CIVIL WAR BACKGROUND

In the mid-19th century, while the United States was experiencing an era of tremendous growth, a fundamental economic difference existed between the country's northern and southern regions. While in the North, manufacturing and industry was well established, and agriculture was mostly limited to small-scale farms, the South's economy was based on a system of large-scale farming that depended on the labor of black slaves to grow certain crops, especially cotton and tobacco. Growing abolitionist sentiment in the North after the 1830s and northern opposition to slavery's extension into the new western territories led many southerners to fear that the existence of slavery in America–and thus the backbone of their economy–was in danger.

In 1854, the U.S. Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which essentially opened all new territories to slavery by asserting the rule of popular sovereignty over congressional edict. Pro- and anti-slavery forces struggled violently in "Bleeding Kansas," while opposition to the act in the North led to the formation of the Republican Party, a new political entity based on the principle of opposing slavery's extension into the western territories. After the Supreme Court's ruling in the Dred Scott case (1857) confirmed the legality of slavery in the territories, the abolitionist John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry in 1859 convinced more and more southerners that their northern neighbors were bent on the destruction of the "peculiar institution" that sustained them. Lincoln's election in November 1860 was the final str~aw, and within three months seven southern states SouthCarolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas–had seceded from the United States.

OUTBREAK OF THE CIVIL WAR (1861)

Even as Lincoln took office in March 1861, Confederate forces threatened the federal-held Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. On April 12, after Lincoln ordered a fleet to resupply Sumter, Confederate artillery fired the first shots of the Civil War. Sumter's commander, Major Robert Anderson, surrendered after less than two days of bombardment, leaving the fort in the hands of Confederate forces under Pierre G.T. Beauregard. Four more southern states–Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina and Tennessee–joined the Confederacy after Fort Sumter. Border slave stateslike Missouri, Kentucky and Maryland did not secede, but there was much Confederate sympathy among their citizens.

Though on the surface the Civil War may have seemed a lopsided conflict, with the 23 states of the Union enjoying an enormous advantage in population, manufacturing (including arms production) and railroad construction, the Confederates had a strong military tradition, along with some of the best soldiers and commanders in the nation. They also had a cause they believed in: preserving their long-held traditions and institutions, chief among these being slavery. In the First Battle of Bull Run (known in the South as First Manassas) on July 21, 1861, 35,000 Confederate soldiers under the command of Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson forced a greater number of Union forces (or Federals) to retreat towards Washington, D.C., dashing any hopes of a quick Union victory and leading Lincoln to call for 500,000 more recruits. In fact, both sides' initial call for troops had to be widened after it became clear that the war would not be a limited or short conflict.

THE CIVIL WAR IN VIRGINIA (1862)

George B. McClellan–who replaced the aging General Winfield Scott as supreme commander of the Union Army after the first months of the war–was beloved by his troops, but his reluctance to advance frustrated Lincoln. In the spring of 1862, McClellan finally led his Army of the Potomac up the peninsula between the York and James Rivers, capturing Yorktown on May 4. The combined forces of Robert E. Lee and Jackson successfully drove back McClellan's army in the Seven Days' Battles (June 25-July 1), and a cautious McClellan called for yet more reinforcements in order to move against Richmond. Lincoln refused, and instead withdrew the Army of the Potomac to Washington. By mid-1862, McClellan had been replaced as Union general-in-chief by Henry W. Halleck, though he remained in command of the Army of the Potomac.

Lee then moved his troops northwards and split his men, sending Jackson to meet Pope's forces near Manassas, while Lee himself moved separately with the second half of the army. On August 29, Union troops led by John Pope struck Jackson's forces in the Second Battle of Bull Run (Second Manassas). The next day, Lee hit the Federal left flank with a massive assault, driving Pope's men back towards Washington. On the heels of his victory at Manassas, Lee began the first Confederate invasion of the North. Despite contradictory orders from Lincoln and Halleck, McClellan was able to reorganize his army and strike at Lee on September 14 in Maryland, driving the Confederates back to a defensive position along Antietam Creek, near Sharpsburg. On September 17, the Army of the Potomac hit Lee's forces (reinforced by Jackson's) in what became the war's bloodiest single day of fighting. Total casualties at Antietam numbered 12,410 of some 69,000 troops on the Union side, and 13,724 of around 52,000 for the Confederates. The Union victory at Antietam

would prove decisive, as it halted the Confederate advance in Maryland and forced Lee to retreat into Virginia. Still, McClellan's failure to pursue his advantage earned him the scorn of Lincoln and Halleck, who removed him from command in favor of Ambrose E. Burnside. Burnside's assault on Lee's troops near Fredericksburg on December 13 ended in heavy Union casualties and a Confederate victory; he was promptly replaced by Joseph "Fighting Joe" Hooker, and both armies settled into winter quarters across the Rappahannock River from each other.

AFTER THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION (1863-4)

Lincoln had used the occasion of the Union victory at Antietam to issue a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which freed all slaves in the rebellious states after January 1, 1863. He justified his decision as a wartime measure, and did not go so far as to free the slaves in the border states loyal to the Union. Still, the Emancipation Proclamation deprived the Confederacy of the bulk of its labor forces and put international public opinion strongly on the Union side. Some 186,000 black soldiers would join the Union Army by the time the war ended in 1865, and 38,000 lost their lives.

In the spring of 1863, Hooker's plans for a Union offensive were thwarted by a surprise attack by the bulk of Lee's forces on May 1, whereupon Hooker pulled his men back to Chancellorsville. The Confederates gained a costly victory in the battle that followed, suffering 13,000 casualties (around 22 percent of their troops); the Union lost 17,000 men - (15 percent). Lee launched another invasion of the North in early June, attacking Union forces commanded by General George Meade on July 1 near Gettysburg, in southern Pennsylvania. Over three days of fierce fighting, the Confederates were unable to push through the Union center, and suffered casualties of close to 60 percent. Meade failed to counterattack, however, and Lee's remaining forces were able to escape into Virginia, ending the last Confederate invasion of the North. Also in July 1863, Union forces under Ulysses S. Grant took Vicksburg (Mississippi), a victory that would prove to be the turning point of the war in the western theater. After a Confederate victory at Chickamauga Creek, Georgia, just south of Chattanooga, Tennessee, in September, Lincoln expanded Grant's command, and he led a reinforced Federal army (including two corps from the Army of the Potomac) to victory in Chattanooga in late November.

TOWARD A UNION VICTORY (1864-65)

In March 1864, Lincoln put Grant in supreme command of the Union armies, replacing Halleck. Leaving William T. Sherman in control in the West, Grant headed to Washington,

where he led the Army of the Potomac towards Lee's troops in northern Virginia. Despite heavy Union casualties in the Battle of the Wilderness and at Spotsylvania (both May 1864), at Cold Harbor (early June) and the key rail center of Petersburg (June), Grant pursued a strategy of attrition, putting Petersburg under siege for the next nine months. Sherman outmaneuvered Confederate forces to take Atlanta by September, after which he and some 60,000 Union troops began the famous "March to the Sea," devastating Georgia on the way to capturing Savannah on December 21. Columbia and Charleston, South Carolina, fell to Sherman's men by mid-February, and Jefferson Davis belatedly handed over the supreme command to Lee, with the Confederate war effort on its last legs. Sherman pressed on through North Carolina, capturing Fayetteville, Bentonville, Goldsboro and Raleigh by mid-April.

Meanwhile, exhausted by the Union siege of Petersburg and Richmond, Lee's forces made a last attempt at resistance, attacking and captured the Federal-controlled Fort Stedman on March 25. An immediate counterattack reversed the victory, however, and on the night of April 2-3 Lee's forces evacuated Richmond. For most of the next week, Grant and Meade pursued the Confederates along the Appomattox River, finally exhausting their possibilities for escape. Grant accepted Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House on April 9. On the eve of victory, the Union lost its great leader: The actor and Confederate sympathizer John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Lincoln at Ford's Theatre in Washington on April 14. Sherman received Johnston's surrender at Durham Station, North Carolina on April 26, effectively ending the Civil War

Reconstruction

Reconstruction, in U.S. history, the period (1865–77) that followed the American Civil War and during which attempts were made to redress the inequities of slavery and its political, social, and economic legacy and to solve the problems arising from the readmission to the Union of the 11 states that had seceded at or before the outbreak of war. Long portrayed by many historians as a time when vindictive Radical Republicans fastened black supremacy upon the defeated Confederacy, Reconstruction has since the late 20th century been viewed more sympathetically as a laudable experiment in interracial democracy. Reconstruction witnessed far-reaching changes in America's political life. At the national level, new laws and constitutional amendments permanently altered the federal system and the definition of American citizenship. In the South, a politically mobilized black community joined with white allies to bring the Republican Party to power, and with it a redefinition of the responsibilities of government.

- African American parade in honour of adoption of the Fifteenth Amendment.
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Origins Of Reconstruction

The national debate over Reconstruction began during the Civil War. In December 1863, less than a year after he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, Pres. Abraham Lincoln announced the first comprehensive program for Reconstruction, the Ten Percent Plan. Under it, when one-tenth of a state's prewar voters took an oath of loyalty, they could establish a new state government. To Lincoln, the plan was an attempt to weaken the Confederacy rather than a blueprint for the postwar South. It was put into operation in parts of the Union-occupied Confederacy, but none of the new governments achieved broad local support. In 1864 Congress enacted (and Lincoln pocket vetoed) the Wade-Davis Bill, which proposed to delay the formation of new Southern governments until a majority of voters had taken a loyalty oath. Some Republicans were already convinced that equal rights for the former slaves had to accompany the South's readmission to the Union. In his last speech, on April 11, 1865, Lincoln, referring to Reconstruction in Louisiana, expressed the view that some blacks—the "very intelligent" and those who had served in the Union army—ought to enjoy the right to vote.

Presidential Reconstruction

Following Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, Andrew Johnson became president and inaugurated the period of Presidential Reconstruction (1865–67). Johnson offered a pardon to all Southern whites except Confederate leaders and wealthy planters (although most of these subsequently received individual pardons), restoring their political rights and all property except slaves. He also outlined how new state governments would be created. Apart from the requirement that they abolish slavery, repudiate secession, and abrogate the Confederate debt, these governments were granted a free hand in managing their affairs. They responded by enacting the black codes, laws that required African Americans to sign yearly labour contracts and in other ways sought to limit the freedmen's economic options and reestablish plantation discipline. African Americans strongly resisted the implementation of these measures, and they seriously undermined Northern support for Johnson's policies. When Congress assembled in December 1865, Radical Republicans such as Rep. Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania and Sen. Charles Sumner from Massachusettscalled for the establishment of new Southern governments based on equality before the law and universal male suffrage. But the more numerous moderate Republicans hoped to work with Johnson while modifying his program. Congress refused to seat the representatives and senators elected from the Southern states and in early 1866 passed the Freedmen's Bureau and Civil Rights Bills. The first extended the life of an agency Congress had created in 1865 to oversee the transition from slavery to freedom. The second defined all persons born in the United States as national citizens, who were to enjoy equality before the law.

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A combination of personal stubbornness, fervent belief in states' rights, and racist convictions led Johnson to reject these bills, causing a permanent rupture between himself and Congress. The Civil Rights Act became the first significant legislation in American history to become law over a president's veto. Shortly thereafter, Congress approved the Fourteenth Amendment, which put the principle of birthright citizenship into the Constitution and forbade states to deprive any citizen of the "equal protection" of the laws. Arguably the most important addition to the Constitution other than the Bill of Rights, the amendment constituted a profound change in federal-state relations. Traditionally, citizens' rights had been delineated and protected by the states. Thereafter, the federal government would guarantee all Americans' equality before the law against state violation.

Radical Reconstruction

In the fall 1866 congressional elections, Northern voters overwhelmingly repudiated Johnson's policies. Congress decided to begin Reconstruction anew. The Reconstruction Acts of 1867 divided the South into five military districts and outlined how new governments, based on manhood suffrage without regard to race, were to be established. Thus began the period of Radical or Congressional Reconstruction, which lasted until the end of the last Southern Republican governments in 1877.

By 1870 all the former Confederate states had been readmitted to the Union, and nearly all were controlled by the Republican Party. Three groups made up Southern Republicanism. Carpetbaggers, or recent arrivals from the North, were former Union soldiers, teachers, Freedmen's Bureau agents, and businessmen. The second large group, scalawags, or native-born white Republicans, included some businessmen and planters, but most were nonslaveholding small farmers from the Southern up-country. Loyal to the Union during the Civil War, they saw the Republican Party as a means of keeping Confederates from regaining power in the South.

In every state, African Americans formed the overwhelming majority of Southern Republican voters. From the beginning of Reconstruction, black conventions and newspapers throughout the South had called for the extension of full civil and political rights to African Americans. Composed of those who had been free before the Civil War plus slave ministers, artisans, and Civil War veterans, the black political leadership pressed for the elimination of the racial caste system and the economic uplifting of the former slaves. Sixteen African Americans served in Congress during Reconstruction—including Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce in the U.S. Senate—more than 600 in state legislatures, and hundreds more in local offices from sheriff to justice of the peace scattered across the South. So-called "black supremacy" never existed, but the advent of African Americans in positions of political power marked a dramatic break with the country's traditions and aroused bitter hostility from Reconstruction's opponents.

Serving an expanded citizenry, Reconstruction governments established the South's first state-funded public school systems, sought to strengthen the bargaining power of plantation labourers, made taxation more equitable, and outlawed racial discrimination in public transportation and accommodations. They also offered lavish aid to railroads and other enterprises in the hope of creating a "New South" whose economic expansion would benefit blacks and whites alike. But the economic program spawned corruption and rising taxes, alienating increasing numbers of white voters.

Meanwhile, the social and economic transformation of the South proceeded apace. To blacks, freedom meant independence from white control. Reconstruction provided the opportunity for African Americans to solidify their family ties and to create independent religious institutions, which became centres of community life that survived long after Reconstruction ended. The former slaves also demanded economic independence. Blacks' hopes that the federal government would provide them with land had been raised by Gen. William T. Sherman's Field Order No. 15 of January 1865, which set aside a large swath of land along the coast of South Carolina and Georgia for the exclusive settlement of black families, and by the Freedmen's Bureau Act of March, which authorized the bureau to rent or sell land in its possession to former slaves. But President Johnson in the summer of 1865 ordered land in federal hands to be returned to its former owners. The dream of "40 acres and a mule" was stillborn. Lacking land, most former slaves had little economic alternative other than resuming work on plantations owned by whites. Some worked for wages, others as sharecroppers, who divided the crop with the owner at the end of the year. Neither status offered much hope for economic mobility. For decades, most Southern blacks remained propertyless and poor.

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Nonetheless, the political revolution of Reconstruction spawned increasingly violent opposition from white Southerners. White supremacist organizations that committed terrorist acts, such as the Ku Klux Klan, targeted local Republican leaders for beatings or assassination. African Americans who asserted their rights in dealings with white employers, teachers, ministers, and others seeking to assist the former slaves also became targets. At Colfax, Louisiana, in 1873, scores of black militiamen were killed after surrendering to armed whites intent on seizing control of local government. Increasingly, the new Southern governments looked to Washington, D.C., for assistance.

- By 1869 the Republican Party was firmly in control of all three branches of the federal government. After attempting to remove Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, in violation of the new Tenure of Office Act, Johnson had been impeached by the House of Representatives in 1868. Although the Senate, by a single vote, failed to remove him from office, Johnson's power to obstruct the course of Reconstruction was gone.
Republican Ulysses S. Grant was elected president that fall (*see* United States presidential election of 1868). Soon afterward, Congress approved the Fifteenth Amendment, prohibiting states from restricting the right to vote because of race. Then it enacted a series of Enforcement Acts authorizing national action to suppress political violence. In 1871 the administration launched a legal and military offensive that destroyed the Klan. Grant was reelected in 1872 in the most peaceful election of the period.

The End Of Reconstruction

Nonetheless, Reconstruction soon began to wane. During the 1870s, many Republicans retreated from both the racial egalitarianism and the broad definition of federal power spawned by the Civil War. Southern corruption and instability, Reconstruction's critics argued, stemmed from the exclusion of the region's "best men"—the planters—from power. As Northern Republicans became more conservative, Reconstruction came to symbolize a misguided attempt to uplift the lower classes of society. Reflecting the shifting mood, a series of Supreme Court decisions, beginning with the Slaughterhouse Cases in 1873, severely limited the scope of Reconstruction laws and constitutional amendments.

- By 1876 only South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana remained under Republican control. The outcome of that year's presidential contest between Republican Rutherford B. Hayes and Democrat Samuel J. Tilden hinged on disputed returns from these states. Negotiations between Southern political leaders and representatives of Hayes produced a bargain: Hayes would recognize Democratic control of the remaining Southern states, and Democrats would not block the certification of his election by Congress (*see* United States presidential election of 1876). Hayes was inaugurated; federal troops returned to their barracks; and as an era when the federal government accepted the responsibility for protecting the rights of the former slaves, Reconstruction came to an end.
By the turn of the century, a new racial system had been put in place in the South, resting on the disenfranchisement of black voters, a rigid system of racial segregation, the relegation of African Americans to low-wage agricultural and domestic employment, and legal and extralegal violence to punish those who challenged the new order. Nonetheless, while flagrantly violated, the Reconstruction amendments remained in the Constitution, sleeping giants, as Charles Sumner called them, to be awakened by subsequent generations who sought to redeem the promise of genuine freedom for the descendants of slavery. Not until the 1960s, in the civil rights movement, sometimes called the "second Reconstruction," would the country again attempt to fulfill the political and social agenda of Reconstruction.