Reconstruction: 1863-1877

1. Issues facing the Union post war
   1. How would the South rebuild its society and economy?
   2. What to do with 4 million freed African Americans?
   3. To what extent was the Federal government responsible for helping freed African Americans?
   4. How should “rebel” states be treated/punished?
   5. Who had the authority to address the primary issues of reconstruction?
2. Lincoln’s Reconstruction Plan
   1. Held firm position that the state’s had never actually left the union
   2. Also held that the Union should be lenient in readmitting states back into the union
   3. **Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction** (1863)
      1. Full presidential pardons granted to Confederates who
         1. Took an oath of allegiance to the US government and constitution
         2. Accepted the emancipation of slaves
      2. A State government could be reestablished as part of the Union once 10% of voters in that state took the oath of loyalty (**10% plan**)
      3. Southern states would be required to rewrite state constitutions and abolish slavery
      4. Designed to shorten the war
   4. Congressional dissent
      1. Wade-Davis Bill (1864)
         1. Republican bill required 50% of voters to take an oath
         2. Only non-Confederates could vote for a new state constitution
      2. Lincoln pocket vetoed, and opened up talks in regard to compromise
   5. Freedmen’s Bureau
      1. Early welfare agency, which provided food, shelter, and medical aid for freed blacks and homeless whites
         1. Established nearly 3000 schools for freed blacks
         2. Funding ended in 1870
   6. Lincoln’s assassination ended early hopes of lasting reform for African Americans (such as the right to vote)
3. Andrew Johnson takes office
   1. A southern Democrat, who stayed loyal to the Union
   2. Chosen by Lincoln as running mate to encourage pro-union democrats to vote for the Union/Republican party
   3. Personality traits
      1. Self-taught, favored poor-whites (and held animosity toward wealthy planters), also a white supremacist
   4. Johnson’s Reconstruction Plan
      1. Similar to Lincoln’s 10% plan
         1. Also, disenfranchisement of former Confederate leaders
         2. Disenfranchisement of Confederates with more than $20,000 in taxable property (Southern Aristocrats)
      2. Still retained the right to issue individual pardons
         1. Many Confederates held Union office again by the fall of 1865
   5. **The First Round of Reconstruction**: The Failures of Presidential Reconstruction
      1. By the end of 1865, 11 ex-Confederate states had already qualified under Johnson’s reconstruction plan to be readmitted
         1. New Constitutions outlawed slavery in accordance with the 13th amendment, but
            1. No voting rights for blacks included
            2. Some former confederate leaders already started winning office-holding seats
      2. **“Black Codes”**
         1. Laws created by southern legislatures to restrict the rights and movements of former slaves
            1. Prohibited blacks from renting land or borrowing money to buy land
            2. Placed freedmen into a “slave-like” system, where they were forced to sign work contracts, and gained little in the form of income through a deferred wage system
            3. Prohibited blacks from testifying against whites in court
      3. Johnson Vetoes
         1. The President vetoed a significant number of bills, often to favor southern (Democratic) states
         2. Some vetoes upset even moderate Republicans
            1. Veto examples include

A bill that extended protections of the Freedmen’s bureau

A bill that nullified Black codes and guaranteed full citizenship to blacks (the first Civil Rights Act)

* 1. The Second Round of Reconstruction: Congressional Reconstruction
     1. Radical Republicans upset by Johnson’s plans, decided to usher in new laws and rules to favor black rights and punish the Southern states
     2. Republican Party
        1. Moderate Republicans
           1. Main concern was economic gains for middle class
        2. Radical Republicans
           1. Sought to extend civil rights for blacks and punish southern states

Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens were prominent Radicals

* + - 1. More Republicans became radical as time progressed in an effort to quell the Southern electorate which was going to be more dominant in congressional representation as a result of the 3/5 rule’s negation
    1. Civil Rights Act of 1866
       1. All African Americans were, indeed, Citizens (negating Dred Scott) and made an attempt to negate “black codes” of the South
    2. Fourteenth Amendment (ratified in 1868, proposed in 1866)
       1. Sought to maintain a more permanent position on Civil Rights
       2. Established
          1. All people born or naturalized in US were citizens
          2. State’s must respect due process of law and guarantee equal protection to all (extending the wording of the 5th amendment)

In other words, both the Federal government AND states were required to uphold the rights of citizens

Not until the 1960’s would these clauses receive their modern translations

* + - * 1. Disqualified former Confederate political leaders from holding office (state or federal)
        2. Got rid of Southern debts owed
        3. Reduced a state’s representation in Congress and electoral college if it kept any eligible person from voting (as a punishment)
    1. Congress officially rejects Presidential Reconstruction
       1. A congressional committee recommended (1866 – the same year as the proposed 14th amendment) that ex-Confederates elected into seats after the war would not be permitted to take their seats
          1. This, along with the 14th amendment, essentially negated the President’s Reconstruction plan
    2. The Election of 1866
       1. Congressional election
          1. Johnson sought to attack and remove his opponents from office

Johnson:

Speeches that appealed to Democrats and whites based on racial prejudices and white superiority

Republicans:

Appeals to voters by “waving the bloody shirt” a phrase which describes the appeals to Northern voters on reminding them of the hardships of the war

* + - * 1. Republicans win overwhelmingly (had both 2/3 in house and senate)
    1. Reconstruction Acts of 1867 (3)
       1. Divided former Confederate states into five military districts, each under the control of a General and the Union Army
       2. Increased requirements for admittance into the Union
          1. States would have to ratify the 14th amendment
          2. States would have to place guarantees for voting rights for all (including blacks)
    2. Impeachment and attempted removal of Andrew Johnson
       1. Congress passed the “Tenure of Office Act” in 1867
          1. Prohibited the president from removing a federal official or military commander without the approval of the Senate

Political law passed to protect Radical Republicans that Johnson may have tried to remove

* + - 1. Johnson believed the new law was unconstitutional and thus challenged the law by removing Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, a radical republican in charge of the military governments of the south)
      2. The house impeached (accused) Johnson on 11 “high crimes and misdemeanors” in 1868
         1. He became the first president to be impeached
      3. He was not removed from office in the Senate trial due to concerns over the precedent that this action would set (to remove someone purely out of political motivation)
  1. The Election of 1868
     1. Republicans nominate Ulysses S. Grant and Democrats nominate Horatio Seymour
        1. Grant wins a narrow victory, largely due in part to black votes in states that had already allowed for universal male suffrage
     2. Republicans realize the need to gain and control the black vote, thus they work to pass an amendment to secure this protection
  2. The 15th Amendment (1869)
     1. Prohibited states from denying the right to vote based on a person’s skin color
  3. The Civil Rights Act of 1875
     1. This law guaranteed equal accommodations in public places (hotels, rail roads, etc)
     2. Prohibited courts from excluding African Americans from Juries
     3. Hard to enforce, and many moderate Republicans grew tired of trying to reform the unwilling south
  4. Congressional reconstruction is abandoned by 1877

1. Reconstruction in the South
   1. Much of southern reconstruction was dictated by Republican military operation of Southern States (due to Reconstruction Act of 1867)
   2. Republican governments of the Southern legislatures:
      1. “Scalawags”: Southern Republicans (derogatory term by Democrats)
         1. Usually former Whigs, who sought to make peace between the sides for economic reasons
      2. “Carpetbaggers”: Northern newcomers, who were generally associated with taking advantage of the poor economic situation of the South (also a derogatory term)
      3. “Redeemers”: Former confederates or confederate sympathizers who sought to protect states’ rights, reduced taxes, reduced spending on social programs, and white supremacy
      4. African American Legislators: several African Americans held elected positions in the reconstructed, republican-held, state governments
   3. Freedmen
      1. Reuniting families
      2. Education: including independent black colleges such as Howard, Fisk, and Morehouse
      3. Migration to new areas
         1. Cities and western states (such as Kansas)
      4. African American Churches acted as a place for leadership, fellowship, and finding a voice
         1. Baptist and Methodist Churches
         2. Black ministers emerge as leaders in the community
      5. Sharecropping
         1. An evolved form of servitude wherein former slaveowners would rent out plots of land to former slaves and poor whites in exchange for a share of the harvest.
         2. Sharecroppers often became indebted to the land-owners
            1. System very similar to indentured servitude system
   4. Republican Successes and Failures in the South
      1. Successes
         1. Liberalized state constitutions of the south
            1. Universal male suffrage, property rights for women, debt relief,
         2. Promoted vast improvements in southern infrastructure
         3. Helped to establish hospitals, prisons, schools and other such public institutions
      2. Failures
         1. Wasteful spending (pork barrel) and bribery
         2. Southern Democratic resentment
2. Reconstruction in the North
   1. Return of the Spoils System – over time, Republican leadership passed to political manipulators who gave jobs and favors to supporters
   2. Corruption in Business and Government during Grant years
      1. Credit Moblier Affair: corruption in congress over building of Transcontinental RR
      2. Whiskey Ring: fed agents associated with President Grant in large fraud scandal with liquor industry
      3. The Tweed Ring: “Boss” William Tweed of NYC masterminded many schemes to cheat NYC taxpayers from their money
3. The Election of 1872
   1. Democrats and reform minded Republicans nominate Horace Greely (editor of New York Tribune)
   2. Regular Republicans nominate Grant once again and “wave the bloody shirt” – winning again
4. The Panic of 1873
   1. Overspeculation by financiers and overbuilding by industry and railroads led to widespread business failures and depression
   2. “Greenback” vs. Gold Debate
      1. Should money be backed by gold?
      2. Debtors on farms and in cities wanted more paper money in circulation
      3. Grant decided to back the money supply by gold and vetoed a bill which called for printing additional paper currency
5. The End of Reconstruction: the third phase
   1. Radical Republicans slowly lost favor and Southern Conservatives, aka “Redeemers” began to regain control in the south
   2. Ku Klux Klan or “the Invisible Empire”
      1. Groups of southern whites organized during the reign of the Republicans in southern legislatures to intimidate blacks and white reformers
      2. Founded by Nathaniel Bedford Forrest
         1. Terrorist group that killed, burned, and intimidated black voters to regain control for “redeemer” politicians
   3. The Amnesty Act of 1872
      1. Removed the last of the restrictions on the ex-confederates, excluding the top leaders, such as Jefferson Davis
         1. Allowed Redeemers (Democrats) to retake, or redeem, their state governments
   4. The Election of 1876
      1. Republicans: Rutherford B. Hayes and Democrats: Samuel J. Tilden
      2. Three southern states were still controlled by Republican military rule by 1876: South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana
      3. Due to this, the three states turned up contested ballots; therefore, there was no clear winner in the election
      4. A special committee was created to determine who was entitled to the votes
         1. The commission voted across party lines in an 8-7 vote, putting Hayes (R) the advantage.
         2. Senate Democrats threatened to filibuster the results from the committee to send the results to the House of Reps (which was now controlled by the Democrats)
      5. The Compromise of 1877
         1. Leaders of the two parties worked out an informal deal
            1. Democrats would allow Hayes to become president, in return:

He would end federal support for Republicans in the South

He would support the building of a southern transcontinental railroad

* + 1. Hayes withdrew troops once he took office, which marked a physical end to reconstruction.
    2. The Supreme Court would strike down reconstruction era laws in the 1880’s and 1890’s, which would further negate reconstruction and reduce the gains made for civil rights