissimilar in their internal conflict and political institutions--varied in their responses to these challenges. Ultimately, enclaves differed in their degree of violence, incorporation of African Americans, and reconciliation of Democrats with the national party. These diverse paths generated political and economic legacies that continue to reverberate today. Focusing on enclave rulers, their governance challenges, and the monumental achievements of their adversaries, Paths Out of Dixie shows how the struggles of the recent past have reshaped the South and, in so doing, America's political development.