Reconstruction and Its Effects

The US begins to rebuild the South, but former slaves face new challenges as support fades for the policies of Reconstruction.

Ruins in Charleston, SC
Section 1

The Politics of Reconstruction

Key Questions!

1. How do we bring the South back into the Union?
2. How do we rebuild the South after its destruction during the war?
3. How do we integrate and protect newly-emancipated black freedmen?
4. What branch of government should control the process of Reconstruction?

Congress opposes Lincoln’s and Johnson’s plans for Reconstruction and instead implements its own plan to rebuild the South.
Lincoln’s Plan for Reconstruction

Lincoln’s Ten-Percent Plan

- **Reconstruction**—period of rebuilding after Civil War, 1865–1877
- Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction called for 10% of population to swear allegiance
- **Radical Republicans** led by Charles Sumner, Thaddeus Stevens
  - wanted to destroy power of former slaveholders
  - wanted to give full citizenship, suffrage to African Americans

Radical Reaction

- 1864 **Wade-Davis Bill** made Congress responsible for Reconstruction
- Lincoln used pocket veto to kill Wade-Davis; Radicals outraged
Assassination!
Johnson Continued
Lincoln’s Policies

- President Andrew Johnson proposed own Presidential Reconstruction:
  - states must swear allegiance, annul war debts, ratify 13th Amendment
  - did not address voting rights, land, laws for former slaves
- States that had not applied under Lincoln agreed to Johnson’s terms
  - some states did not fully comply
Presidential Reconstruction Comes to a Standstill

- Radical Republicans in Congress refused new Southern legislators
- Congress enlarged **Freedmen’s Bureau**—helped former slaves, poor whites; gave social services, medical care, education

Civil Rights Act of 1866

- Congress passed Civil Rights Act of 1866:
  - granted citizenship to African Americans
  - prohibited **black codes** or discriminatory laws
- Black codes restored many restrictions of slavery
- Whites used violence to prevent blacks from improving their lives
- Johnson vetoed Freedmen’s Bureau and Civil Rights Act
- Alienated moderate Republicans; angers Radicals
Congressional Reconstruction

Moderates and Radicals Join Forces
- In mid-1866, moderate Republicans joined Radicals to override veto
- Drafted Fourteenth Amendment—makes African Americans full citizens
- Most Southern states rejected amendment; not ratified until 1868

1866 Congressional Elections
- Johnson was jeered on tour urging election of supporters of his plan
- Moderates, Radicals win 2/3 majority in Congress, can override veto
Reconstruction Act of 1867

- 1867 Reconstruction Act didn’t recognize most new state governments
  - divided South into military districts
  - set new conditions for reentry in Union
- Johnson believes act unconstitutional, vetoed; Congress overturned the veto

Johnson Impeached

- Radicals sought to impeach—formally charge with misconduct in office
- Johnson fired Stanton—tests constitutionality of Tenure of Office Act
- House Radicals impeached Johnson; Senate did not convict
Johnson was impeached in 1868. The trial took place in May of 1868.

The Senate voted 35-19 for removal, one vote shy of the 2/3rds needed!
Ulysses S. Grant Elected
• 1868, Grant won presidency with help of African-American vote
• **Fifteenth Amendment**—gave voting rights to all, regardless of color
• South did not enforce 14th, 15th Amendments
• White Southerners used violence to prevent blacks from voting
• Enforcement Act of 1870—federal government could punish violators

Waving the “Bloody Shirt!”
Section 2

Reconstructing Society

Various groups contributed to the rebuilding of Southern society after the war.
Conditions in the Postwar South

Physical and Economic Conditions
- By 1870, all Confederate states in Union had Republican governments
- Buildings, infrastructure, farms destroyed throughout South
- People poor; property value plummeted, Confederate bonds worthless
- 1/5 white males dead, many maimed; tens of thousands black males dead

Public Works Programs
- Transportation; homes for orphans, disabled; public schools built
- Northern capitalists did not invest in South; states had to raise taxes
Politics in the Postwar South

Scalawags and Carpetbaggers

- Democrats called Southern white Republicans **scalawags**
  - most are small farmers
  - want better economic position
- **Carpetbaggers**—Northerners who moved to South after war

African Americans as Voters

- African Americans were largest group of Southern Republicans
- In many areas, 90% of African-American voters voted
Politics in the Postwar South

Political Differences
• Few scalawags supported civil rights for blacks; many rejoined Dem party
• Republican governors appointed Democrats; did not win white support
• Some whites supported Republicans; thought end of slavery good for South
• Many whites refuse to accept new status or equal rights for blacks
• Several thousand Southerners emigrate to Europe, Mexico, Brazil

New-Won Freedoms
• At first, former slaves were cautious about testing limits of freedom
• Some traveled to new places
• Many leave plantations to find work in Southern towns

Reunification of Families
• Many search for loved ones on different plantations
• Couples could marry legally and be sure of keeping their children
Education

• Freed people of all ages sought education
• African Americans established schools and universities
• Initially, most teachers were Northern whites; by 1869, most were black

Churches and Volunteer Groups

• Many African Americans founded churches; mostly Baptist, Methodist
• Black ministers became influential community leaders
• African Americans form thousands of volunteer organizations:
  - foster independence
  - give financial, emotional support
  - offer leadership opportunities
Politics and African Americans

- 1865–1877, African Americans held local, state, federal office
- At first, most officeholders were freeborn; by 1867 some were former slaves
- Almost as many black as white citizens; black officeholders were the minority
  - only 16 African Americans in Congress
    - Hiram Revels is first black senator
Laws Against Segregation
• By 1866, Republican governments repealed most black codes
• Anti-segregation laws created, but many not enforced
• Blacks focused on building up their community, not total integration

40 Acres and a Mule
• Sherman: slaves who follow him can have 40 acres, use of army mules
  - freed slaves settle on abandoned land
  - Johnson ordered them evicted
• Many Republicans rejected seizing property; passed weak land-reform laws

Restoration of Plantations
• African Americans, poor whites want small farms
• Planters, Northern merchants, mill owners want cotton plantations
• Planters fear will be unable to make profit if must pay wages
• Freedmen work in mills, railroad, farming
  - planters prevent them getting land
Changes in the Southern Economy

Sharecropping and Tenant Farming
- Landless African Americans signed labor contracts with planters - neither freedmen nor planters were happy with this system
- **Sharecropping**—owner gave land, seed, tools for part of crops
- **Tenant farming**—rented land from owner; bought own tools

Cotton No Longer King
- Other countries increased cotton production; South created oversupply
- Tried to diversify—textiles, tobacco products; wages lower than North
- Banks held Confederate debt, mounting planters’ debts; many fail
Share Cropping and Tenant Farming

1. Sharecroppers are given small plots of land and seed by landowners

2. Sharecroppers buy food, clothing, and supplies on credit

3. Plant a crop; yields are low and the same crop every year depletes the soil

4. Sharecroppers must give landlords a large share of their crops

5. Sharecroppers sell what they have left, but are at the mercy of the market

6. Sharecroppers pay off their accounts; some landlords and merchants charge unfair fines for late payments

7. Some with leftover cash could become tenant farmers

Cycle would then start over again
Southern opposition to Radical Reconstruction, along with economic problems in the North, end Reconstruction.
Opposition to Reconstruction

Ku Klux Klan
- **Ku Klux Klan (KKK)**—Confederate veterans group that turned terrorist
- Grew rapidly; aimed to restore white supremacy

Anti-Black Violence
- 1868–1871 Klan, others killed thousands, burn schools, churches, homes
- Klan worked to force Republican state governments out of power
- Southern Democrats used violence to intimidate black voters
- White Democratic candidates won state elections in 1875, 1876
Economic Pressure
- Black landowners, non-farmers attacked, had property destroyed
- Need forced freedmen into wage labor, sharecropping for whites

Legislative Response
- 1870, 1871 Enforcement Acts passed to curtail Klan, Democrats
  - Supreme Court ruled 1871 act unconstitutional
- Klan violence decreased because restored white supremacy in South

Shifts in Political Power
- 1872 Amnesty Act returned voting rights to many former Confederates
- Congress allowed Freedmen’s Bureau to expire
Fraud and Bribery

- Grant considered honest; appointed friends to political office
- Beginning in 1872, series of Grant administration scandals exposed

**MAJOR** corruption issues
1. Credit Mobilier
2. Whiskey Ring
3. Bribes (Belknap)

**GRANTISM!**
Republican Unity Shattered

- 1872, Liberal Republican Party formed, nominated Horace Greeley
- Democrats also nominated Greeley; Grant won by wide margin
- Liberal Republicans weakened Radicals, made Reconstruction difficult
Election of 1872
Economic Turmoil

The Panic of 1873
• Business opportunities in South led investors to excessive debt
  Largest government securities dealer bankrupts, started panic of 1873
  - banks, businesses closed; stock market collapsed
• Panic triggered 5-year economic depression

Currency Dispute
• Panic of 1873 fueled dispute over currency
  - financial experts wanted return to gold standard
  - South, West wanted more greenbacks to pay debts
• 1875, Specie Resumption Act put country back on gold standard
Continued Scandal

• Administration corruption continues;

• Grant would not seek reelection in 1876
Judicial and Popular Support Fades

Reconstruction Amendments
• 13th: Abolished Slavery
• 14th: Defined citizenship and provided “due process of law” for all citizens
• 15th: Black male suffrage

Supreme Court Decisions
• 1870s Supreme Court decisions undermined 14th, 15th Amendments
• Federal government lost power to protect African-American rights

Northern Support Fades
• Northerners grew indifferent to events in South:
  - shifted attention to national problems
  - wanted reconciliation between regions
  - began to dislike Reconstruction policies
• Republicans gave up from lack of judicial, public support, leaders
• Republicans concluded government cannot impose moral, social changes
Democrats Recapture the South

- **Redemption**—return of Democrats to power in the South, 1869–1875
Democrats “Redeem” the South

Election of 1876

- Republicans nominated Governor **Rutherford B. Hayes**, not Grant
- Democrats chose Governor **Samuel J. Tilden**
- Tilden won popular vote, 1 shy of electoral; 20 electoral disputed
- **Compromise of 1877**—Hayes won presidency, Democrats got:
  - federal troops leave LA, SC
  - funding for Southern railroad and waterways
  - conservative Southerner in cabinet
- Compromise meant end of Reconstruction
Home Rule in the South

• After Hayes removed federal troops, Democrats took over southern states
• **Home rule**—running state government without federal intervention

Legacy of Reconstruction

• Republicans failed to protect rights they gave to former slaves
• Unwillingness to distribute land blocked economic independence
• Amendments abolished slavery, gave basis for civil rights legislation
• African-American schools, civic groups increased literacy, and opportunity