

Oliver Richomme. *Race and Partisanship in California Redistricting: From the 1965 Voting Rights Act to Present.* Lexington Books, 2019. 419 pp. (cloth, \$120).

Professor Richomme has produced a timely history of redistricting in a state that exemplifies the growing complexity and inescapable conflicts inherent in engineering racial and partisan representation in the single-seat electoral systems that dominate U.S. politics. Professor Richomme succeeds with the stated goal of the work: to show that the demographic and political evolution of the country, particularly our shifting racial composition, the increasing correlation of racial with partisan identity, and incongruous judicial doctrine have together made the process of redistricting both more consequential and more difficult.

The book is divided into chronological chapters, beginning with the reapportionment revolution in the 1960s and the 1971 redistricting cycle, through the implantation of the 2011 California Redistricting Commission. This is an appropriate time span as restrictions on malapportionment (placing different numbers of people in electoral districts to dilute or amplify the voting strength of certain groups) and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 incorporated racial considerations into California redistricting in a way that they had not been previously. Each decade's redistricting cycles are given a separate chapter, and two additional chapters (4 and 7) are dedicated to studies of legal conflicts and reform, the 1988 voting rights case *Garza v Los Angeles County* and the 2001 California Voting Rights Act, respectively. The organizational design falls naturally from the subject, and relevant racial and partisan election tables, as well as election maps, are provided near the end of each chapter for easy reference.

Those interested in the dynamics of the redistricting process are treated to an extensive description of the many institutional restraints and political considerations that enter into the politics of map drawing. For example, the courts have played an integral role in the process in every redistricting cycle, as both political consideration and restraint, such as Governor Wilson's strategic decision to try to get from the courts what he could not from the legislature in the 1990s to the bipartisan incumbent-protection compromise designed to avoid court intervention in the 2001 redistricting. As Richomme documents, court-directed redistricting recently emerged as a major force under the California Voting Rights Act, this time as a weapon deployed by voting rights groups, often in opposition to partisan and local elites.

Professor Richomme shows how term limits impact the redistricting calculus, raising the relevance of which groups are likely to be empowered in upcoming open contests. In turn, the demographics of primary elections, and the distribution of low- and high-turnout voters among adjacent seats, increase in salience. The budget process itself intervenes: how much capital could Governor Davis invest in gerrymandering when he would eventually need Republican votes to pass a budget by supermajority? These considerations, as well as tactics, from dissolving a vulnerable opponent's seat across one's own seats, or collapsing several opposition seats into one, strengthening existing party seats, or creating a new one by increasing competition, all shift costs and benefits across the various groups that make up a party coalition, shaping its future.

And in the case of the California Democratic Party, that coalition now includes every salient ethnic, racial and sexual orientation group within the state, basically competing within a single party for electoral representation, given the Republican Party's strategic blundering and population shifts within their demographic strongholds. One sees shades of today's Orange County in Richomme's recollections of how GOP strongholds in the San Fernando Valley gave way to increasingly reactive Republican leadership and waves of immigration that eventually wiped them out. Yet the beneficiaries of that population growth and transition have not always been the newly settled populations.

The lasting contribution of *Race and Partisanship in California Redistricting* is to persuasively demonstrate that the goal of racial representation in line with, or proportional to a group's demographic strength is not infrequently subverted in favor of partisan advantage. This is not a surprise to scholars of political parties, but the sacrifices that groups like the United Farm Workers made in terms of Latino/a representation in the 2000s, the dilemmas faced by African American representatives in increasingly diverse districts, and other ways that Democratic Party leaders have used the power they wield with new coalition members, to their disadvantage, brings home just how central this tension has been in California.

As control over the redistricting process is further democratized, first through the widespread availability of redistricting data to groups outside of party elites, and then institutionally through more deliberative redistricting processes, reconciliation between partisan and coalition group preferences becomes more difficult. As Richomme's analysis unfolds, it becomes clear that conjoined racial and partisan polarization is likely to result in greater intra-party conflict over competing demands for representation under our single-seat district system.

Professor Richomme acknowledges that perhaps moving to a multi-seat, proportional electoral system could help ameliorate the dilemma, but he concludes that it remains, in the words of Bruce Cain, "the last taboo in American politics." Alas, we are left with the stark reality that "The conflation of race and partisanship *is* the American political paradigm." The lack of a well-developed theory of representation to guide analysis or prescribe a remedy to this challenge is the most significant shortcoming of *Race and Partisanship in California Redistricting*, though the historical goal and judicial intimations toward proportional racial representation are covered. Left largely unconsidered is whether the adoption of proportionality as an electoral design principle would leave party leaders as kingmakers, or if it would yield greater control to contending groups.

On August 25th of this year, the Democratic Party officially resolved to support the institution of proportional representation and multi-member districts "to foster greater electoral representation, provide equity to minority discourses, and increase the diversity of our elected officials." It appears that the tension between racial and partisan representation may be forcing party leaders toward an institutional accommodation. However this next chapter plays out, *Race*

and Partisanship in California Redistricting provides a valuable history to understand how we have arrived here.

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