

Chapter 16 Outline - Reconstruction: An Unfinished Revolution, 1865–1877

- I. Introduction

The end of the Civil War brought profound changes to the United States. Reconstruction changed some things, but it did little regarding social equality and political turmoil. In the end, the government established black suffrage, but this reform proved insufficient to remake the South or to guarantee human rights.

- II. Wartime Reconstruction

- A. Lincoln's 10 Percent Plan

Lincoln planned for a swift and moderate Reconstruction process. Under his 10 percent plan, he proposed that as soon as 10 percent of the voting population in the 1860 election took an oath to the United States and established a government, it would be recognized.

- B. Congress and the Wade-Davis Bill

Responding negatively to Lincoln's Reconstruction plan, Thaddeus Stevens advocated a "conquered province" theory. In July 1864, Congress passed the Wade-Davis bill by which the process of readmission to the Union was to be harsh and slow. Lincoln pocket-vetoed the bill.

- C. Thirteenth Amendment

Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment on January 31, 1865. The Amendment abolished slavery and gave Congress the power of enforcement.

- D. Freedmen's Bureau

On March 3, 1865, Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands to aid southern refugees. During its

four-year history, the Bureau supplied food and medical services, built schools and colleges, negotiated employment contracts between freedmen and former masters, and tried to manage confiscated land.

- E. Ruins and Enmity

At the end of the Civil War, America was in ruins and many white refugees faced starvation.

- III. The Meanings of Freedom

- A. The Feel of Freedom

Many former slaves began to explore freedom by searching for family members or exercising their right of mobility. Others reacted more cautiously. Most settled as workers on their former farms or plantations but attempted to control the conditions of their labor.

- B. Reunion of African American Families

Relying on the black community in the South, thousands of former slaves began odysseys to find family members.

- C. Blacks' Search for Independence

Many blacks tried to avoid contact with overbearing whites by abandoning their slave quarters and relocating their houses. Some even established all-black settlements.

- D. Freedpeople's Desire for Land

Next to freedom, blacks wanted land most of all. Since they could not secure solid support in the North, however, few obtained their dream of economic independence.

- E. Black Embrace of Education

Many African Americans eagerly sought an education. Federal aid and

northern charity helped start thousands of schools for freedmen in the South.

- F. Growth of Black Churches

In an effort to gain more independence from whites, African Americans established their own churches, which became the social center of their new freedom.

- G. Rise of the Sharecropping System

Blacks could not get credit, and sharecropping became widespread. Owners often cheated their tenants.

Most southern farmers grew cotton, but a weak market created low prices that made dependence on cotton a mistake. Many white farmers lost their land as a result, and joined the ranks of sharecroppers.

- IV. Johnson's Reconstruction Plan

- A. Andrew Johnson of Tennessee

Johnson was the only senator from a seceded state (Tennessee) who refused to follow his state out of the Union. At heart he was really a Jacksonian Democrat, not a Republican. He believed in limited government.

- B. Johnson's Racial Views

Johnson was a white supremacist and did not favor black civil and political rights. Johnson's belief that black suffrage could never be imposed on a southern state by the federal government put him on a collision course with the Radical Republicans.

- C. Johnson's Pardon Policy

At first it appeared that Johnson hoped to keep prewar leaders from

participating in the Reconstructed South.

- D. Presidential Reconstruction

Nevertheless, Johnson ended up pardoning most southern aristocrats and former rebels, thus allowing the old elite to return to power. Only eight months after Appomattox, Johnson declared Reconstruction complete. In December 1865, many former Confederate congressmen traveled to Washington to take their seats in the new U.S. Congress.

- E. Black Codes

Johnson's pardons upset many Republicans, but the discriminatory black codes revealed the depth of southern defiance.

- V. The Congressional Reconstruction Plan

- A. The Radicals

The Radicals wanted to transform the South, and they were willing to exclude it from the Union until they had achieved their goal. By refusing to work with conservative and moderate Republicans, Johnson and the Democrats forced them to work with the Radicals.

- B. Congress Versus Johnson

Congress worked to extend the Freedmen's Bureau and to pass a civil rights law counteracting the black codes. Johnson vetoed these bills, ending hopes of compromise.

- C. Fourteenth Amendment

This amendment gave citizenship to freedmen, prohibited states from interfering with constitutional rights, declared the Confederate war debt null and void, barred Confederate leaders from holding state and federal office, and punished any state that restricted extension of the right to vote to black men.

- D. The South's and Johnson's Defiance, 1866

At the urging of President Johnson, all southern states except Tennessee rejected the Fourteenth Amendment. Having won overwhelmingly in the 1866 congressional elections, Republicans decided to form new southern state governments.

- E. Reconstruction Acts of 1867–1868

Congress set up five military districts in the South, guaranteed freedmen the right to vote in elections for state constitutional conventions, required congressional approval of all new state constitutions, and declared that southern states must accept the Fourteenth Amendment.

- F. Failure of Land Redistribution

Thaddeus Stevens failed to win approval for his plan to confiscate and redistribute land in the former Confederate states.

- G. Constitutional Crisis

Congress passed a number of controversial laws, including the Tenure of Office Act, by overriding presidential vetoes. Johnson proceeded to take several belligerent steps, including removal of Secretary of War Stanton.

- H. Impeachment of President Johnson

After Johnson removed Secretary of War Stanton, Congress impeached the president. Although acquitted in the Senate, Johnson suffered politically.

- I. Election of 1868

Grant, a supporter of congressional Reconstruction and of black suffrage in the South, won the 1868 presidential election.

- J. Fifteenth Amendment

In 1869, Radicals succeeded in passing the Fifteenth Amendment, which prohibited denying the right to vote based on “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Voting rights of women could still be denied.

- VI. Politics and Reconstruction in the South

- A. White Resistance

Whites in the South resisted Reconstruction. Some denied freedom to their slaves, while others prevented blacks from getting land. White resistance also included the use of violence.

- B. Black Voters and the Southern Republican Party

Thanks to a large black voter turnout and restrictions on prominent Confederates, a new southern Republican Party controlled the state constitutional conventions of 1868–1870. The new state constitutions were more democratic. The constitutional conventions broadened women’s rights in property and divorce.

- C. Triumph of Republican Governments

Republican victory in the South meant that for the first time black citizens gained political office. Southern Republicans worked to build white support for the party and condemned itself to defeat if white voters would not cooperate.

- D. Industrialization and Mill Towns

Republican governments tried to industrialize the South, but higher taxes for that purpose drew money away from education and other reforms. Many whites were impoverished. As farming became less desirable, whites and blacks moved to cities and mill towns.

- E. Republicans and Racial Equality

Economic progress remained uppermost in the minds of most southern blacks. They accepted segregated facilities in return for other opportunities.

- F. Myth of “Negro Rule”

Southern Conservatives used economic and social pressure on blacks as well as inflammatory racist propaganda to undermine congressional Reconstruction. Despite the charge of “black domination,” African Americans did not dominate or control events.

- G. Carpetbaggers and Scalawags

In their propaganda, Conservatives labeled northerners seeking economic opportunity as “carpetbaggers” and white southerners who supported the Republicans as “scalawags.”

- H. Tax Policy and Corruption as Political Wedges

Although an increase in taxes was necessary just to maintain traditional services, Republican tax policies aroused strong opposition. The corruption with which Republicans were charged was often true.

- I. Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan terrorized black leaders in an effort to curb their support for the Republicans. This campaign of terror was often organized by the wealthy and the powerful in an effort to retake political control.

A number of things brought about the collapse of the Republican regimes, forcing them out of office before they instituted social and economic reforms.

- VII. Retreat from Reconstruction

- A. Political Implications of Klan Terrorism

Congress passed two Enforcement Acts in 1870 and 1871 in an effort to counteract Klan violence. The laws were enforced selectively. Congressional opponents of these laws charged that Congress was infringing on states' rights.

- B. Industrial Expansion and Reconstruction in the North

Both industrialization and immigration surged in the years immediately after the Civil War. Political corruption ran rampant.

There was gross economic inequality that polarized American society, and the struggle between labor and capital intensified. Then came the Panic of 1873.

- C. Liberal Republican Revolt

Although Grant won reelection in 1872, the revolt of the Liberal Republicans in conjunction with opposition from the Democrats reinforced Grant's desire to avoid confrontation with white southerners.

- D. General Amnesty

In 1872, Congress offered amnesty to most remaining former Confederates, and in 1875 it offered a watered-down Civil Rights Act that the Supreme Court eventually struck down.

- E. The West, Race, and Reconstruction

The federal government pursued a policy of containment against Native Americans in the West. Hispanics in the Southwest and the Chinese in California were subjected to racial prejudice and persecution.

- F. Foreign Expansion

In 1867, the United States purchased Alaska from Russia and also took control of the Midway Islands.

- G. Judicial Retreat from Reconstruction

Supreme Court decisions, by narrowing the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment and by denying equal rights, encouraged the northern retreat from Reconstruction.

- H. Disputed Election of 1876 and the Compromise of 1877

The disputed election between Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel Tilden resulted in the Compromise of 1877, effectively ending Reconstruction in the South.

Tens of thousands of southern African Americans felt betrayed by the election of 1876.