



Kevin M. Kruse @KevinMKruse

22 Jun 19 • 11 tweets • [KevinMKruse/status/1142454240377524230](https://twitter.com/KevinMKruse/status/1142454240377524230)



Thanks to the trolls in my mentions, I see Kevin Williamson is back at it in the pages of [@NRO](#).

All right, a short thread.



Joe and the Segs | National Review

Biden here has performed something of a public service: smoking out the few people in the Democratic party who are less serious than he is.

<https://www.nationalreview.com/2019/06/joe-biden-segregationist-comments-controversy/>

First of all, I'm flattered by the shout-out.

By "a reliable peddler of this sort of thing" I can only assume Williamson meant that I am "a reliable peddler of the overwhelming consensus of four decades of work by historians and political scientists."

Democrats do not much care for being reminded of their party's history of frank and energetic racism. They insist that that was, in fact, another party, and that the Democrats and Republicans "changed places" on the matter of civil rights for African Americans. Professor Kevin Kruse of Princeton, a reliable peddler of this kind of thing, offered the usual dodge:



Kevin M. Kruse ✓
@KevinMKruse



A history lesson "is" warranted. Senators James Eastland and Herman Talmadge were southern "conservatives"—as were other segregationists, in both parties.

[twitter.com/TomCottonAR/st...](https://twitter.com/TomCottonAR/status/1142454240377524230)

Tom Cotton ✓ @TomCottonAR

A history lesson is warranted: Senators James Eastland and Herman Talmadge were "Democrats"—as were other segregationists. @JoeBiden & them have nothing to do with "bipartisanship," so please leave GOP out of Democrats' debates about their party's troubled history on race.

♥ 5,990 6:40 PM - Jun 19, 2019

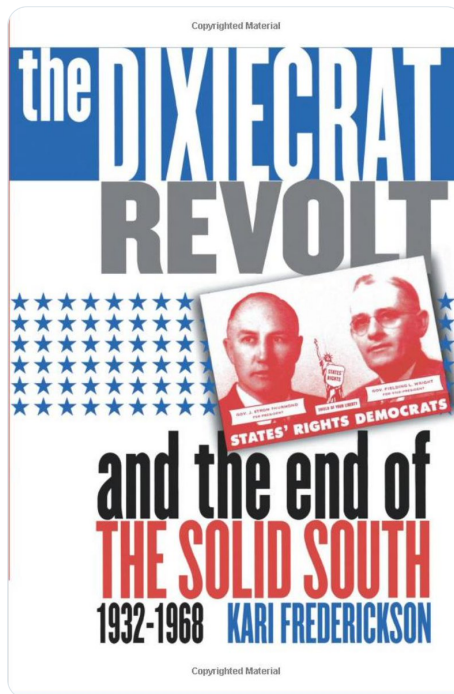
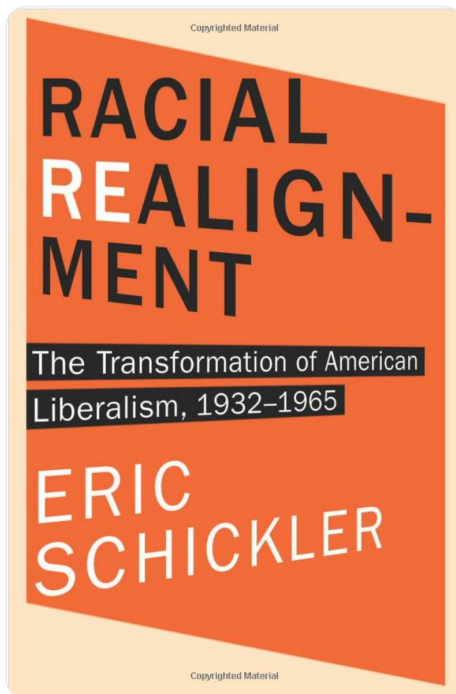
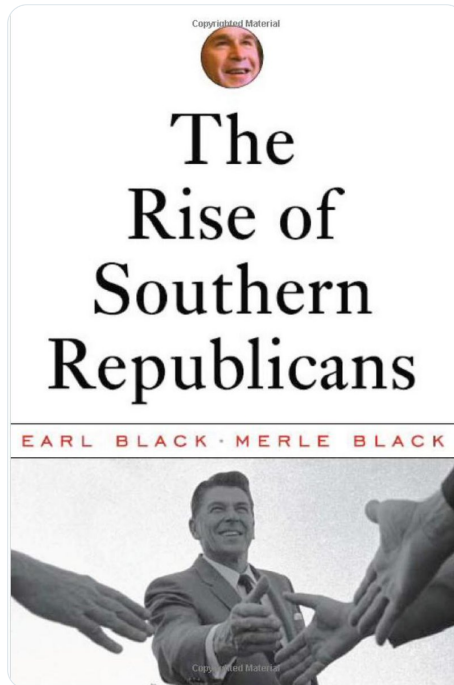
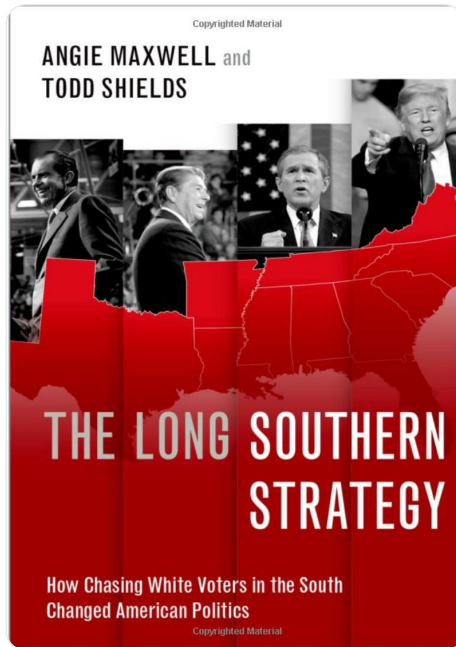


💬 1,577 people are talking about this



My Twitter presence leads some to single me out now, but -- and I can't repeat this enough -- the case I present online is not some kind of edgy revisionism that I'm

pushing alone but a standard account chronicled by countless historians and political scientists for decades.



Beyond the standard denialism about the party realignment, Williamson specifically takes issue with my assertion in this thread of mine that, when Biden entered the Senate in 1973, Jim Eastland (D-MS) and Herman Talmadge (D-GA) were seen as conservative.



Kevin M. Kruse 
@KevinMKruse



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5,992 10:40 PM - Jun 19, 2019

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Williamson asserts that "by most criteria" men like them were understood to be progressives.

Which criteria exactly?

That is, of course, false. Conservatives largely opposed the New Deal, while segregationist Democrats were critical to making it happen. [Most of the segregationist Democrats of the FDR-LBJ era were committed New Dealers and, by most criteria, progressives.](#) They largely supported welfare

In that thread and this one too, I went to lengths to show that, in 1973, by the criteria of the American Conservative Union -- you know, Matt Schlapp's group? the one that runs CPAC today? -- Eastland and Talmadge were considered to be quite conservative.



Kevin M. Kruse  @KevinMKruse



Let me put this another way:

For 1973, Joe Biden's first year in Congress, the American Conservative Union judged that Sen. Jim Eastland (D-MS) and Sen. Herman Talmadge (D-GA) were more conservative than 23 of the 44 Republicans in the Senate.

[twitter.com/KevinMKruse/st...](https://twitter.com/KevinMKruse/status/1139888888888888888)

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Replying to @KevinMKruse

Here are the ACU's Senate ratings for Biden's first year in office, 1973.

Eastland and Talmadge scored 77 and 76 (24th and 25th most conservative).

Meanwhile, Biden scored a 9 (74th most conservative, between Ted Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey). [acuratings.conservative.org/acu-federal-le...](https://www.acuratings.conservative.org/acu-federal-le...)

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436 1:49 AM - Jun 20, 2019


131 people are talking about this

But maybe the American Conservative Union was an unreliable judge of ... American Conservatism.

Well, how about William F. Buckley Jr., who identifies Talmadge and Eastland as "conservative-minded Democrats" who might be lured to switch to the GOP?

Who Will Follow Thurmond?

By WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.



BUCKLEY

Senator Strom Thurmond's bolt from the Democratic Party to become, officially, a member of the Republican Party is a switch of enormous significance, one of those by-products of the Goldwater candidacy that will ripple through the political history of this country for many years to come.

The notion of a Republican representing South Carolina in the Senate of the United States is breathtaking to adamant Southerners, and it remains of course to be seen whether Senator Thurmond will get away with it. He will not run for reelection until two years hence, so that there is no immediate opportunity for South Carolinians to repudiate him, in the event they should choose to do so. The chances are that they will not: that his switch to the Republican Party will be verified by the voters. Whereupon, the defection in the heartland of the South that began with the election of John Tower to the Senate three years ago will have been confirmed: one-party rule in the South will have ended.



There will ensue, of course, an intense struggle for power, and it will have one unfortunate effect, namely to polarize the parties in the South. The die-hard Democrats who stick with the Democratic Party will almost certainly feel the necessity to go left, and take refuge in the loving arms of Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey.


In South Carolina, for instance, Governor Donald Russell, at heart a conservative, and a man of charm and intelligence, will almost certainly stick with the Democrats; and it is not at all unlikely that he will run against Strom Thurmond in 1966. On what issues? The tug will be to the left specifically as the result of the defection of Strom Thurmond.

Up until now, Democrats could say that after all, in their state the Democratic Party encompassed a conservative like Thurmond, a middle-of-the-roader like Russell, and a liberal like Olin Johnston. Now that it is no longer possible to say that, the Repub-

mond, six, or possibly eight, conceivably ten Democratic senators could be persuaded to move in a bloc to the Republican side of the aisle provided . . . If Senator Russell, joined, let us really speculate, by Senator Lausche, should attempt to mobilize a defection syndicate on the understanding that all bets are off until they amass a group large enough to guarantee a reorganization of the Senate under Republican leadership, the temptation would be enormous to go ahead and do so.

Who might join in such a movement? Mostly of course conservative-minded Democrats; but they would not all need to be so. Liberals like Olin Johnston, for instance, might face elimination at the polls in their own state now that the Republican Party has become more or less official. So that self-interest itself might dictate a receptive attitude towards the overtures of the Defection Syndicate. Who might be approached? James Eastland for instance, John McClellan, John Steins, Sam Ervin, Herman Talmadge, Allen Ellender, Spessard Holland, John Sparkman.

**Kevin M. Kruse** 

@KevinMKruse 

Another way to understand Eastland and Talmadge's place in national politics in the civil rights era:

After Strom Thurmond switched to the GOP in 1964, conservatives like William F. Buckley Jr. hoped that Eastland, Talmadge and other Dixiecrats might be persuaded to switch too.

♥ 738 3:27 PM - Jun 20, 2019

319 people are talking about this

So the American Conservative Union thought Eastland and Talmadge were conservative & William F. Buckley Jr. thought so too.

Williamson ignores all that and points to Talmadge's vote on Medicare. (You'll note he ignores Eastland's vote. Here it is.)

Mississippi			
Nay	MS		Eastland, James
Nay	MS		Stennis, John

How representative was that one vote? How conservative were Eastland and Talmadge in 1965?

The ACU ratings don't start until 1971, but at the other end, the ADA had its liberal

Talmadge got a 12 from the ADA that year. Eastland ... zero. (Note Russell & Stennis too.)

MISSISSIPPI
Eastland.....0
Stanton.....0
MISSOURI

So conservatives like the American Conservative Union & William F. Buckley thought they were conservatives, and liberals like the ADA thought they were conservatives.

And what about National Review itself?

Well, it literally ran a poem to Talmadge's conservatism in Jan 1972.

Thank You, Senator Talmadge

You sneaked a work-for-welfare line
Right in a bill he had to sign.
He signed it, saying he agreed,
And how the country has a need
For honest sweat and honest work.
(He sounded just like Edmund Burke.)
I hope he wasn't mouthing pap.
We'll know the day he flushes FAP.

W. H. VON DREELE ·

14 NATIONAL REVIEW

By most criteria, yes, it seems that Talmadge and Eastland were conservative.

Sincerely,
Your Most Humble and Reliable Peddler

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