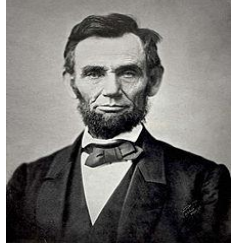


# Reconstruction Plans

Danzer, Gerald A. "The Politics of Reconstruction." *The Americans*, Evanston, McDougal Littell, 2009, pp. 376-82.

# 1. Lincoln's Plan



## **Views on the Confederacy:**

Abraham Lincoln had thought about the process of restoring the Union from the earliest days of the war. His guiding principles were to accomplish the task as rapidly as possible and ignore calls for punishing the South.

Lincoln had made it clear that he favored a lenient Reconstruction policy. He believed that secession was constitutionally impossible and therefore that the Confederate states had never left the Union. He contended that it was individuals, not states who had rebelled and that the Constitution gave the president the power to pardon individuals.

## **In late 1863, Lincoln announced a formal plan for reconstruction:**

1. A general amnesty would be granted to all who would take an oath of loyalty to the United States and pledge to obey all federal laws pertaining to slavery
2. High Confederate officials and military leaders were to be temporarily excluded from the process
3. When one tenth of the number of voters who had participated in the 1860 election had taken the oath within a particular state, then that state could launch a new government and elect representatives to Congress.

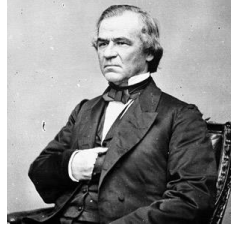
## **South's Response:**

The states of Louisiana, Arkansas and Tennessee rapidly acted to comply with these terms. Civil governments were set up after conventions in each state officially abolished slavery, repudiated their debts, and canceled the acts of secession. Representatives were elected to serve in Congress.

## **Reaction:**

However, the Lincoln plan was not acceptable to Congress, which rejected the representatives. The Radical Republicans voiced immediate opposition to Lincoln's reconstruction plan, objecting to its leniency and lack of protections for freed slaves. Congress refused to accept the rehabilitation of Tennessee, Arkansas, and Louisiana. In July 1864, Congress passed the Wade-Davis Bill, their own formula for restoring the Union that said a state must have a majority(not just 10%) within its borders take the oath of loyalty.

# 2. President Andrew Johnson's Plan



## Views on the Confederacy:

Lincoln's assassination in April 1865 left this successor, Democrat Andrew Johnson from Tennessee, to deal with the Reconstruction controversy. A staunch Unionist, Johnson has often expressed his intent to deal harshly with Confederate leaders. Most white Southerners therefore considered Johnson a traitor to his region, while Radicals believed that he was one of them. Both were wrong.

## Johnson's plan:

- Pardons would be granted to those taking a loyalty oath
- Most high ranking Confederate officials and wealthy Southern landowners would not be pardoned
- A state needed to abolish slavery before being readmitted (ratify 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment)
  - He supported abolition, but he was not in favor of former slaves gaining the right to vote
- A state was required to repeal its secession ordinance before being readmitted

## South's Response:

Johnson's policies relieved most white Southerners. Johnson's support of states' rights instead of a strong central government reassured the Southern states. The remaining Confederate states quickly agreed to Johnson's terms. Within a few months, these states—all except Texas—held conventions to draw up new state constitutions, to set up new state governments, and to elect representatives to Congress. However, some Southern states did not fully comply with the conditions for returning to the Union.

In December 1865, the newly elected Southern legislators arrived in Washington to take their seats. Many of them had previously sat in the Congress of the Confederacy or fought as Confederate generals. Johnson pardoned them all—a gesture that infuriated the Radicals.

## Reaction:

When Congress convened in December 1865, the Radical Republican legislators disputed Johnson's claim that Reconstruction was complete. Many of them believed that the Southern states were not much different from the way they had been before the war. As a result, Congress refused to admit the newly elected Southern legislators. At the same time, moderate Republicans pushed for new laws to remedy weakness they saw in Johnson's plan.

# 3. Congressional Plan



## Views on the Confederacy:

The Radical Republicans believed blacks were entitled to the same political rights and opportunities as whites. They also believed that the Confederate leaders should be punished for their roles in the Civil War. The leaders vigorously opposed Andrew Johnson's lenient policies.

## Congressional Plan:

- Civil Rights Act of 1866- gave African Americans citizenship and forbade states from passing discriminatory laws—black codes—that severely restricted African American’s lives.
- 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1866)- “all persons born or naturalized in the United States” citizens of the country. All were entitled to equal protection of the law, and no state could deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. States, not just the federal government were required to uphold the rights of citizens.
- Reconstruction Act of 1867- placed the South under military occupation. Also, the requirements for states to reenter the union increased: the states must ratify the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and constitutionally guarantee to give the right to vote to all adult males regardless of race.
- 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment (1870)- no one could be kept from voting because of “race, color, or previous conditions of servitude.”

## South’s Response:

The first two years of Congressional Reconstruction Southern states rewrote their Constitutions and ratified the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Now the Southern Unionists — Southerners who supported the Union during the War — became the new Southern leadership.

## Reaction:

President Johnson shocked everyone when he voted down the Civil Rights Act. Johnson vetoed the Reconstruction Act of 1867 because he believed it was in conflict with the Constitution. Congress promptly overrode the veto.

Radical leaders felt President Johnson was not carrying out his constitutional obligation to enforce the Reconstruction Act. They looked for grounds on which to impeach the president—that is to formally charge him with misconduct in office. In March 1867, Congress had passed the Tenure of Office Act, which prohibited the president from removing a federal official or military commander without the approval of the Senate. The purpose was to protect the Radical Republicans in Johnson’s cabinet. Johnson challenged the act by firing his Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. The House of Representatives responded by impeaching Johnson. A three-month trial ensued. When the vote was completed, the vote was 35 to 19—one short of a two-thirds majority to impeach him. Seven Republican Senators had jumped party lines and found Johnson not guilty. Johnson dodged a bullet and was able to serve out his term.