

The Battle Over Reconstruction

After the war, there were many opinions about what Reconstruction would look like. These differences are highlighted in Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson and Congress's views on how to rebuild. Today, you will learn more about these three different plans for Reconstruction.

Directions: Complete the chart below using the information provided on [this video](#) and pages 2-4 of this document. If you click on the links in the first column they will take you to the corresponding plan.

Reconstruction Plans Comparison Chart

Plan	Details (brief summary in your own words)	Impact of the plan +/-
Lincoln's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction		
Wade - Davis Bill		
Johnson's plan		
Congressional Reconstruction		

Check for understanding:

1. Evaluate the major differences between the three plans.
2. Which plan did you feel was the most appropriate course of action to take after the war? Why?

Lincoln's Reconstruction Plan

December 1863

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. Unlike the Radical Republicans, it was Lincoln's belief that the Southern states had not really left the Union since it was never constitutionally possible.

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.

The states of Louisiana, Arkansas and Tennessee rapidly acted to comply with these terms. However, the Lincoln plan was not acceptable to Congress.

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:

1. A state must have a majority within its borders take the oath of loyalty
2. A state must formally abolish slavery
3. No Confederate officials could participate in the new governments.

Lincoln did not approve of this plan and exercised his pocket veto.

An angry Congress would later pass the Wade-Davis Manifesto (August 1864), which charged Lincoln with usurping the powers of Congress. This statement would have little impact on the public as the military news from the South improved; Sherman's Atlanta Campaign restored Lincoln's popularity and helped assure his reelection.

Johnson's Reconstruction Plan

The looming showdown between Lincoln and the Congress over competing reconstruction plans never occurred. The president was assassinated on April 14, 1865. His successor, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, lacked his predecessor's skills in handling people; those skills would be badly missed. Johnson's plan envisioned the following:

- Pardons would be granted to those taking a loyalty oath
- No pardons would be available to high Confederate officials and persons owning property valued in excess of \$20,000
- A state needed to abolish slavery before being readmitted (13th Amendment)
- A state was required to repeal its secession ordinance before being readmitted.

What should be done for the Freedmen?

- African Americans should be guaranteed equal rights only if individual states want to grant them to the freedmen. The federal government should not force Southern governments to accept new laws regarding freedmen. Whether or not to give freedmen education, money, jobs, or other supports would be left up to the states
- African Americans should not be given the right to vote. Only certain Freedmen could be trusted to vote, like those who could read and write.

Most of the seceded states began compliance with the president's program. Congress was not in session, so there was no immediate objection from that quarter. However, Congress reconvened in December and refused to seat the Southern representatives.

Reconstruction had produced another deadlock between the president and Congress.

Radical Republicans' Reconstruction Plan

The postwar Radical Republicans were motivated by three main factors:

1. Revenge—a desire among some to punish the South for causing the war and a belief that the Southern states had, in fact, seceded and were conquered territory.
2. Concern for the freedmen—some believed that the federal government had a role to play in the transition of freedmen from slavery to freedom
3. Political concerns—the Radicals wanted to keep the Republican Party in power in both the North and the South.

Northern Requirements of the Southern States:

1. The Southern states would be ruled by the military until all new laws and provisions set forth were enforced.
2. Each state would call a convention to write a new Constitution.
3. Guarantee African Americans full rights as citizens (14th Amendment)
4. Guarantee African Americans the right to vote. (15th Amendment)
5. Former Confederate officials and army officers barred from voting or holding political office.

If the South were to fall back into Democratic hands, the Radical Republican program would suffer. This threat brought many Republicans around to supporting the vote for blacks (Fifteenth Amendment). Grateful freedmen voting Republican would help to maintain the status quo.

The postwar Congress pushed through a number of measures designed to assist the freedmen, but also demonstrate the supremacy of Congress over the president. These measures included the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the Fourteenth Amendment, the Tenure of Office Act and the Army Appropriations Act.

The culmination of this process occurred in 1867 and 1868 when Congress passed a series of Reconstruction Acts; these measures were implemented and constituted the final restoration program for the South. The Radical Republicans in Congress, however, were not satisfied until they dealt with their chief tormenter in the impeachment of Andrew Johnson.