

Essay on emancipation and the first reconstruction 1863-77

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



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I. What was going on in America during this time (1865-1877) known as " the reconstruction? (1-3 Page) (Talk about Lincolns 10% plan, Charles Sumner, Preston Brooks, Lincolns death, The Reconstruction act, Impeachment of Andrew Johnson, Freedmans Bureau, Birth of the KKK, etc.)

There were two Reconstructions in American history, although the first one in 1865-77 ended with restoration of home rule and white supremacy in the South, rather than equal citizenship and voting rights promised in the 14th and 15th Amendments. In fact, it ended in extreme violence, with perhaps 50, 000 blacks being murdered when the Ku Klux Klan overthrew the governments of many Southern states and returned the former Confederates to power. For almost ninety years after 1877, though, on these issues the political system returned to the " traditional ways of expediency and concession" as it ignored the rights of the freed slaves and their descendants (Woodward 1966/1992, 3).

Abraham Lincoln in his famous letter to the New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley in 1863 stated that he regarded the issue of slavery as one of pragmatism and expediency rather than morality, and that if he could save the Union by freeing, all, some or none of the slaves then he would do so.

Only the pressures of wartime and the need to recruit black troops and deprive the South of its most important labor force pushed Lincoln to the more radical position of immediate abolition of slavery, which he had not supported when he was first elected in 1860 (Tsesis 2004). His Emancipation Proclamation of January 1863 also reflected this pragmatism, freeing all slaves in states that were still in rebellion as a war measure while leaving others alone in the Border States that had remained loyal to the Union. Nor did he ever seem particularly enthusiastic about extending full citizenship and voting rights to the freed slaves, although behind the scenes in 1864-65 he worked actively in support of the 13th Amendment that abolished slavery everywhere in the U. S. when it was ratified in 1865. For black leaders like Frederick Douglass and radical members of his own party like Rep. Thaddeus Stevens and Senators Charles Sumner and Ben Wade, Lincoln's policies on slavery and Reconstruction were too moderate, centrist and slow, and they were the real driving force behind Radical Reconstruction in 1867-77, which required the Southern States to ratify the 14th Amendment in 1868, which guaranteed equal citizenship for blacks, and the 15th in 1870 that enfranchised black males. For the majority of white Southerners, though, these policies contradicted their view on white supremacy and had only been imposed on them at gunpoint by the victors in the Civil War.

Radical Reconstruction

Many Republicans in Congress thought that Lincoln was too moderate on issues of black civil rights and voting rights, such as his plan to readmit Louisiana to the Union with no real protections of the rights of the freed

slaves. They clashed openly with his successor Andrew Johnson, the former Senator from Tennessee, who was prepared to readmit all of the Southern states with the former Confederates still in control. The First Reconstruction was carried out by Congress rather than the executive branch, which passed a Civil Rights Act in 1866, placed the South under military rule again in the 1867 Reconstruction Acts, disenfranchised the former Confederates, and then impeached Andrew Johnson and turned him into a lame duck, one-term president. Ulysses S. Grant supported this version of Radical Reconstruction from the start, including the impeachment of Johnson, and then was elected president in 1868. Johnson only survived in office at all because of seven moderate Republican votes in the Senate, who represented the section of the party that was frightened by the Radical Benjamin Wade and did not want him to succeed Johnson if he were removed from office. Wade, like Thaddeus Stevens in the House, was a self-proclaimed Jacobin who had often clashed with Lincoln over the delay in abolishing slavery and thought his Reconstruction policies far too moderate and conciliatory to the Confederates. He also favored women's rights, labor unions and a redistribution of wealth in the country, which frightened the business community that already regarded the Republican Party as its preferred political home. Therefore, the Republicans permitted Johnson to survive his term in office as a completely powerless president, and "contrary to myth, the Republican Party did not drive out of its ranks the 'seven martyrs' who had voted for acquittal" (Foner 2005, 146).

Blacks could hardly vote anywhere in the U. S. before the First Reconstruction, but over 2, 000 held public office in 1867-77. This would

have been impossible in the past and would not happen again until after the Second Reconstruction of 1954-65. The 14th and 15th Amendments initiated a “constitutional revolution” in the South, but it only endured for ten years due to intense opposition from the former Confederates (Foner 129). At least 10% of black officeholders during the First Reconstruction were actually victims of physical violence, intimidation or even murder by the KKK, and in the presidential elections of 1868 and 1876, Klan violence was so extreme in some states that blacks and their allies could hardly campaign at all (Foner 2005, 134). Indeed, the real reason that the election of 1876 was in dispute and ended up being decided in the House of Representatives was that violence by the KKK in South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana made it impossible for many blacks to vote or have their ballots counted, which meant that the electoral votes of those states were in dispute. During the First Reconstruction, however, the majority of white males in the South were disenfranchised or refused to vote at all, which was “an ominous indication” that they mostly regarded it as illegitimate and having been imposed by force by the federal government (Foner 2005, 143). Only those whites who had opposed secession and the Confederacy participated in the First Reconstruction, and even though their numbers were substantial in Upper South states like Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas, they were never the majority anywhere in the South.

II. Imperialism and what it was and why it was important in this time. (1-2 Pages)

Before World War II, American interventionism was often overt and direct,

simply landing troops on the shores of some prospective banana republic and installing a 'friendly' government there. This is exactly what happened in Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, in some cases more than once. Although the "men who directed these 'regime change' operations may not have explained forthrightly why they were acting, but they took responsibility for their acts" (Kinzer 5). Theodore Roosevelt was hardly shy about admitting that he sent troops to Puerto Rico and the Philippines, taking Panama from Columbia or landing in person with the army in Cuba in 1898. Indeed, more sober and pragmatic imperialists feared that he was too much of a 'cowboy' and perhaps unsound in his boasting about a new American Empire. During the Cold War, overthrowing governments was more commonly done in the shadows through CIA covert operations, but once the Soviet Union ceased to exist, the U. S. increasingly reverted to the older methods of direct intervention. Although the "men who directed these 'regime change' operations may not have explained forthrightly why they were acting, they took responsibility for their acts" (Kinzer 5).

President Theodore Roosevelt was hardly shy about admitting that he sent troops to Puerto Rico and the Philippines, taking Panama from Columbia or landing in person with the army in Cuba in 1898. Woodrow Wilson insisted that he was intervening on the side of democracy and human progress in the Mexican Revolution of 1910-20. In the Philippines, independence leaders had already written a constitution and elected an assembly when the U. S. annexed the islands in 1899, resulting in a harsh war of occupation and counterinsurgency campaign that was unpopular at home. Eventually,

though, the Army was able to defeat the guerillas, while the conciliatory policies of Roosevelt, William Howard Taft Wilson allowed most Filipinos to accommodate to American rule. Since the U. S. Congress and public opinion were ultimately uncomfortable with the idea of European-style colonies, the Philippines received considerable autonomy and home rule from the early-1900's onward.

American foreign policy was basically the same in Puerto Rico, the Philippines and all the other dependencies and protectorates it acquired after 1898. Puerto Rico had already been granted the right to home rule and an elected assembly when U. S. troops landed there in 1898. In the Philippines, independence leaders had already written a democratic constitution and elected an assembly when the U. S. annexed the islands in 1899, resulting in a brutal war of occupation and counterinsurgency campaign in which torture and murder were commonplace. In both cases, a local democratic government would have endangered American trade and investment as well as its plans to build military bases on these islands. Although even Theodore Roosevelt had never “ been enthusiastic about the Philippines operation” and doubted that the U. S, would be able to hold these islands in the event of war with Japan, who pursued the conquest to the bitter end (Kinzer 55).

III. Summarize papers read in own viewpoint (1-3 Pages)

Albert Beveridge expressed this new “ March of the Flag” in the racist terms of Manifest Destiny in which the ‘ Nordic’ or Anglo-Saxon peoples had conquered the Natives of the Americas and seized half of Mexico. He simply assumed this represented the progress of white, Christian civilization, along

trade, commerce and free market capitalism, and even described (white) Americans as a Chosen People. This was a common view of the time, shared even by presidents like Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and William McKinley. None of these leaders were particularly concerned about the plight of blacks in the post-Reconstruction South, either. Like Beveridge, they were all quite prepared to share the ‘ blessings’ of this civilization and its institutions with the rest of the world, and to achieve commercial control of the planet in the future. As for the peoples of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, they would become part of this new empire whether they consented to it or not. Most of them did not of course, but that was of little concern to Beveridge, and he compared them to the Native Americans in this respect. In any case, if the U. S. gave up its new colonies, Germany, Japan or some other imperial power would quickly seize them, such was the state of the world in the 1890s. He thought it would be better for the U. S. to keep them, along with their raw materials and natural resources, and their potential as markets and places for investment.

Mark Twain was a member of the Anti-Imperialist League and strongly opposed the annexation of the new colonies and the war in the Philippines. He was very skeptical about any concepts of white or ‘ Nordic’ racial supremacy, or the virtues of American government and the big corporate interests that controlled it—including men like Sen. Beveridge. For Mark Twain the new American empire of the 1890s was a continuation of the slave trade and the wars against the Native Americans, neither of which he regarded as signs of progress and civilization. He saw ever clearly that the true motives for seizing these colonies were economic, and had nothing to

do with extending liberty, justice and democracy to the colonies. That was all hypocrisy and propaganda, which he satirized mercilessly. William McKinley pretended that was the reason for intervening in Cuba, but then he showed his true motives when he annexed the Philippines. The real American game would not to have followed the example of the European empires, but to give the islands their independence after the Spanish had been defeated in 1898. McKinley and his allies like Beveridge and Henry Cabot Lodge then began to prattle on about extending the ' blessings of civilization' to the natives, but it was all a smokescreen for the big business interests and Wall Street bankers. If Lincoln had broken the chains of slavery, men like McKinley were now restoring them, both at home and overseas, only on a larger scale than ever before.

IV. Things you think will make the writers arguments stronger or even disprove them from other things that happened during this time.

Compromise of 1877 and the Failure of the First Reconstruction

One of the key events in the U. S. during this era was the failure of Reconstruction and the restoration of the old order in the South after 1877. This early experiment in democracy and human rights was a failure, and as a result the U. S. remained a very deeply racist society, not only toward blacks but Native Americans, Asians, Hispanics and immigrants. Not surprisingly, when the U. S. became an imperial power overseas in the 1890s, this same type of racist ideology and social system was applied there as well, such as in the war against the guerillas in the Philippines. Mark Twain certainly

recognized this connection between racism at home and imperial policies abroad, even as he condemned both. Once the last of the federal troops were removed after the Compromise of 1877, blacks lost their civil and voting rights and were “ firmly relegated to the lower rungs of the economic ladder” (Woodward 1955/2002, 5). Had this not occurred after 1877, there would have been no need for a Second Reconstruction in the 1950s and 1960s. Segregation and denial of black voting rights were considered ‘ legal’ by state and local governments and upheld by Supreme Court decisions like *Plessey v. Ferguson* (1896) and *Williams v. Mississippi* (1897). For the United States, “ separate but equal” was the law of the land in many parts of the country until 1964, and while the separation by race was real equality part never existed (Glover 14). So it was in the American colonies overseas as well.

Twain could have made an even stronger case had he considered the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 and its annexation to the U. S. five years later. From a Native Hawaiian perspective, this story is identical to that of the indigenous people of the Americas since 1492 in that they were also enslaved, exterminated, wiped out by epidemics and marginalized in ghettos and reservations. In 1778 there were over one million Natives, but because of European diseases their numbers fell to 100, 000 in the 1840s and just 40, 000 by 1890, when they were outnumbered by white and Asian immigrants. Their Native forms of landholding and government were systematically destroyed and replaced by an oligarchy of white plantation owners, who brought in ‘ coolie’ labor from Asia to perform menial agricultural tasks. These planters took control of the government in 1887,

denied the vote to Hawaiians and ceded Pearl Harbor to the U. S. “ in exchange for duty-free sugar” (Trask 11). No Hawaiians ever had a chance to approve the annexation of the islands by the United States and none had the right to vote for the new territorial government that replaced the monarchy, no more than blacks on Southern plantations or indigenous people on reservations could vote. They simply became a colony of the United States, a subject people, and so they have remained ever since.

Twain and Beveridge could have added that even before the war of 1898, Cuban leaders like Jose Marti were rightly concerned that American intervention in their revolution would merely substitute one form of imperialism for another. Far from endorsing the nationalist revolution in Cuba, the U. S. government feared that its proposals for democracy, social welfare and land reform would be a threat to American investments and business interests (Kinzer 37). General Leonard Wood, in charge of the military occupation of the island, was equally blunt in his conception that the meaning of Cuban independence should be openness to foreign investment (Kinzer 42). In addition, the Platt Amendment, passed by Congress along partisan lines, gave the U. S. the power to install and remove governments, supervise its treasury and foreign policy, and to intervene militarily whenever it saw fit. Essentially, it “ gave the Cubans permission to rule themselves as long as they allowed the United States to veto any decisions they made” (Kinzer 43).

Both Twain and Senator Beveridge realized that in the Philippines, the Army of Liberation was already in control of most of the country by the time 12,000 U. S. troops landed in Manila in August 1898. As in Cuba most Americans

do not remember that a revolution was already underway in these Spanish colonies long before the U. S. became involved in conventional or counterinsurgency operations (Silbey 215). From the American point of view, it was “ a messy unanticipated war” and one that was never popular at home (Linn 156). President William McKinley had sent the troops to Manila with no clear plan, orders or mission, and Washington was completely preoccupied with other political and military crises. Only after Spain surrendered did he decide on a policy of “ benevolent assimilation” rather than granting the Philippines independence as promised or taking a risk that Germany, Japan or France might try to turn them into one of their colonies (Linn, p. 158). By 1899, though the Tagalog areas of Luzon had already declared independence, while other independent republic has also appeared in Mindanao, Pinoy and Negritos.

When the Filipinos learned that they had been annexed by the United States, they already had their own civil administration in most towns outside of Manila, and this continued underground even after American troops were garrisoned all over the islands. Counterinsurgency operations and pacification programs including building roads, schools, courthouses and clinics in secure areas, and actual military operations occurred in fewer than half the provinces (Linn 160). The Navy maintained a very strict blockade and control of commerce throughout the war, while on land the Army relied heavily on food controls, cordon-and-sweep operations, travel restrictions, and use of Filipino scouts and auxiliaries. Former guerillas collaborating with the military received incentives and rewards, and were allowed to remain in power on the local and provincial levels. General Arthur MacArthur, the

father of Douglas (who also fought in the Philippines War as a young officer) ordered the mass arrest and detention of anyone suspected of collaborating with the insurgents, and attempted to eliminate their support in the towns (Linn 162). In Batangas and Samar, most of the population was concentrated in certain protected areas, while anyone caught outside these was assumed to be a guerilla and shot on sight. MacArthur offered rewards for information leading to the capture of guerillas, supplies and weapons, while in each locality Army intelligence officers maintained networks of spies and informers. In addition, the U. S. army built roads and telephone and telegraph lines that gave it superior mobility and communications (Linn 168). Officially, the Philippines War ended in 1902, although counterinsurgency operations continued in Leyte and Samar until 1907 and in Mindanao against the Moros (Muslims) until 1913. Although mostly forgotten in the U. S. today, this was actually America's longest war, more than Vietnam or Afghanistan, but the number of troops stationed there fell from over 40, 000 at its height to about 12, 000 by 1907 (Silbey 207).

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