America’s First Failed War on Terrorism: Explaining the Failure of Reconstruction

Paper for presentation at the Notre Dame International Security Center seminar series

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Draft Date: September 4, 2020

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Abstract

The article examines the failure of Reconstruction (1867-1877), drawing on insights from the study of terrorism, insurgency, and occupation. The failed postwar governments of the Southern states could not provide security or prosperity, and Southern whites opposed to Reconstruction effectively mobilized their community, using terrorism as an intimidation tactic to undermine Black political power and force uncommitted whites to their side. Radical Republicans did not deploy enough troops or use them consistently and aggressively. Three alternative paths that might have made success more likely – arming the Black community, exploiting white divisions more effectively, and extending the occupation for decades more – were politically unrealistic.

Reconstruction’s failure illustrates the dangers of half measures. The United States sought to dramatically reshape the American South on the cheap, both in terms of troop levels and in terms of time. Second, failed efforts to install democracy and rebuild governments can leave those who do the most to make things better the most more vulnerable. Most important, Reconstruction demonstrates that a common policy recommendation – compromise with the losers after a civil war – is often fraught, with the price of peace being structural racism and generations of injustice.
Wade Hampton’s imposing statue, 15 feet tall and 17 feet long, greets visitors to the South Carolina state house. A Confederate general in the Civil War, “the Savior of South Carolina” was one of the largest slaveholders in South Carolina and a member of its legislature when it became the first state to secede from the Union. After the Civil War ended, Hampton allied with the Red Shirts, a white supremacist paramilitary group that supported the Democratic Party by suppressing Black voting and intimidating whites who might support the Radical Republican agenda of Black equality. In essence, the Red Shirts were a South Carolinian version of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), which operated in several other states. During the 1876 presidential election, the Red Shirts drove the formerly enslaved from their homes and whipped them, murdered at least 150 freedmen and their leaders, and barred them from voting. One historian called these groups “a terrorist arm of the Democratic Party.” In that election, Hampton became South Carolina’s first Democratic governor after ten years of Radical Republican dominance and later represented the Palmetto State in the U.S. Senate.

The story of Hampton’s victory is the story, in miniature, of how white supremacists overturned the verdict of the America’s bloodiest conflict. Violence during Reconstruction (1867-1877) claimed the lives of many Republicans and intimidated or prevented many others from voting, enabling the Democrats to seize control of the South. We do not know how many people white supremacists killed during Reconstruction, but the figure is probably in the high thousands. Thousands more were displaced, leaving their homes in the countryside for safer cities or fleeing their states altogether. After Reconstruction, Democrats used their control of state government to enact a mix of poll taxes, grandfather clauses, literacy requirements, and “good character” tests while white vigilante groups continued their lynchings and beatings. In South Carolina,

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there were over 90,000 Black voters in 1876; by the end of the century, this number had fallen to less than 3,000.⁵

This violence destroyed the remarkable political progress by the formerly enslaved. During Reconstruction, 16 African Americans served in the U.S. Congress, more than 600 in state legislatures, and hundreds more in local offices through the South. After Reconstruction, this number plunged to a few scattered local officeholders. It was not until 1967, almost 100 years later, that African Americans returned to the Senate when Edward Brooke of Massachusetts won a Senate seat. The former Confederate states became the “Solid South,” voting consistently for Democratic candidates as a bloc well into the 1970s. To this day, the former Confederacy has elected only one African American senator in the post-Reconstruction era, Tim Scott (R-SC), who took his seat in 2013.

Historians have long overturned the once-taught story of the end of Reconstruction as a rejection of corrupt scalawags and carpetbaggers (pejorative terms, respectively, for white Southern Republicans and northern white migrants who supported Reconstruction) and incompetent African Americans. Scholars have recognized the tremendous political achievements African Americans attained in a short period of time and the often-virtuous intentions of many whites, both Northern and Southern, in supporting greater equality.⁶ Political scientists, however, rarely consider Reconstruction as part of the study of political violence in comparative perspective. This is a mistake. Scholars of national security would recognize many of the characteristics of Reconstruction: a contested occupation in a divided society after a bitter civil war, successful counter-mobilization of traditional forces fearful of losing their dominant position, the formation of an insurgency, uses of terrorism to intimidate, and other dangers that show up in U.S. occupations of Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries.

Why did Reconstruction fail? How did Southern whites emerge triumphant? What lessons can we learn about the terrorism, counterinsurgency, and the difficulties of military occupation? These are the questions this article seeks to answer.

Reconstruction’s failure was not foreordained, as the federal government enjoyed several important advantages in fighting white supremacist violence. Nor do common explanations for the failure of Reconstruction, including economic weaknesses, the inability to mobilize the formerly enslaved, and the leadership shift after President Abraham Lincoln’s assassination to Andrew Johnson, explain failure.

Instead, this article argues for the central role of violence. The failed postwar governments of the Southern states could not provide security or prosperity, and Southern whites opposed to Reconstruction, for their part, effectively mobilized their community, using terrorism as an intimidation tactic to undermine Black political power and force uncommitted whites to their

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side. Radical Republicans did not deploy enough troops or use them consistently and aggressively. Three alternative paths that might have made success more likely – arming the Black community, exploiting white divisions more effectively, and extending the occupation for decades more – were politically unrealistic.

Reconstruction’s failure illustrates three important policy implications. First, it suggests the dangers of half measures. The United States sought to dramatically reshape the American South on the cheap, both in terms of troop levels and in terms of time. Second, failed efforts to install democracy and rebuild governments can leave those who do the most to make things better the most more vulnerable. White and especially African American Republican leaders in the South paid a heavy price for the failure of Reconstruction. These two findings illustrate a third, even more important implication. Reconstruction demonstrates that a common policy recommendation – compromise with the losers after a civil war – is often fraught. Negotiations and compromise can foster social peace, but they may do so at the price of justice.

This article looks both backward and forward in history. In recent years, political scientists have begun to examine Reconstruction in the context of bureaucratic capacity, taxation, education, and public finance – all important issues, but none of which fully explain how the democracy was overturned and African Americans disenfranchised and subjugated. At the same time, this article hopes to help integrate the Reconstruction era as a potential case for the study of counterinsurgency, occupation, and other challenges that are thought only to happen abroad. As such, it hopes to add events in America ranging from the genocide of Native Americans to race relations to the broader comparative literature rather than treating the United States as sui generis.

This article begins by examining possible explanations for failure. It first defines key terms such as occupation and counterinsurgency in order to argue that relevant literatures on these subjects should be examined when reviewing the Reconstruction period. Section II presents several hypotheses offered by historians and by political scientists for why situations like Reconstruction fail, focusing on three categories of factors: structural, individual, and policy. Section III provides a brief review of the Reconstruction period, laying out the chronology and relevant facts. Section IV then details the many problems that doomed Reconstruction, drawing on the theoretical factors identified in Section II to identify and assess relevant issues. Section V speculates on several roads not taken. Section VI is also speculative, discussing possible differences between the 19th century and today that may affect my findings. The article concludes in Section VII by examining the lessons for understanding U.S. history and conducting other occupations.

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I. Definitions and Debates

Scholars of security studies have not applied insights from the study of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and similar areas to understanding Reconstruction. The violence of the Reconstruction period fits common definitions of insurgency and terrorism. The logic of occupations also applies, but the definitional fit is less exact.

The CIA defines an insurgency as “a protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations. The common denominator for most insurgent groups is their objective of gaining control of a population or a particular territory, including its resources.”

This definition matches much of the violence of the Reconstruction, where irregular military forces and illegal organizations such as the Red Shirts and the KKK sought to displace the Republican-led government in the South and re-establish their control over African Americans.

Similarly, following scholar Bruce Hoffman’s definition of terrorism, the violence in question was political, carried out by a substate group, and intended to create a broader psychological effect. As the empirical review below indicates, substate groups such as the KKK consciously sought to instill a broader fear that would intimidate Blacks and Republican whites and discourage Black voting and political activities.

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11 Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, pp. 1-44.
Using an occupation lens for understanding Reconstruction-era violence also has value, though the fit is not perfect. Scholar David Edelstein defines an occupation as a temporary control of territory by another state “that makes no claim to permanent sovereignty over that territory.”

Occupations are usually intended to cultivate stability and a favorable regime, with the occupier departing once this is assured. The temporary nature of an occupation is important, as both sides seek to shape the political situation after the eventual withdrawal. Edelstein found the United States is twice as likely to fail at occupations as it is to succeed.

Was the American South occupied or conquered? Much depends on whether one is looking at the federal level or the state level, and rhetoric can be found to justify both interpretations. Radical Republican leader Thaddeus Stevens, one of the architects of Reconstruction, claimed the Confederate states were “conquered provinces” and should be treated as such. The Democratic-dominated Southern press is replete with articles comparing the federal presence to an occupation, and some historians also use that term. Randolph Shotwell, a Southern newspaperman and politician, wrote, “Why should this country be called a Union? The very term signifies equality of parts. Let it be called ‘Yankeeland’.” Looking at actions rather than rhetoric, on the side of the “conquest” argument, the Civil War was fought over sovereignty, and the Union meant to ensure permanent control of the South after victory. However, even the most ardent proponents of Reconstruction did not intend military rule and federal control to endure indefinitely. Rather, they wanted to withdraw, leaving behind state governments that recognized Black voting and other civil rights, which for them also meant Republican political dominance of state politics.

When weighing the balance between occupation and conquest, it is important to recognize the federal nature of the U.S. system, which was far more pronounced at the time. The withdrawal of federal troops meant the end of an occupation at the state and local levels of government, but it did not end the conquest at the national level as the South remained part of the Union. Indeed, the question of racial justice was often about this very tension. If it was to be decided at the federal level, as was initially true during Reconstruction and would again be true one hundred years later during the civil rights era, then the logic of conquest applies as the nexus of decisionmaking was Washington, not local capitols. However, Southern whites succeeded in shifting most, though not all, racial equity issues to the state and local levels, where the logic of occupation is stronger.

II. Factors Explaining Failure

For occupations, counterterrorism, and counterinsurgency, scholars have hypothesized a number of factors that influence success. Some of these are structural, relating to the strategic importance

\[^{12}\text{Edelstein, Occupational Hazards, p. 3.}\]
\[^{13}\text{Edelstein, Occupational Hazards, p. 5.}\]
\[^{16}\text{Quoted in But There Was No Peace, p. 8.}\]
of the area in question, the presence of meddling neighboring neighbors, and shared threat perceptions. Others stress the importance of key leaders. A final category — one that I argue has the most causal explanation for this period — is effective counterinsurgency policy, which focuses on the dangerous role of spoilers, troop-to-population ratios, and similar factors. In practice, of course, the categories overlap and, as will be discussed, shape one another.

**Structural Factors**

Analysts often raise structural factors to suggest that occupations and counterinsurgents usually fail because the conditions for success are so poor. A state’s geographic position, economic status, or other immutable factors (or at least ones difficult to change in the short-term) affect the likelihood, scope, and scale of violence. In other words, regardless of what the soldiers and leaders of the era do, they are doomed to failure.

Some scholars stress the importance of the pre-existing economic structure and overall levels of economic development.  

Japan and Germany, though devastated and defeated in the war, had high levels of industrialization and modernization, and in both cases the countries helped pay for their own occupations over time.

This reduced the burden on the occupier. It also made it easier to restart their economies and, in so doing, create a stable government and society that helped meet the goals of the occupation.

Another argument concerns pre-war levels of mobilization. Potential rebels have endowments of technological, human, and social capital that they can draw on as they foment unrest.

Slavery prevented social and political organization in the African American community before the Civil War. Conversely, the white population was well organized. The South had an extensive state and local government structure, and society had been mobilized during the Civil War to fight for secession; it also had in place a system of patrols to stop runaway slaves, which meant it was easier in the post-war era to create armed bands to roam the countryside.

They thus had deeper endowments that could be mobilized for both violence and politics during Reconstruction.

Sustaining an occupation over time, tolerating casualties from any resistance, and otherwise enduring in the face of adversities requires political will at home, an amorphous but important concept that is often linked to the overall level of strategic interest. Political will is likely to be stronger if the area is of significant political value, such as the core territory of a country, as

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19 See Edelstein, *Occupational Hazards*, p. 18 for a description of this thesis.

20 Paul Staniland, *Networks of Rebellion: Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014), pp. 17-56. Staniland, however, is focused on the initial outbreak of rebellion and then how rebellion changes organizations. The Reconstruction case differs, as the Confederates fought as a conventional army during the Civil War and then as insurgents in Reconstruction — so the “pre-war” period for Reconstruction is really the era of Civil War mobilization.


22 Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, eds., *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* (Osprey, 2011, p. 17.)
opposed to sustaining an occupation in a land of little strategic or political value. Occupations, moreover, are more likely to succeed when both the occupier and the occupied share a common threat, as happened after World War II in Germany and Japan, when both feared the Soviet Union and sought U.S. assistance to resist it.\textsuperscript{23}

Neighborhoods also matter tremendously. Insurgents and terrorists often benefit from a haven or other forms of support from a neighboring state, and if these are lacking then defeating them is easier.\textsuperscript{24} The Taliban, for example, found refuge in Pakistan, and Iranian support for “special groups” hindered the United States’ ability to stabilize Iraq and ensure a pro-U.S. government there.\textsuperscript{25}

Governance is often a top challenge. In a post-war situation, the war and military defeat often lead to economic collapse and the ruin of old state institutions. Outsiders also often seek political and institutional change. However, governance works best when it has local support, and counterinsurgents must be able to recruit competent local collaborators.\textsuperscript{26} Even when the type and composition of government does not provoke anger, its poor quality may. The lack of a state to provide services, particularly law and order, encourages the formation of armed groups and allows even small organizations to play the role of spoiler.\textsuperscript{27} Terrorism expert Seth Jones finds countries with a high Islamic State and Al Qaeda presence often rank at or near the bottom of government effectiveness rankings.\textsuperscript{28}

Spoilers often emerge to prevent peace and disrupt the new order. The zealotry of spoilers varies, but Stephen Stedman shows that even relatively small groups of individuals can undo a settlement.\textsuperscript{29} Terrorists regularly use spoiling to undermine a peace deal or other negotiations.\textsuperscript{30}

\textbf{Individual Factors}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{23} Edelstein, “Occupational Hazards.”
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Some scholars point to the role of individual leaders to explain success and failure. Leaders can set the direction of policy, inspire the public to make sacrifices, help create institutions, and otherwise play critical roles. The end of the Civil War saw one of the most dramatic shifts in leadership in U.S. history. Abraham Lincoln, one of America’s greatest presidents, was assassinated as the war was ending, while Andrew Johnson, one of America’s worst, took the helm at a critical time for the postwar order. “Andrew Johnson proved to be utterly the wrong man for the job,” noted one Reconstruction historian. By this logic, Johnson’s many poor leadership qualities and hostility to the goals of Reconstruction made it less likely to succeed.

**Policy Decisions**

In contrast to structural factors, a number of issues that are theorized to shape success are well within the control of policymakers. Structure, of course, still shapes these decisions, but is not determinative by itself.

To meet the likely challenges, the counterinsurgent must devise clear goals and coordinate a civil-military effort that fosters broader legitimacy. French counterinsurgency scholar-warrior David Galula approvingly cites Mao to claim that counterinsurgency is 80 percent political. Establishing governance requires security, but it also requires a government that enjoys at least some legitimacy. Indeed, the U.S. Army counterinsurgency manual stresses that government legitimacy should be the main objective.

To promote governance and counter spoilers, leaders must create military and civilian capacity and use it accordingly. Scholars of modern stability operations suggest a troop-to-population ratio of 20 per thousand people, which for the American South would be a troop level of 180,000 based on the population of the time. Research suggests that number can be lower – just 2.8 per thousand people or 25,000 troops – once the violence is properly suppressed. However, violence will snowball if there are insufficient troops.

In keeping with the political nature of occupations, however, civilian capacity is equally important. Someone must provide services, administer justice, distribute aid, reconstruct governments, and otherwise do more than suppressing potential insurgents. In Iraq and

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35 U. S. Army and US Marine Corps. *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, p. 120.
Afghanistan, this was the “build” part of a three-stage “clear, hold, build” counterinsurgency strategy and the stage that proved the most difficult. 

Although ideally peace and governance would quickly be restored after a civil war, the counterinsurgent power must prepare for a long struggle, both militarily and politically. A RAND study found that modern insurgencies last approximately a decade on average. However, a lengthy troop presence creates its own problems. Edelstein argues that successful military occupations are lengthy, but such long occupations create resentment among the population. Another scholar of occupations found that Americans have “attention deficit disorder” when it comes to occupation, and they start to pull away as the reasons for the initial occupation fade and casualties and costs mount. When ending the troop presence, the outside power must either be sure of success or have some degree of conditionality that serves as a deterrent for future violence and preserves any gains made.

Together, these structural, individual, and policy factors suggest an array of explanations for the failure of Reconstruction. They will be addressed explicitly in Section IV.

III. A Brief History of a Complex Event

After the Civil War ended and Lincoln was assassinated in 1865, President Johnson, a former slaveholder himself, declared that the war’s purpose was fulfilled because it restored national unity and, with the ratification of the 13th Amendment at the end of 1865, ended slavery. He sought to readmit Southern states to the Union on lenient terms that preserved white supremacy. Most congressional Republicans, so-called “Radical Republicans,” sought more expansive goals.

In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, former Confederates dominated state governments and were chosen to represent their states in Congress. Those sent to Washington included Alexander Stephens, the Vice President of the Confederacy, along with dozens of former Confederate congressmen and military officers. In 1865 and 1866, Southern states enacted the so-called “Black Codes,” a variety of measures that denied Blacks the vote and other rights ranging from sitting on juries judging whites to owning firearms and refusing a contract. The Black Codes aimed to ensure racial control in the absence of slavery. Some states refused to

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39 U. S. Army and US Marine Corps, Counterinsurgency Field Manual, p. 120.
40 Connable and Libicki, How Insurgencies End.
41 Edelstein, "Occupational Hazards.”
42 Coyne, "Deconstructing Reconstruction.”
recognize the 13th Amendment officially (Mississippi would not ratify it until 1995). It appeared the old antebellum order would quickly resume in the South, with the same leaders and similar social policies – albeit with the important exception of slavery.

Blacks quickly organized and sought to be treated equally, but the Southern white backlash was immediate, with massacres of Blacks in Memphis and New Orleans that killed almost 100 people. (In the parlance of the time, these massacres were labeled “riots,” with blame directed at the formerly enslaved.) Their agitation and outrage over the Black Codes put Black rights on the national political agenda, forcing attention to the issue. As W. E. B. Du Bois wrote, “with perplexed and laggard steps, the United States government followed in the footsteps of the Black slave.” Southern pro-Union leaders installed by the Union Army, for their part, realized that they could not beat former rebels in elections if Blacks did not vote.

In the 1866 elections, Radical Republicans gained a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress and refused to seat representatives from the old order. This also enabled them to override President Johnson’s veto, support institutions to help the formerly enslaved, and to pass the 14th Amendment, guaranteeing rights to all citizens regardless of color.

Reconstruction is often seen as beginning in 1867, when Congress passed the three Reconstruction Acts (the fourth would be passed in 1868, as would the 14th Amendment) over President Johnson’s veto. The Acts removed civilian governments in the South, suspending the state constitutions and putting the former Confederacy (with the exception of Tennessee) under the rule of the Army in five military districts. The Acts required state governments to ratify the 14th Amendment. The Army could replace civil officials, reject local courts, overturn laws, close newspapers, and otherwise held immense power that was unprecedented in U.S. history and went against strong traditions of civilian rule and limited government.

Reconstruction is often considered to have ended a decade later in 1877. After the close and disputed 1876 election, Republican Rutherford Hayes was accepted as President in exchange for agreeing to withdraw federal troops from the South and to recognize the victories of Democratic governors in South Carolina and Louisiana, where massive violence had enabled Democrats like


46 For one of many examples of Blacks mobilizing to claim equality, see Proceedings of the Colored People’s Convention of the State of South Carolina, held in Zion Church, Charleston (Charleston, S.C.: South Carolina Leader’s Office, November 1865), pp. 30-31, reprinted in Harrold, The Civil War and Reconstruction, pp. 191-193.


49 When Reconstruction begins and ends is disputed, with some historians seeing it as a continuation of the Civil War, while others portray it as going beyond 1877 well into the early 19th century. See Paul A. Cimbala and Randall M. Miller, eds., The Great Task Remaining Before Us: Reconstruction as America’s Continuing Civil War (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), for arguments along these lines. This 1867-1877 period is often called “Congressional Reconstruction” to distinguish it from the immediate postwar period, labeled “Presidential Reconstruction.”

Hampton to win. After the “Compromise of 1877,” Republican political influence in the South collapsed. Mass disenfranchisement, Jim Crow laws, and decades of near-complete subordination of the Black population of the South followed. Laws put additional nails in Reconstruction’s coffin. In United States v. Cruikshank et al., a case that grew out of the 1873 Colfax Massacre in Louisiana where whites killed over 100 Blacks, the Supreme Court ruled in 1876 that it was the responsibility of the state, not the federal government, to enforce civil rights. This decision essentially put enforcement of laws related to Black equality in the hands of those who opposed equal rights. In 1878, Congress passed the Posse Comitatus Act, preventing the military from being involved in civil affairs.  

As Table 1.0 indicates, the demographic picture of the South during Reconstruction varied. In South Carolina and Mississippi, newly freed slaves were a majority, while in others they were a significant minority. The demographic picture often varied substantially within states, with certain counties or parishes enjoying overwhelming Black majorities – an important factor at a time when local governance had far more relative power than it does today. Table 1.0 also indicates the pace of political change. By 1870, Democrats had “redeemed” Alabama, Tennessee, and Texas. In 1874, Arkansas and Virginia joined the list of Democratic states, and by 1877 the entire South had Democratic governors.

A Failed State

When Reconstruction began, the South was economically devastated. One fifth of Southern whites of military age, the core of the labor force, had died in the war, and even more had been wounded. Machinery and work animals also were lost in the war. In addition, emancipation raised the question of who would harvest the crops, which before had depended on slave labor. By 1868, however, the plantation economy had begun to stabilize, and the planter class again began to prosper, but many poorer whites faced competition from Black labor.

As dire as the economic situation was for the old order, it was even worse for the newly freed Blacks. They had nothing. Slavery, with its rape, brutality, and family separations, had shattered much of their community’s social capital, and land, animals, and equipment were all in the hands

51 For a discussion of the role of the judiciary and reconstruction, see Pamela Brandwein, Rethinking the Judicial Settlement of Reconstruction (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).


of whites. In response to their needs, Congress created the federal Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (the “Freedmen’s Bureau”) to protect the rights of the formerly enslaved, administer justice, and help them negotiate labor contracts and lease lands.

Yet the racial power imbalance was profound. Southern whites conspired to prevent the formerly enslaved from buying land, starting businesses, or otherwise becoming economically independent. In addition, the Democratic newspapers had far more circulation and influence than the new pro-Republican ones (which were also often targeted for violence), and they dispensed a steady stream of vitriol against the Radicals, at times even publicizing orders for groups such as the KKK. Although the Bureau played an important role in helping the Black community, the federal government and some military officials often promised land distribution but delivered little. In the process, they alarmed whites and disappointed Blacks.

In addition to economic duress, local government had collapsed in much of the former Confederacy. The war had bred strife between pro- and anti-Union neighbors, and score-settling was common, as were crime and robbery. The Klan and similar organizations often saw themselves as guardians of the law, opposing the assumed criminality of the formerly enslaved and organizing for what they saw as a possible race war—indeed, by killing Blacks, they believed they were preventing a race war through preemption and intimidation.

### Voting under Reconstruction

The question of Black voting was in the air for several years before the passage of the 15th Amendment in 1870, which barred laws that prevented voting “on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Lincoln himself proposed only giving the vote to Blacks who had fought with the Union and “the very intelligent.” Johnson, for his part, agreed that “a loyal negro is more worthy than a disloyal white man” and favored allowing relatively wealthy and literate Blacks to vote. However, Johnson did not want to enforce Black equality at the federal level, and in his annual message to Congress in December 1867, Johnson declared Blacks had less “capacity for government than any other race of people” and that without white guidance they quickly “relapse into barbarism.” He also campaigned against the 14th Amendment and promised that land confiscated by the Freedmen’s Bureau would be returned to the Confederate owners.

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After Congress rejected the initial election results that returned the slave-holding elite to power, the Republican Party won nearly every Southern state. Where Republicans held power, they required Black political support to keep it: The choice was between “salvation at the hands of the negro or destruction at the hand of the rebels,” according to one Republican newspaper.61

During the first few years of Reconstruction, both sides sought to use voting restrictions to ensure power, and voting rights shifted regularly. Republicans feared they would lose elections if all ex-Confederates could vote.62 In many Confederate states, military authorities initially banned thousands of former Confederates from voting or holding office—a precedent for de-Nazification, de-Talibanization and de-Baathification in subsequent U.S. occupations. In Tennessee, 80,000 ex-Confederates were proscribed in 1865.63 Under the 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, Congress debarred individuals from holding public office if they had played leadership roles in the Confederacy. Alabama and Arkansas excluded all former Confederates, while Louisiana, Mississippi, and Virginia excluded some.64 In 1872, however, Congress passed the Amnesty Act, removing the 14th Amendment ban on political participation for all but a small number of ex-Confederates.65

Conversely, after the Civil War ended, it was by no means obvious even to Northerners what the rights of the formerly enslaved should be.66 In loyal states like Maryland, Blacks were not allowed to vote, and postwar efforts to extend the franchise to Blacks in the North initially failed in Connecticut, Minnesota, Ohio, and other states. The election of 1868 would see Black voting throughout the South but not in much of the North.67 Southern white Republicans were divided on questions related to Black equality and often saw support for Blacks as an alliance of convenience, not as a defense of their inalienable rights.68

Once the formerly enslaved won the right to vote, they often wielded considerable influence. Ulysses S. Grant won the election of 1868 by 300,000 votes—the 400,000 votes by the formerly enslaved almost certainly propelled him to the Presidency.69 Because former Confederates were initially proscribed from political participation in many states, the influence of the formerly

61 Quoted in Foner, Reconstruction, p. 303.
62 James Alex Baggett, The Scalawags: Southern Dissenters in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Baton Rouge, L.A.: Louisiana State University Press, 2004). Indeed, with the three-fifths compromise gone with the end of slavery, there was a fear that ex-Confederates would gain more seats in Congress than before the war, drawing on the ex-enslaved population to increase their proportion of seats without granting the former slaves the right to vote. The “reward of treason will be an increased representation,” as one congressman fretted. Richard M. Valelly, The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Enfranchisement (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 29.
enslaved was even greater. In Alabama, due to proscriptions, 56 percent of registered voters were Black, but the population was 70 percent white. In addition, at first many white Southerners boycotted elections that let Blacks vote, not wanting to legitimate the system they opposed.

Despite the many restrictions, threats of violence, and general confusion, initial progress on Black political participation was impressive, even astounding. Newly freed slaves were quick to seize opportunities to vote; join “Union Leagues,” Republican-affiliated clubs that sought to mobilize the Black vote and promote their rights; farm land; and otherwise seize the benefits of freedom. The number of Black civil society organizations, ranging from burial societies to debating clubs, skyrocketed, with Black churches playing a particularly important role. In Mississippi, almost 80 percent of eligible Black men voted in the summer elections in 1868.

In addition to political power, Blacks enjoyed a dramatic increase in social and individual liberty. Blacks often sought to leave the farms where they had once toiled or to own land themselves, and many bargained over their wages, outraging planters. The formerly enslaved exulted in their freedom. Blacks wanted to be addressed as Mister or Missus, acquired guns and liquor, and refused to yield to whites on sidewalks. Whites complained they were not properly servile. The resulting “insults” were a common source of violence.

Before 1867, no African American had ever held elected office. Between 1870 and 1876, there would be two Black U.S. senators, 15 congressmen, and over 600 state legislators – slightly less than 20 percent of Southern political offices in all. Hundreds more held local positions, which were particularly important at a time when government power was highly decentralized. In South Carolina, where almost 60 percent of the population was African American, people of color held a majority in the lower house. Black representation at the national level peaked in 1875, with eight members of Congress representing six different states.

**Violence and Military Rule**

At its founding in Tennessee after the war, the KKK initially was dedicated as much to amusement (masquerading was popular at the time) as violence. Even as the movement spread and focused on suppressing Black rights, there was no unified command and control within states, let alone between them. By 1867, the movement had grown more unified, and for several

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71 Rapoport, “Before the Bombs There Were the Mobs,” p. 177.
73 Foner, *Reconstruction*, p. 95.
75 Foner, *Reconstruction*, p. 132.
years Confederate war hero General Nathan Bedford Forrest became its commander in Tennessee. Even then, the KKK is best thought of as a like-minded collection of local groups, and local groups initiated most of their violence without informing state or even county KKK leaders.\textsuperscript{79} After the KKK become famous by 1868, many chapters organized on their own after learning about the Klan in the newspapers. Existing like-minded local groups also took on its name, though in some cases they preserved their original ones, such as the Red Shirts, the Knights of the White Camelia in Louisiana, the Native Sons of the South, or the Knights of the Rising Sun in Texas.\textsuperscript{80}

Racial violence was popular among whites. As the historian Allen Trelease contends, KKK participation “was also a patriotic venture which, like military service in wartime, often had the esteem and support of public opinion.”\textsuperscript{81} Often these groups drew on the majority of the white male population in their areas of operation.\textsuperscript{82}

Although violence occurred for many reasons, it often spiked before elections, both state and federal.\textsuperscript{83} Before the 1871 election, Southern Democrats vowed to win “the election peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must.”\textsuperscript{84} Another white supremacist testified that the goal of violence was to keep Blacks from “going to the polls and voting and to overthrow the republican party.”\textsuperscript{85} In Alabama, for example, attacks spiked before the 1868 national election and plummeted right after it. They soared again before the August 1869 congressional elections and again dropped off after.\textsuperscript{86} Violence was particularly common in parts of a state where the racial balance was roughly equal, meaning that small shifts in voting rates could tip the election.\textsuperscript{87} So-called “night riding” was common, when KKK members would fire into Republican and Black leaders’ homes or invade them directly with no warning in middle of the night, demanding that they stop supporting Republican candidates and cease political organizing. Thousands of Blacks and pro-Reconstruction whites slept in the woods rather than at home to avoid violence.

\textsuperscript{79} Trelease, \textit{White Terror}, pp. 4-52; Parsons, \textit{Ku-Klux}, p. 25.
\textsuperscript{80} Trelease, \textit{White Terror}, p. xlv.
\textsuperscript{81} Trelease, \textit{White Terror}, p. 52.
\textsuperscript{83} Egerton, \textit{The Wars of Reconstruction}, p. 292.
\textsuperscript{84} Quoted in Egerton, \textit{The Wars of Reconstruction}, p. 296. See also Testimony of William K. Tolbert, Mis. Doc., Ho. of Reps., 41\textsuperscript{st} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess.; Hoge vs. Reed, contested election, Appendix No. 7, \textit{Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, 42\textsuperscript{nd} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session}, vol. 4, \textit{Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States: South Carolina, Volume II} (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), p. 1260, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moa/aca4911.0004.001/670?view=image&size=100.
\textsuperscript{87} Williams, \textit{The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials}, p. 15.
Those who sought to lead risked the most. Of the hundreds of Blacks who participated in constitutional conventions in the 1867-1868 period, one in ten were victims of violence. Some activists would be tortured to death, their mutilated bodies dumped in public areas to send a message to other Republicans.\(^88\) Republicans could not campaign, or even vote, in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia when Klan activity soared.\(^89\) Much of the violence targeted Republican Party officials responsible for turning out and monitoring the vote. Party officials had the job of distributing ballots, encouraging voters to go to the polls, and guarding ballot boxes: killing or intimidating them could swing close elections.\(^90\)

Intimidation went beyond leaders and often targeted anyone suspected of activism. One military officer reported that the goals of these groups was “to disarm, rob, and in many cases murder Union men and negroes” and “to intimidate every one who knows anything of the organization but will not join it.”\(^91\) Activities included beatings, placing coffins on doorsteps of enemies as a warning, and otherwise using fear and obstruction against their enemies.\(^92\) The victims might be killed or brutally whipped, and their homes burned to the ground. Rape, too, was common and often part of a deliberate campaign of intimidation.\(^93\) White supremacists targeted symbols of Black progress and autonomy like schools, churches, and Union League facilities—one Alabama county saw 26 school burnings in the first six months of 1871.\(^94\)

On election day in some areas, Blacks would be denied access to the polls or forced to vote Democratic. Cannon were stationed in front of some polling places, and in others armed whites surrounded groups of potential Black voters.\(^95\) White supremacist groups sometimes seized ballot boxes that might contain large numbers of Republican votes. In Louisiana, white supremacists systematically intimidated scalawags and marched survivors of one massacre to the polls to force them to vote Democrat.\(^96\)

White supremacists also used their economic power. To ensure whites stayed in (or returned to) the fold, they often boycotted white Republican businesses.\(^97\) Some refused to hire Black laborers who had voted Republican. Others issued “certificates of loyalty” to Blacks who

\(^{88}\) Fellman, *In the Name of God and Country*, p. 116.

\(^{89}\) Foner, *Reconstruction* pp. 426-442.


\(^{91}\) “Report of Brevet Major General J.J. Reynolds, Commanding Fifth Military District.”


\(^{94}\) Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction*, p. 293.


\(^{97}\) Fellman, *Blood Redemption*, p. 120.
promised to vote Democratic—a promise easier to verify at a time before secret voting, when votes were often placed in a large crate with the label of the preferred party. The certificate would protect them from violence and from losing their job.

All this took its toll on voting. In Columbia County, Georgia, the Republican vote went from 1,222 to 1 from one election to the next, and several Georgia counties with Black majorities did not give Grant a single vote. In Yazoo County, Mississippi, Republican Governor Ames received seven votes in 1875; in the previous election of 1873, he had won the county by 1,800 votes. In 1868, Louisiana held both state-level elections and presidential elections in April and November, respectively. Due to violence, one parish that gave almost 5,000 votes for the Republican governor in the spring gave zero votes to Grant in November; Republican votes in other parishes similarly fell dramatically due to terror.

Local authorities felt powerless. Republican state governments often passed tough laws in response to the violence, but these laws were not enforced. Sheriffs, county prosecutors, local witnesses, and jury members were either sympathetic to the white supremacists or afraid of retaliation. The Freedmen’s Bureau in Texas reported in 1868 that every member of the community was armed and ready for violence, and in many counties the officials were Klan members. “The Civil Authorities are really afraid to act.” Blacks who testified before U.S. commissioners were often prosecuted for perjury at the state level.

As the Democrats began to claw back power through violence, in 1870 and 1871, Republicans in Congress passed the Enforcement Acts (also known as the KKK Acts), which authorized the President to supervise elections, employ the Army to guarantee rights, and use the federal court system, not the state courts, if individuals are deprived of their rights. It also prohibited individuals from venturing out in disguise.

With these Acts, Congress expanded the Army’s responsibility even as its size shrank. Postwar demobilization had been rapid; in January 1866, there were fewer than 90,000 troops in the entire army, and many of those were deployed in the Texas-Mexico border area. By the end of the year, the number deployed in the former Confederacy, excluding Texas, had shrunk to less than 20,000. As Table 2.0 indicates, troop levels fell in every state in the South from 1870 to 1877 despite high, and often growing, levels of violence in many states.

[Insert Table 2.0 here: Federal Troop Levels During Reconstruction]

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98 Egerton, *The Wars of Reconstruction*, p. 239.
103 See Williams, *The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials*, for a discussion of the Enforcement Acts and their effects.
When Congress put the South under military rule, it led to a tremendous variation of policy depending on the attitudes of the particular commander or governor. General John Pope paid Black voters in his district to register. When General Sheridan oversaw Texas and Louisiana, he helped form pro-Republican Union Leagues and removed unsympathetic officeholders. Johnson replaced him in 1867 with General Winfield Scott Hancock, who was far more conservative, as was General John Schofield in Virginia. Some provisional governors worked with old elites, while some appointed new officials and suspended many others.

Throughout this period, violence plagued the South, though comprehensive figures are lacking. Many of the formerly enslaved did not have a last name and lived in rural areas, making it harder to count the dead, particularly when few at the state level sought to do so. However, snapshots of different states at different times are painfully suggestive. In Louisiana alone, a congressional report found that over 1,000 people, mostly African Americans, were killed between the April and November 1868 elections, and 2,000 more were killed or wounded in the weeks before the 1871 election. The year 1873 saw the Colfax Massacre in Louisiana, where white Democrats killed up to 165 Blacks after a disputed election, with roughly a third killed after being taken prisoner, with whites using cannons against Black forces. The next year saw the “Battle” of Liberty Place, where white supremacists defeated police and militia forces in New Orleans in an attempt to overturn election results. December 1874 saw as many as 300 Black activists massacred, which spawned copycat attacks in nearby cities. In Texas, between the Civil War’s end and 1868, whites murdered 1,000 Blacks—and the figure is probably low. One U.S. district attorney in Texas recalled that “As for freed people, they were robbed, outraged, and intimidated systematically.” An Army officer in Texas reported, “The murder of negroes is so common as to render it impossible to keep an accurate account of them.” White paramilitaries attacked a Republican barbecue in Clinton, Mississippi, in 1875, shooting Blacks “just the same as birds,” according to one account. In Tennessee, one white supremacist gloated, “When a white man feels aggrieved at anything a n-----’s done, he just shoots him and puts an end to it.” In Arkansas, white supremacists killed over 2,000 people in connection with the 1868 election. Many Blacks fled to larger towns or cities, where there was more safety in numbers and where federal troops were stationed. Indeed, with the notable exception of Memphis and New Orleans, Southern cities were generally free of terror.

105 Foner, Reconstruction, p. 307.
110 Fellman, In the Name of God and Country, pp. 118-119.
111 Foner, Reconstruction, p. 120.
112 Quoted in Trelease, White Terror, p. 105.
114 Foner, Reconstruction, p. 560.
115 Foner, The Wars of Reconstruction, p. 204.
In addition to attacking the formerly enslaved, violent actors often targeted leading Republicans. On the eve of the 1868 election, the KKK murdered Republican congressman James Hinds of Arkansas, the first-ever murder of a U.S. congressman. In Florida, white supremacist groups murdered fewer people than in other states, but intimidation was widespread. When the 1875 election results split the Florida legislature evenly between Republican and Democratic members, terrorists broke the tie by assassinating E. G. Johnson, a Black state senator, to give Democrats a majority.\footnote{Lemann, \textit{Redemption}, p. 175.}

As horrible as these accounts of murder are, the deaths we do not know of are probably far greater. In a few areas, the Army investigated deaths, but in many it did not. Much of the violence was committed in the countryside against Black farmers, who represented the bulk of the community, and there is far less documentation on their status and suffering. White Democrats controlled the press in most of the South, and they often refused to report attacks unless they involved massive death tolls that gained national attention.\footnote{Fellman, \textit{In the Name of God and Country}, p. 117.}

There was little redress at the local level. White-dominated grand juries would not convict whites accused of violence against Blacks, prosecutors would not charge them, and sheriffs would not arrest them. One federal investigator in South Carolina found that local officials were “either in complicity with the Ku-Klux conspiracy or intimidated by it.”\footnote{Quoted in Williams, \textit{The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials}, p. 39.}

Efforts to arm and train Blacks as part of militias had limited success, but any Black mobilization was seen as a threat, and thus officials largely avoided it. Governor Robert K. Scott of South Carolina, who created a large Black militia, feared it would “lead to a war of races.”\footnote{Williams, \textit{The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials}, p. 17.} Later efforts by local Blacks to mobilize to defend themselves almost invariably sparked fears of a broader insurrection.\footnote{Egerton, \textit{The Wars of Reconstruction}, pp. 112, 240.} One study of Texas found that the creation of Union Leagues and similar organizations designed to organize the Black community led to white counter-mobilization and an increase in violence.\footnote{Gregg Cantrell, “Racial Violence and Reconstruction Politics in Texas, 1867-1868,” \textit{The Southwestern Historical Quarterly}, Vol. 93, No. 3 (January 1990), p. 346.}

The End of Reconstruction

As whites won control of political power at both the local and the state level, they then used this power to enact laws that further disenfranchised the recently enslaved. Over time, white Democrats were able to peel off part of the Republican coalition in the South. Scalawags in particular were open to change, as many shared the racial views of the Democrats but had disagreed with them on economic issues and were also vulnerable to social pressure.\footnote{Trelease, \textit{White Terror}, p. xxvii.} By the end of Reconstruction, whites largely voted as a bloc for Democratic candidates.
Corruption also soured many in both the South and North on Reconstruction, decreasing support for the Radical Republican agenda. Although government programs under Reconstruction fell well short of modern standards, public spending and associated taxation grew tremendously with federal funding of railroads and schools. Some leaders recognized their time in office might be short and sought to cash in. However, in some states, such as Louisiana, corruption had already been endemic (indeed, bribery there was not even a crime) and both parties were highly corrupt. Critics of Reconstruction played up abuses, declaring that the involvement of Blacks in government made corruption inevitable. Independent of Reconstruction, Grant’s administration was plagued by scandal, decreasing overall support for it.

The cost of the occupation and its unclear endpoint raised also concerns among congressional leaders. As Grant admitted when he rejected the Mississippi governor’s request for help against violence there, “The whole public are tired out with these annual autumnal outbreaks in the South, and a great majority are now ready to condemn any interference on the part of the government.”

In addition, the Panic of 1873 devastated the economy, ushering in what was referred to as the “Great Depression” until the 1930s and further reducing popular support for the Republican Party and the spending associated with Reconstruction. Northern leaders began to focus on trade, the gold standard, taxation, and other issues, rather than on the legacy of slavery. Justice Department officials were told to use the Enforcement Acts only to focus on the worst cases of Klan activity and to no longer charge individuals for simply being Klan members.

In 1874, the massive Republican majority in Congress was replaced by a large Democratic majority in the House and a narrow one in the Senate, leading to paralysis on racial issues. In the 1876 elections, violence led to disputes about who truly won Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina. Under the Compromise of 1877, Republicans were awarded victory in these contests but agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South. Although Black electoral power and rights did not end abruptly, the withdrawal of federal troops marked the point of no return. The few remaining stalwarts on Reconstruction found themselves with eroding support and declining political power, and Black political power and the hope of Black equality steadily declined in the South.

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126 Williams, The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials, p. 12; Fellman, In the Name of God and Country, p. 106.
127 Trelease, White Terror, p. xxix; Foner, Reconstruction, p. 385.
128 For one such polemic disguised as reporting, see James S. Pike, The Prostrate State: South Carolina under Negro Government (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874).
129 Downs, After Appomattox, pp. 122-123.
130 Quoted in Fellman, In the Name of God and Country, p. 134.
133 Foner, Reconstruction, p. 523.
IV. Explaining Reconstruction’s Failure

How do we explain Reconstruction’s failure? The structural, individual, and policy factors identified in Section II vary in their explanatory power, with the structural factors setting the stage for many problems and the policy decisions often exacerbating them.

Assessing Structural Factors

The South suffered significant economic problems that made the Reconstruction governments less popular, and the Panic of 1873 was a further disaster. However, the plantation economy began to recover somewhat as Reconstruction went on, yet white planters remained opposed, and indeed led the opposition, to Reconstruction. The motivation of the violence was primarily racial and political, not economic.134

As expected, whites found it easier to mobilize effectively for violence, using preexisting political networks from the Civil War as well as local connections forged in the decades of their dominance before the war. The KKK and similar groups operated across class lines and drew on the many white men who had served in the Confederate military. Many had the weapons they had used in the Civil War, and some had been involved in partisan warfare behind Union lines or slave catching patrols.135 Proscription, however, hindered white political mobilization in many states. At the same time, freed Blacks also mobilized quickly, despite their lack of pre-Reconstruction networks. Part of this was due to assistance from institutions like the Freedmen’s Bureau and the Union Leagues, but the eagerness of the formerly enslaved to embrace their rights began immediately after the war’s end and struck observers of all political stripes. Militarily, Blacks had served in the Union army in large numbers, and many were eager to join state militias or otherwise serve. They were stopped by federal policy, not their own disorganization or preferences.

Favoring success, the United States saw the former Confederacy as strategically and politically vital. The South, of course, was America, and thus the interests were truly existential, in contrast to control of a colony or less-integral piece of territory. Moreover, at least by comparative standards with Iraq and Afghanistan, Army soldiers were familiar with the culture, religion, and belief systems of the occupied population. In addition, the United States at the time was far more casualty tolerant, having just suffered the bloodiest war in its history.136 Politically, the dominant Republican Party also hoped to use Black suffrage to augment its presidential and congressional majorities, giving it a strong political interest in the success of Reconstruction.

Foreign influence on Reconstruction was minimal. Although parts of the South, notably Texas, shared with several Northern states a fear of Native American raids,137 in general the United

134 Egerton, The Wars of Reconstruction, p. 289. However, poor whites who had not owned slaves did fear economic competition from Black farmers.
135 Lemann, Redemption, p. 3; Fitzgerald, “Ex-Slaveholders and the Ku Klux Klan,” p. 150.
136 Coyne, “Deconstructing Reconstruction.”
States lacked a significant external danger at this time that could unite Southern and Northern states. At the same time, in contrast to Iraq, Afghanistan, and many other occupations, the U.S. Army did not have to grapple with foreign funding or inspiration for militants, a neighboring haven for their leadership, a porous border through which enemy forces were entering the country, or similar problems.\footnote{Bruce R. Pirnie and Edward O’Connell, Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2006): RAND Counterinsurgency Study—Volume 2 (Santa Monica, C.A.: RAND Corporation, 2008). For more on these concepts, see Stathis N. Kalyvas and Laia Balcells, “International System and Technologies of Rebellion: How the End of the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict,” American Political Science Review, Vol. 104, No. 3 (August 2010), pp. 415-429, doi.org/10.1017/S0003055410000286.}

Governance challenges loomed large. The former Confederacy shared many characteristics of a failed state, with a shattered economy and a collapse in law and order in many parts of the South. Petty crime was paired with a constant fear of race war. The KKK and similar groups billed themselves as forces of law and order, punishing theft and defending white women.\footnote{Otto H. Olsen, “The Ku Klux Klan: A Study in Reconstruction Politics and Propaganda,” The North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. 39, No. 3 (July 1962), p. 343.} Former Confederates saw joining groups like the KKK as “prudent caution,” according to one historian.\footnote{Fitzgerald, “Ex-Slaveholders and the Ku Klux Klan,” p. 154.}

Reconstruction governance suffered from a lack of legitimacy among many white Southerners. However, in the American South, as in many divided societies, such a policy prescription would have ended attempts to achieve Black equality, as would eventually happen after 1877.\footnote{Bernhard, “The Lessons of a Successful Occupation.”} The decision to proscribe former Confederate soldiers and senior officials had a similar effect as de-Baathification did in Iraq, sending a signal that past social leaders were not welcome in the new power structure.\footnote{Pirnie and O’Connell, Counterinsurgency in Iraq (2003-2006).} Allowing them to vote and participate, however, would have doomed many Reconstruction efforts from the start, as indicated by the results of the rejected 1866 elections that restored the old order. Radical Republicans tried to square this circle by working with scalawags, which enabled indirect rule, but they did not represent the bulk of white Southern opinion. In the highly divided South, whoever took power would not enjoy legitimacy among much of the population.

In summary, the structural picture is mixed, and failure was not foreordained. Southern white supremacists did enjoy some structural advantages regarding mobilization, and economic and governance challenges made the task of Reconstruction far harder. At the same time, the federal government enjoyed several important advantages in fighting white supremacist violence, notably strong political will and a lack of foreign influence.

**Assessing Individual Factors**

Individual leaders also did not cause the failure of Reconstruction. Johnson lacked both the skill and the inclination to advance the rights of the formerly enslaved, seeking only the formal end of
slavery and the restoration of the Union, not equality. A racist himself (even by the low standards of the time), Johnson was unsympathetic to the cause of Black equality. His tolerance of the Black Codes, willingness to readmit former secessionists, opposition to the Freedmen’s Bureau, and other measures started the post-Civil War era decidedly against Black equality.143

Yet Johnson was hardly the only leader of the time. In large part due to his positions on Reconstruction, he was impeached and lost effective control over Reconstruction after the Republican sweep of the 1866 elections. Grant, who won the 1868 and 1872 elections, favored Reconstruction, helped establish the Department of Justice to enforce it, and supported the crackdown on the KKK, the 15th amendment, and other key measures.144 As General of the Army after the Civil War, Grant also played a key role in administering the South before he was president, as did Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, another progressive figure.145 In addition, much of the energy and policy was set by regional military commanders and governors, many of whom strongly favored the rights of African Americans. The head of the Freedmen’s Bureau was also aggressive in using his power to help those once enslaved.146 Overall, the individual level would suggest that Reconstruction was more likely to succeed or at least was indecisive.

Although they could not be worse than Johnson’s policies, the approach Lincoln would have pursued had he lived does not suggest a dramatic shift. For all his greatness as the Civil War president, it is not clear how much he embraced Black equality beyond ending slavery. Pressing for “the intelligent” and former soldiers to receive the vote is a far cry from equality under the law. Lincoln’s views, however, were constantly evolving, and he was skilled at advancing broad agendas with incremental steps, so this is a genuine unknown.147

**Assessing Policy Factors**

Both the structural and individual levels suggest difficulties for Reconstruction, but the poor policy choices of U.S. leaders played a decisive role in tipping the balance toward. Some of these decisions, and at times a refusal to take action, exacerbated structural problems, while others created new difficulties of their own.

**A Lack of Clear Goals**

Counterinsurgency doctrine calls for clear goals shared among military and civilian leaders, but these were often lacking during the Reconstruction era. During the war, Northern Republicans agreed that slavery must end and the Union must be restored, but they did not agree on or even deeply consider the political status of the formerly enslaved. As the abolitionist Wendell Phillips noted, the Emancipation Proclamation and subsequent federal policy “frees the slave and ignores

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the negro.” Lincoln, Johnson, and congressional leaders had different views on how to go forward with voting rights, the use of force, and other issues.

Even Radical leaders held prejudices and were divided in priorities. Thaddeus Stevens, who led Radical Republicans in the House, told the House that “Negro equality does not mean that a negro shall sit on the same seat or eat at the same table with a white man.” Although most Northern Republicans remained committed to the goals of Reconstruction, some favored a focus on economic issues, and others feared federal overreach. Many Southern white Republicans opposed land reform, which Black Republicans saw as vital. In addition, many scalawags saw themselves as natural leaders of the Republican Party in the South, creating tension with the African American community as it exercised its rights and sought more leadership and patronage. In Missouri, Virginia, and several other states, splits within the Republican Party allowed Democrats to win elections, with violence playing only a limited role.

Southern Democrats, in contrast, consistently prioritized the withdrawal of federal troops and the necessity of white supremacy. Although many white-owned small farms had few enslaved people, and whites in mountainous areas often had none, they shared values of white supremacy. The social equality of Blacks, who now demanded better pay and refused to be servile, let alone the presence of Blacks as legislators and jurors, was infuriating. Rape, intermarriage, and other supposed risks to white women were particularly feared and exploited. As Reconstruction wore on, Democrats were able to peel off many scalawags from the Republican coalition.

**Not Planning for a Lengthy Occupation**

The U.S. Army and congressional leaders of Reconstruction did not properly plan for a lengthy occupation or for how to ensure equal rights were honored after a troop withdrawal. At the time, the U.S. Army, and the U.S. government in general, had no experience in long-term occupations. Counterinsurgency experience existed, in a sense, from the wars against the Native American population, but the goals there – in particular population removal – differed wildly from the objectives of Reconstruction. Leading generals such as George G. Meade and Hancock opposed interfering with civil governments. As wars against Native Americans on the Great Plains grew more pressing, the Army favored prioritizing that theater.

Time itself was an enemy, with other concerns rising to the fore and diverting attention from Reconstruction. Corruption made Reconstruction less popular, and from the start, many congressmen were uncomfortable with the unprecedented authority given to the federal government and wanted it to be temporary at most. The economic problems after the Panic of

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148 Quoted in Foner, *Reconstruction*, p. 36.
149 Quoted in Foner, *Reconstruction*, p. 231.
154 Rable, *But There Was No Peace*, p. 209.
155 Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion*. 
1873 and rise of other priorities made Reconstruction and the resources it consumed less and less attractive.

As federal forces prepared to leave, white reformers often settled for paper promises rather than ensure they could enforce any deal. After a contested Louisiana election involving violence, a “peace conference” was held in 1875 where Democrats agreed to guarantee voting rights in exchange for demobilizing and disarming Black militias.\footnote{Lemann, \textit{Redemption}, p. 131.} In Mississippi, Republican Governor Adelbert Ames made a similar deal.\footnote{Fellmann, \textit{In the Name of God and Country}, p. 135.} Democrats would renege on their promises, but the militias stayed demobilized. Many Northern Republicans were willing to settle for empty agreements in the hopes of putting Reconstruction behind them, foreshadowing the “decent interval” that would appear in future failed interventions.

**Troop Ratios and Civilian Capacity**

Despite these advantages, for most of Reconstruction the United States did not deploy enough troops to ensure the peace, and civilian capacity was weak to non-existent. The Army was responsible for nine million people living over 750,000 square miles, with many of the most vulnerable living in remote rural areas with poor infrastructure. Using even a conservative 1:50 troop-to-population ratio for modern stabilization operations, the number of troops required would be around 180,000 troops total, while even at peak times the number deployed to the South was between 10,000 and 15,000 total troops. Moreover, the logistics of the time were difficult given the lack of a developed transportation network or air power, leaving more remote areas hard to police. One expert compared the Army’s presence at the time to spokes on a wheel, with a garrison in major cities and attached by road or rail lines.\footnote{Downs, \textit{After Appomattox}, pp. 14, 25.}

When troops were deployed, however, they succeeded in suppressing the Klan and similar groups, protecting Black voting rights, and otherwise achieving the ostensible aims of Reconstruction. In 1868, the Republican governor of Tennessee passed a series of tough laws against voter intimidation and conspiracy and was able to use a state militia to impose peace, reducing KKK activities. In Texas, after years of brutal violence, in 1869 the Army used cavalry to pursue suspects and tried many cases before military commissions. Organized white violent activity in the Lone Star state plunged.\footnote{Trelease, \textit{White Terror}, pp. 44, 147.} In 1870 in North Carolina, the Klan helped swing 10 counties to the Democratic side in elections; only where there were federal troops stationed did the Klan fail to suppress the Republican vote.\footnote{Olsen, “The Ku Klux Klan,” p. 360.} Overall, Black political mobilization surged in cities and rural parts of the South that federal troops occupied, while lagging in more remote areas with no troops.\footnote{Foner, \textit{Reconstruction}, p. 113.} Conversely, one report from the immediate postwar period found that assaults “increase just in proportion to their distance from United States Authorities.”\footnote{Quoted in Downs, \textit{After Appomattox}, p. 107.}
The Enforcement Acts, along with federal troops, enabled a crackdown on the KKK in several states, with hundreds ending up in prison and far more forced to flee their home areas for fear of arrest. In the subsequent trials, many Klan members accepted plea bargains, providing the names of other Klan members in another blow to the organizations. By 1872, the Klan’s back was temporarily broken in several states, with a dramatic decline in overall violence there.

Yet for all these individual successes, government leaders did not consistently deploy troops in times of crisis, and the scope and scale of the crackdown was limited. Troop deployments were invariably subject to the political winds of the moment, and even when used, the overall numbers remained too small to ensure widespread security. In Mississippi, Governor Ames asked Grant to send out troops, but Grant did not do so because using force was increasingly unpopular in the North, and he feared that it would hurt Republican electoral chances in the key state of Ohio. The inaction led to open violence against Republican rallies and the murder of prominent Blacks in Mississippi, emboldening white militants in other states. Ames fled the state after Grant refused his request for protection. The first successful impeachment of a governor in U.S. history occurred in 1871 after North Carolina’s governor deployed federal troops against the Klan, outraging other state officials. Troops were often instructed to work in support of local authorities, but these authorities usually favored, or at least did not actively oppose, violence against Blacks and their Republican allies.

Nor were there enough troops even if the federal government wanted to act. The Indian wars led to the redeployment of cavalry, necessary for rapid pursuit of often mounted marauders. During the 1871 crackdown, there were only 6,000 troops garrisoned in the South, excluding those deployed in Texas for wars against the Native Americans. In South Carolina in 1875, Grant did send troops and reduced violence. However, the troops numbered only 1,000, and they could not cover the entire state or undo the years of terror the Black population had already suffered. In most instances, troop numbers stayed small, and in many states declined, even as violence grew.

Civil capacity was even worse. Law enforcement officials always lacked sufficient money, personnel, and courts to conduct hearings. At its peak, the Freedmen’s Bureau had only 900 people in the South. Although its authority extended throughout the South, its lack of personnel meant that it was non-existent in many parts of the former Confederacy. General Sherman told the first head of the Freedmen’s Bureau, “It is not … in your power to fulfill one tenth of the expectations of those who framed the Bureau.” Without sufficient troops to protect them and

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167 Trelease, *White Terror*, p. 32.
ensure their dictates were followed, the Bureau agents were “worse than useless,” declared General E. O. C. Ord, who commanded the Arkansas and Mississippi district.\(^ {171}\)

In addition, as the Enforcement Acts took their toll on some groups, marauders learned to avoid areas where guards might be stationed and instead focus on intimidating Republican leaders and suppression in rural areas.\(^ {172}\) The KKK and other groups learned to modulate their violence and otherwise walk the line between intimidation and provoking a reaction. High-profile massacres captured Northern attention and demanded a federal response. Lower-level violence and attacks in rural areas, however, rarely made headlines and did not provoke a crackdown.\(^ {173}\) The KKK even shut down a white supremacist group in Indiana, trying to avoid spreading the violence outside the South in ways that might alarm Northern leaders and backfire for the group.\(^ {174}\)

Groups also learned to cooperate more. They crossed state lines to assist in suppressing the vote in neighboring states – at the time, elections were often held on different days, making this mutual aid possible. Similarly, ideas on how to use violence effectively also spread. Whites in states like South Carolina referred to the “Mississippi Plan” to describe their planned use of violence to suppress the Republican vote.\(^ {175}\)

**The Interplay between Structure and Policy**

The Reconstruction era was bound to produce governance problems, but the resulting policy decisions failed to resolve this, allowing spoilers to disrupt political progress.

White supremacists exploited the inability and unwillingness of Army and political leaders to engage in a full crackdown, serving as effective spoilers to disrupt the postwar government. Although some of the KKK and similar groups’ violence involved killing, their primary purpose was political change, not murder. Indeed, much of it was intended to intimidate political leaders. As with most terrorism, the psychological effect was great. “The Ku Klux terror colored nearly every aspect of Southern life and politics, often far beyond the immediate range of terrorist activity,” argued one historian.\(^ {176}\) The lack of capacity and will to repress spoilers validates the Greenhill and Major argument that, “As such, the real key to deterring and defeating would-be spoilers lies in the possession and exercise of the material power to coerce or co-opt them, rather than in the capacity to discern their true character or personality type.”\(^ {177}\)

The ultimate effect of the failure to stop white violence was not lost on Republican leaders. The Governor of Mississippi noted by force of arms “a race are disenfranchised—they are to be

\(^{171}\) Quoted in Foner, *Reconstruction*, p. 143 and 148, respectively.


\(^{176}\) T release, *White Terror*, p. xii.

returned to a condition of serfdom—an era of second slavery,”\textsuperscript{178} and Grant himself admitted that “the results of the war of the rebellion will have been in large part lost.”\textsuperscript{179} Radical Republicans and military leaders generally understood the true character of their opponents, but they lacked the power, or the will, to stop them.

V. Roads Not Taken

Was Reconstruction’s failure inevitable? U.S. leaders did not pursue several options that might have offered a greater hope of success. However, even with the benefits of hindsight, the alternatives seem politically unrealistic given the attitudes of the time.

Arming the Black Community

The lack of sufficient troops and local protection for Republican leaders, voters, and Freedmen’s Bureau officials could have, in theory, been resolved by mobilizing, arming, and training the formerly enslaved—a modern equivalent of U.S. programs to work with Sunni militias in Iraq or warlords in Afghanistan. They were a large and motivated pool of manpower and, in the few cases they were armed and incorporated into militias, they proved effective. In Tennessee, Black militia units helped the state government repress the Klan there.\textsuperscript{180} Similarly, when white supremacists prevented Blacks from voting in Mississippi, the exception was the town of Grand Gulf, where the Black community showed up armed at the polls.\textsuperscript{181}

The backlash, however, would have been immense. “[M]obilizing these [the formerly enslaved] was the equivalent of arming one political party against the other,” noted Trelease. He contended that proposals to do so inflamed conservative sentiment and increased fears of a race war and military despotism.\textsuperscript{182} In South Carolina, the Republican governor Robert Scott put almost 100,000 Blacks in the militia (some as a form of patronage). This led to massive white counter-mobilization: “arming Black citizens convinced whites that they, too, most arm themselves for self-protection,” wrote one historian.\textsuperscript{183} As the bloodshed grew, Scott disarmed the units to appease white opinion.\textsuperscript{184} In general, even supportive organizations like the Freedmen’s Bureau opposed Black militias, believing they further inflamed white opinion.\textsuperscript{185} Blacks were thus caught in a local security dilemma. A failure to arm left them vulnerable, but taking up arms “proved” the worst fears of the white community.

For this option to work, white politicians would have had to put aside their hope of reconciling Southern whites to the new political system. In addition, they would have needed to put aside their own racist beliefs about the benefits of white leadership and the dangers of supposedly less-

\textsuperscript{178} Gillette, \textit{Retreat from Reconstruction}, p. 163.
\textsuperscript{179} Lemann, \textit{Redemption}, p. 137.
\textsuperscript{180} Foner, \textit{Reconstruction}, p. 439.
\textsuperscript{181} Lemann, \textit{Redemption}, p. 150.
\textsuperscript{182} Trelease, \textit{White Terror}, pp. xxxiv-xxxv.
\textsuperscript{183} Williams, \textit{The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{184} Foner, \textit{Reconstruction}, p. 439.
\textsuperscript{185} Trelease, \textit{White Terror}, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{186} Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict.”
enlightened Blacks. Doing either of these was unlikely given attitudes of the time and would have further undercut support in the North for Reconstruction.

**Exploiting White Divisions**

Although Southern whites shared values of racial supremacy, they often differed on economic policies. Before and during the Civil War, the planter class dominated Southern politics. The war worsened the divide, draining small farms of manpower while large plantations with many slaves could still be productive. The ability to avoid conscription by producing a substitute (including 20 enslaved workers to provide labor for the war effort) also rankled.\(^{187}\) In addition to wartime grievances, the Southern economy produced additional class divisions, especially after the plantation economy began to stabilize by 1868 while smaller farms still faced ruin. In addition, the Freedmen’s Bureau in some states helped more poor whites than it did Blacks, a potential source of unity.\(^{188}\)

However, Southern Democrats succeeded in making elections revolve around issues of racial equality, and the economic differences among whites were not able to transcend this issue. Indeed, violence and the associated organization served to unite whites of different classes.\(^{189}\) To have kept divisions among whites front and center, Republicans would have had to play down issues of Black equality, thus depriving themselves of potential voters and a cause many of them genuinely embraced. Southern Democrats’ use of economic pressure made this even more difficult, as whites risked economic ruin if they supported Republicans.

**More Troops and an Enduring Occupation**

Federal troops, if used more aggressively and in greater numbers, could have prevented the voter suppression that was vital for Democratic political victories in many states. Had the Radical Republicans been able to ensure a long-term troop presence, this might have solidified Black political power, creating incentives for cross-racial cooperation. This would have been especially true in states like South Carolina, which had a Black majority. In essence, the occupation would have lasted for decades after the war itself ended, as has the U.S. troop presence in Germany, South Korea, and other countries.

Americans at the time, however, were highly suspicious of a strong federal government, and the continued arrogation of powers to the Army had only limited support. Continued racism kept support for Black rights limited, and reports of corruption, both real and exaggerated, further diminished support. Even if the troop presence was continued beyond 1877, to preserve the gains of Reconstruction Congress would have had to mobilize far more of the Army—an option no one was considering—and have troops deploy far more extensively and use force more aggressively.

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\(^{188}\) Grandin, *The End of the Myth*, p. 103.  
\(^{189}\) Fellman, *Blood Redemption*, p. 132.
It is hard to compare the 19th century with the 21st century, as aspects of counterinsurgency varied considerably between these two periods, as did the relative advantages enjoyed by the counterinsurgent. If anything, however, conditions might favor the counterinsurgent in the 19th century. Jason Lyall and Isaiah Wilson found that counterinsurgency success was far more likely in the 19th century than it is today. This section briefly considers several relevant factors that varied between now and the Reconstruction era.

Instant communication and rapid mobility, two staples of the American way of war today, were not possible in the 19th century. Indeed, as Downs points out, during Reconstruction the U.S. military presence was tied to cities and railroad and riverine lines of communication. In addition, the massive reconnaissance and intelligence apparatus the United States has deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other war zones was lacking, hindering tactical intelligence collection.

On the other hand, militaries of the time were not mechanized, and the rebels did not have advanced communications to gain outside support or mobilize their community, both of which favored the champions of Reconstruction. To the extent that Americans have become more casualty sensitive over time, this would also favor counterinsurgents of the time, and federal troop casualties were low in any event. Communications technologies, however, cut both ways. The outrages of the KKK and similar groups did get attention in the North, but often only if the numbers were large. The immediacy of television and social media, and the reach of the latter, were lacking.

More striking than any physical technology shift, however, were mental blocks that made certain counterinsurgency approaches difficult if not inconceivable. Nineteenth-century expectations of government were far less extensive, with social welfare, electricity provision, and similar services a thing of the future. Strong laissez faire values dominated the thinking of the time, even among leaders of the African American community, such as Frederick Douglass. Reconstruction saw the federal government redistribute land, build schools, enforce law and order, and otherwise take on tasks that had largely been the function of states. Many Americans at the time were uncomfortable with such an expansive federal role and eager to return to a smaller federal presence. As one historian wrote about the Freedmen’s Bureau’s mandate to support the welfare of many citizens, it was “a concept of national authority alien to the constitutional thought of the day.”

Similarly, the peacetime military was meant to be small, mobilized only temporarily for foreign wars and to protect (or expand) the borders in various struggles against Native Americans. President Grant himself noted that it would have been “wisest” to continue military rule but that “our people did not like it. It was not in accordance with our institutions.”

193 Quoted in Grandin, *The End of the Myth*, p. 103.
VII. Learning from Reconstruction

“The past is never dead. It’s not even past.” Nowhere are Faulkner’s words more poignant than in U.S. racial history. White racists’ victories during Reconstruction gave them a repertoire of violence to draw on in subsequent years when their superior social position faced new threats. Night riding, election fraud, lynching, assassination, and similar tactics would continue in the Jim Crow era and as a way to halt the civil rights movement.\(^{195}\) It had worked in the past, and those like Hampton who participated became heroes. The state of Tennessee would even memorialize the first grand wizard of the KKK, the Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest, whose statue remains in the state capitol to this day.\(^{196}\)

The lack of governance in the post-Civil War South created tremendous opportunities for violence, which Southern white Democrats exploited and federal authorities failed to repress. The structural disadvantages, however, were not by themselves decisive. The architects of Reconstruction did not deploy enough troops in the South or give them an aggressive enough mandate. As a result, much of the South was not governed by the new regime or governed at all, both of which gave the KKK and other violent groups opportunities to take control of Southern states.

The staggering violence of Reconstruction, the gross suppression of human rights, and the unbending of the arc of America’s moral universe get short shrift in U.S. history classes, as does the remarkable, but brief, progress in political representation by the formerly enslaved. The teaching varies by state or region, with the violence often downplayed or the period ignored altogether. Often there is a focus on “feel good” stories about abolitionists or isolated cases of progress without proper context.\(^{197}\) As one high school teacher noted, “U.S. history is often taught in this continuous arc of improvement, but post-Reconstruction destroyed that myth.”\(^{198}\) America, like other countries that are guilty of major crimes, must reconcile with its history.\(^{199}\)

Given how poorly Reconstruction is taught, it is less surprising that its lessons do not shape U.S. thinking on counterinsurgency, occupation, and related issues in the policy and analytic communities. The experience of Reconstruction validates general lessons on the importance of sufficient troops with a strong mandate, a unified strategy, the risks of spoilers, and a long-term


\(^{199}\) For lessons on the international side, see Jennifer Lind, *Sorry States: Apologies in International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010).
mindset. It highlights the importance of understanding the most local levels of conflict, where violence is often underreported and where government control is weakest. Finally, it underscores the point that political agreements that cannot be enforced are meaningless.

Half measures are the bane of many military efforts, and Reconstruction is a sterling example of the problems they create. The Compromise of 1877, which led to an end to slavery but entrenched Black inequality, was similar to what was on the table when Reconstruction began and did not require a decade of painful efforts and the staggering death toll. If the United States wanted to reshape the American South, it would have required more troops with a more aggressive mandate, a determination to stay in place for decades, and a willingness to arm the Black community and otherwise offend the sensibilities of the time. In addition, the troops would have had to adopt a law enforcement role at the local level to prevent white supremacist violence and intimidation.

The failed effort at Reconstruction, and in general failed efforts to build stable democracies, leave many people at risk. Southern white Republicans risked being killed, driven from their homes, and socially ostracism. These considerable risks pale beside those faced by African-Americans, especially those in leadership positions. Similarly, in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other places those who collaborated with the United States faced additional risks when hostile forces contested or seized territory.

Yet such a warning against half-measures and the risks to those who work with the occupiers is unsatisfying. The study of Reconstruction highlights a problem with conciliation, compromise, and other measures to negotiate an end to violence. If only violence is considered, one could argue that the Compromise of 1877 reduced violence in accord with political science articles recommending the incorporation of former combatants into government, a high degree of local autonomy, and otherwise embracing compromise.200 The post-Reconstruction era, while still bloody, was far less murderous than the Reconstruction era. However, compromise in the name of stability also meant surrender on the issue of Black voting rights and equality, cementing injustice into the postbellum foundation of America. This offers a lesson for other struggles as well. Enemies can be coopted with more autonomy, more political influence, social changes, or other concessions. The implications of such concessions, however, can be damning for generations to come even when they bring a superficial peace.

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Table 1.0. African American Population Figures and State-Level Political Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>% African American in 1870</th>
<th>Went Democratic (Presidential)</th>
<th>Went Democratic (Governor)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee**</td>
<td>26.41</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>25.22</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>36.56</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>47.69</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>48.38</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>50.10</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>1877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>58.93</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>41.86</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>53.65</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>46.04</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>30.95</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky**</td>
<td>16.82</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


** Figures for Kentucky and Tennessee are given, but they were not part of Reconstruction, as they had met the conditions before the Reconstruction Acts were passed.
Table 2.0: Federal Troop Levels During Reconstruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Troops 1870 (high/low)*</th>
<th>Troops 1877</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee**</td>
<td>466/160</td>
<td>38/61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>666/344</td>
<td>51/79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>897/260</td>
<td>44/336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>719/478</td>
<td>336/23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>643/331</td>
<td>572/310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>893/512</td>
<td>1506/345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>563/250</td>
<td>150/959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>1,280/413</td>
<td>696/820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>804/191</td>
<td>0/119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1,036/680</td>
<td>479/149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas***</td>
<td>5,102/3,769</td>
<td>4,099/3243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky**</td>
<td>344/666</td>
<td>0/84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* For the troop levels for 1870 and 1877, the numbers varied within the year and the high/low for that year is given, but the month of the peak varies by state. Gregory P. Downs and Scott Nesbit, “Mapping Occupation: Force, Freedom, and the Army in Reconstruction,” University of Georgia, March 2015, http://mappingoccupation.org/map/index.html.

** Figures for Kentucky and Tennessee are given, but they were not part of Reconstruction, as they had met the conditions before the Reconstruction Acts were passed.

*** Texas troop numbers are higher, but many were deployed to prevent Native American raids and on the U.S.-Mexico border.