Grant: "The Tanner Boy" and Reconstruction

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GRANT: "THE TANNER BOY"

AND RECONSTRUCTION

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

Department of History
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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ABSTRACT

Reconstruction, as viewed by historians, is usually divided into two distinct periods, "Presidential" and "Congressional," each controlled by a different branch of the United States Government.

This approach leaves one major question unanswered: What of Grant, "the tanner boy," and Reconstruction? After all, President Ulysses S. Grant was elected to the office of President of the United States in 1868, and served in that capacity from March 4, 1869, until March 4, 1877, when Rutherford B. Hayes assumed office.

Grant: "The Tanner Boy" and Reconstruction answers this question and determines why Grant has been deemed less important than Lincoln, Johnson, or Congress during this period. This thesis examines Grant's plans for reconstructing the Union, his success in implementing them, and his overall impact on Reconstruction. In evaluating these issues, primary attention has been placed upon Grant's presidential presentations, especially his State of the Union addresses and proclamations.
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"Grant's postwar career was decidedly anticlimactic. To be sure he was elected as a Republican to two terms as president (1869-1877), but his administrations were marred by indecisive leadership, an inconsistent policy on southern Reconstruction, and massive corruption."

William L. Barney

"But the class next after us [1843] was destined to furnish the man who was to eclipse us all—to rise to the rank of general, an office made by Congress to honor his services, who became President of the United States, and for a second term; who received the salutations of all the powers of the world in his travels as a private citizen around the earth, of noble, generous heart, a lovable character, a valued friend,—Ulysses S. Grant."

James B. Longstreet

2 James Longstreet, From Manassas To Appomatox (1895; Reprint, New York, 1994), 4.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

At approximately 4:15 a.m., April 12, 1861, the national ties between the northern and southern states of the United States of America were broken. As Mary Chestnut, a citizen of Charleston, South Carolina noted in her diary, "If [Major Robert] Anderson does not accept terms - at four - the orders are he shall be fired upon" and then "at half-past four, the heavy booming of cannon."¹ Thus, the Confederate forces initiated the American Civil War by opening fire on the Federal garrison at Fort Sumter, Charleston Harbor, South Carolina and the American governmental system based on the Constitution of the United States of America failed to avert a costly civil war.

After two years and eight months of savage conflict, with demoralizing defeats at such places as Bull Run and Chancellorsville, frustrating draws at Shiloh and Antietam, and spectacular victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, the Union forces seemed to be on the road to eventual victory. As a result, President Abraham Lincoln took the first steps toward bringing about the reconstruction of the nation. On December 8, 1863, the President in a formal proclamation to

the nation outlined the steps to be followed by any southerner who wished to reestablish his allegiance to the United States. Lincoln's program also provided the guidelines for the collective citizenry of any southern state desiring to return their state to the Union.2

His plan, which was met with extensive discussion both north and south of the Mason-Dixon line, initiated the first phase of Reconstruction known collectively by American historians as the period of "Presidential Reconstruction." The issues which Lincoln, Congress and his three predecessors faced were extremely complex and seemed to defy resolution. They included such diverse problems as finding a just peace out of civil war, national unity out of sectional strife, equal civil rights out of slavery, equality of race out of discrimination, and free suffrage out of intimidation. From December 8, 1863, until his assassination on April 15, 1865, Lincoln attempted to both chart and implement the process of rebuilding the United States into a single free nation.

With Lincoln's death, Vice-President Andrew Johnson assumed that responsibility, and quickly set out to establish his own set of Reconstruction policies. His efforts met determined resistance in Congress, which sought to implement its own plans. This collision of ideas resulted in a period of bitter disagreements and recriminations which lasted until 1867, when Congress defeated President Johnson's plans, programs, and ambitions.

In March 1867 Congress passed, over President Johnson's veto, The Reconstruction Acts of 1867, which sub-divided the southern states into five distinct military districts, each under the command of a single military officer. Under these acts the new military governor was to utilize the military forces at his disposal to protect the citizenry and property located within the district. This legislation also provided yet a third plan for rebuilding and readmitting the South into the Union. This new procedure signaled the beginning of Congressional Reconstruction, which ran its course from March of 1867 to the final days of 1877, when with the collapse of the few remaining Republican State governments in the South, the process ended.

Reconstruction then, as viewed by historians, is usually divided into two distinct periods controlled by two different branches of the United States government. The first period, defined as "Presidential Reconstruction," was controlled by Presidents Lincoln and Johnson from 1863 to approximately March 1867. The second period is identified as the time of "Congressional Reconstruction" from March 1867 to December 1877.

This approach to the period leaves one major question unanswered: What of Grant, "the tanner boy," and Reconstruction?3 After all, President Ulysses S. Grant was elected to the office of President of the United States in 1868, and served in that capacity from March 4, 1869, until March 4, 1877, when Rutherford B. Hayes assumed office.

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Grant held the presidency for eight years, and all of them fell within the nation's Reconstruction period. Grant, therefore, should have been, at least in part, responsible for the course of the United States's Reconstruction after the Civil War for more than twice as long as either Lincoln or Johnson. Yet, his period of office remains obscured under the label of "Congressional Reconstruction."

Grant is in part to blame for this unusual circumstance. When Grant wrote his autobiography, he neglected, perhaps due to the advanced stage of his own terminal illness, to discuss his presidency in any detail. Rather, for all practical purposes, he ended his work with the closing of the war. Indeed, Grant only hints at those things which occurred between 1865 and 1877 in the last seven pages of his book. Historian William S. McFeely in the "new introduction" to Grant's work, published in 1982, even went so far as to state that "it is not impossible that these final pages also show how huge doses of morphine had begun to take their toll on the dying writer." Nevertheless, those few pages are all the information Grant imparted to his readers on his service as President of the United States.

This absence of discussion by the man himself has led others to conclude that perhaps nothing really significant happened to Grant after he ended his command of the Union forces. Evidence to support this determination can be found in E. B. Long's introduction to the 1952 publication of

Grant's autobiography. In it, Long asserts that although the former General was also the President of the United States, "Grant the soldier was the real man;" and that "the rest was anticlimax." Long goes on to argue that the American people have been "willing to overlook the sometimes unfortunate years of the presidency" precisely because Grant "as a soldier" had "won the hearts of America." Others historians, such as George C. Rable, in But There Was No Peace, Eric Foner, in Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877, and Brooks D. Simpson in Let Us Have Peace: Ulysses S. Grant and the Politics of War and Reconstruction, 1861-1868, have all sought to examine Grant's activities, within the context of the reconstructive process. But in each case the attention directly related to Grant's presidential years has been limited.

Rable, for instance, concentrated on examining the role of southern violence during Reconstruction. Within that context, he determined that "President Ulysses S. Grant tried to administer the laws passed by Congress without actively participating in the legislative process," but Rable did not explain why Grant followed that course. The author also discovered that "the inconsistency of Federal reconstruction policy" under Grant combined with the sheer "strength of southern resistance seemed to have doomed the reconstruction

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6 Ibid., xxiii.
7 George C. Rable, But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction (Athens, Ga., 1984), 191.
experiment to inevitable collapse."\textsuperscript{8} Rable's analysis did not center on Grant specifically, but rather approached the topic of Reconstruction from a different perspective. This approach, although well developed, failed to establish a complete evaluation of President Grant's activities during this period.

Eric Foner, in his excellent work, addressed the entire spectrum of Reconstruction, from the political activities of the individual Presidents and Congress to the economic and social changes which reshaped the nation. In accomplishing this, the author out of necessity reduced Grant to one of a great many historical figures that participated in the process. Therefore, Grant's role is deemphasized to fit into the greater patterns of Reconstruction, and Foner's references to him often take the form of general comments relating to his administration. For example, in evaluating Grant's second term, Foner finds that because it was "buffeted by the shifting tides of public opinion, preoccupied first with the economic depression and later with yet another wave of political scandals," that the government "found it impossible to devise a coherent policy toward the South."\textsuperscript{9} This statement, in and of itself, establishes only that Grant's administration in general did not find the correct solutions, in Foner's opinion, to the problems of Reconstruction. Comments like these, however, do not clearly

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., xii.

\textsuperscript{9} Eric Foner, \emph{Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877} (New York, 1988), 528.
establish if Grant was personally to blame for this failure. His role, therefore, remains hidden under the cloak of "Congressional Reconstruction."

In *Let Us Have Peace*, Brooks D. Simpson elected to adopt yet another approach to studying Grant's legacy, by evaluating his performance between 1861 and 1868. This author worked to demonstrate that Grant as a participant in Reconstruction was a better man at his job, both militarily and politically, than others had previously recognized. Unfortunately, Simpson chose to end his narrative at precisely the same point that others had ended theirs, the time at which General Grant became President Grant. This stopping place would certainly have been acceptable, were it not for the fact that in his conclusion Simpson elected to join the ranks of other historians by criticizing Grant's accomplishments during the next eight years not examined by his book. In his summary, he declared that "although Grant continued to hold fast to his ultimate objectives of reunion and racial justice," during his presidency, he was forced however grudgingly to unofficially acknowledge "that the price of sectional reconciliation was justice toward the freed-people." Simpson concluded that Grant was eventually compelled to give up "the vision of peace glimpsed at Appamatox Court House" and surrender the Freedmen to the control of the southern redeemers.° Simpson neither supports these concluding remarks with additional arguments nor states

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whether or not Grant was personally responsible for this tragic failure. Again as before, Grant's presidency is criticized without an adequate supporting explanation.

Unlike the other scholars, William S. McFeely, Grant's principal biographer, did explain in some detail his presidential years in the book *Grant: A Biography*. But in writing the material, the author by choice tended to concentrate more on Grant the man than on the man as President. This often resulted in the reader being left with the impression of a mediocre individual who at a time of great crisis rose to prominence and then fell upon hard times as the Chief Executive of the United States. Indeed, McFeely implied that Grant found his life's work almost by accident—that after reaching the age of "nearly forty no job he liked" came "his way - and so he became general and president because he could find nothing better to do."11 This same basic tone dominates the book, and McFeely specifically declares that in the final analysis Grant "... did not rise above limited talents or inspire others to do so in ways that make his administration a credit to American politics."12 Statements like these severely downgrade Grant's presidency and clearly lead one to the conclusion that Grant's actions in Reconstruction must have been ineffective.

These types of comments, by historians such as McFeely, have consistently served to reduce President Grant's

12 Ibid., 522.
importance and to conceal his efforts under the label of Congressional Reconstruction. Yet, they are incomplete and fail to explain why Grant acted as he did during his administration. The purpose of this paper, therefore, will be to determine why Ulysses S. Grant has been deemed less important than Lincoln, Johnson, or Congress during Reconstruction. It will seek to answer the following questions:

1. What were Grant's plans for reconstructing the Union?
2. Was he successful in implementing any of his plans?
3. Did his plans and actions impact the Reconstruction process?

In attempting to answer these questions, primary attention will be placed upon Grant's presidential speeches, especially his State of the Union addresses and proclamations. In these official presentations to the collective nation the President outlined his perception of the problems and solutions for dealing with the complex issues of Reconstruction. Grant's key objectives will then be compared to the actual historical events of the period to determine his successes, failures and influence.
CHAPTER 2

GRANT'S BACKGROUND

On March 4, 1869, Ulysses S. Grant was inaugurated as the eighteenth President of the United States. Initially, Grant, as the most famous Union general to emerge from the Civil War, offered much hope to the Nation. The Republican party had nominated him unanimously in May 1868. He had promised to provide the conflict-weary nation the very thing it desired most—"Peace."  

Supporters, such as Frederick Douglass, a black American and former abolitionist, clearly expected great accomplishments from Grant's presidency. As Douglass stated in August 1869, several months after Grant had assumed office, "I say then, if General Grant goes forward, determines to fight it out on this line, we have nothing to fear . . . and the principle of equal rights will become everywhere practical and permanent." Many an American believed that Grant would bring the long awaited peace to the nation and help resolve the vexing difficulties of Reconstruction.

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2 John W. Blassingame and John R. McKivigan, eds., The Frederick Douglass Papers (Series One, 5 vols., New Haven, 1991), Series One, IV, 236.
The new president was a complex personality who continues to puzzle historians. He was a man of diverse faces and attitudes. A simple loving family man who hated being away from his family for long periods, he chose careers, the army and politics, which demanded that he spend considerable amounts of time away from them. He was a man of war, serving in both the Mexican War and the American Civil War, and as the leading Union military officer in the latter conflict was responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of men. Yet, Grant was also a man of peace, who could not stand the sight of blood and for much of his later life advocated peaceful coexistence between the North and South, as well as between white and black Americans. While both he and his wife Julia Dent Grant, prior to the war, owned between them a total of five slaves, Grant played an essential role in freeing all slaves and then became their protector during Reconstruction. Grant consistently demonstrated an absolute inability to manage his own business affairs, and yet he achieved the positions of Commanding General of the United States Army in the American Civil War and the office of the President of the United States of America for two terms. Therefore, to understand the man, which in turn enables one to comprehend his subsequent impact on Reconstruction, it is necessary to examine the life of the leader known to the nation as Ulysses S. or simply "Sam" Grant.

Hiram Ulysses Grant, which was his true given name, was born on April 27, 1822, at Pleasant, Ohio. Typical of the
many contradictions in Grant's life were the various name changes that he experienced. Based on a meeting of the minds of family members, Hiram was selected as his first name. As a boy, Grant went by the nickname "Lyss," which was eventually changed to "Sam" at West Point."3 The name that Grant is generally known by, Ulysses S. Grant, resulted from a bureaucratic mistake, compounded by inflexible authorities. As the story goes, when Grant was appointed to West Point by Representative Thomas L. Hamer, the congressman forgot the applicant's true name. So, rather than ask, he simply wrote in the name Grant generally went by, Ulysses, and then entered the first letter of his mother's maiden name "S" for Simpson. When Grant reported to West Point, he found that he could not register as H. Ulysses Grant, the name he selected in order to avoid being known as "Hug" a name formed by use of his initials. Instead, he had to sign in as Ulysses S. Grant, as there was an appointment only for an individual by that name.4 As a result, Hiram Ulysses Grant became Ulysses S. Grant, and the change would help him, when during the Civil War, he became known as U. S. Grant or Unconditional Surrender Grant. These name changes were typical examples of Grant's willingness outside of the military, to allow others to direct events in his life, rather than insisting on having his own way.

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Grant's life fell into four parts. They were as a soldier and participant in the Mexican War, a civilian and business failure, a Civil War officer and war hero, and a politician and President of the United States. Each period had its special impact on his life, and each contributed to Grant's handling of the complexities of Reconstruction.

Grant spent his childhood uneventfully attending school and helping his father, Jesse Root Grant, in his leather tanning business, making Grant a "tanner boy." But at age seventeen, his father announced to him that he was "going to receive" an appointment to West Point. He initially declined, but Jesse insisted and Grant eventually conceded. Grant had resisted only because he "had a very exalted idea of the acquirement necessary to get through" West Point and he "did not believe . . . [that he] possessed them, and could not bear the idea of failing."5 Contrary to his apprehensions Grant graduated twenty-first out of a class of thirty-nine cadets.6 Upon completing this formal military education he was assigned to the Fourth United States Infantry at Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis, Missouri.

During this time Grant recognized one of his principal personality traits. While traveling to a duty assignment, he encountered a swollen river overflowing its banks. Instead of taking an alternate route or seeking a better crossing, which would have delayed his travel, Grant plunged his horse into the river and at great risk to himself and the horse

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6 Ibid., 16.
forced his way across. Grant stated that one of his "superstitions had always been when . . . [he] started to go any where . . . not to turn back, or stop until the thing intended was accomplished."7 Throughout his life, he refused to deviate from a course of travel, or as later events would show, a course of action, that he had chosen. This belief was expanded subsequently to include his political decisions and loyalty to his friends as well. This characteristic helps explain why Grant often seemed determined to batter his way through the enemy lines, such as at Vicksburg and the Wilderness, when another might have considered an alternate course of action. Similarly, this trait serves to clarify Grant's relationships to both the South and Congress during Reconstruction.

Although his graduation from West Point required him to serve in the military, it was never his "intention to remain in the army long, but to prepare . . . [himself] for a professorship in some college."8 But, the United States annexation of Texas and the coming of the Mexican War intervened; the country was deprived of a college instructor, but gained an officer. He found himself drawn into a war that he actually detested rather than supported. "Bitterly opposed to the [annexation of Texas]," he regarded "the war which resulted as one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation."9 Duty to country over came

7 Ibid., 20-21.
8 Ibid., 21.
9 Ibid., 22.
conscience, and Grant served with distinction. As a result of his actions in the field, he received promotions, to a "full" Second Lieutenant, then to First Lieutenant and finally to the rank of "Brevet Captain." In accomplishing this, Grant demonstrated his courage and ability to himself and to his peers.\textsuperscript{10}

After the war, Grant remained in the army until poor pay, separation from his family, and boredom led to his resignation on April 11, 1854. This action initiated the second phase of his life— that of a former Army officer turned civilian. In this capacity Grant's life was not a happy one. Between the years of 1854 and 1861, one business failure after another haunted him. He tried his hand at farming and built his own home, which according to his wife Julia Dent Grant "looked so unattractive that [they] facetiously decided to call it Hardscrabble."\textsuperscript{11} When working his own farm did not prove profitable, Grant leased it and worked the farm land of his father-in-law, Frederick Fayette Dent.

During these years, Grant owned slaves. In order to make a living for himself and his family on his father-in-law's farm, he used the labor of perhaps as many as twelve slaves. Out of these, Grant only owned one outright, a slave by the name of William Jones; the others belonged to Julia's

\textsuperscript{10} For additional information on Grant's Mexican War service see, Lloyd Lewis, Captain Sam Grant (Boston, 1950), 131-263.

\textsuperscript{11} John Y. Simon, ed., The Personal Memoirs of Julia Dent Grant [Mrs Ulysses S. Grant] (Carbondale, 1975), 79.
father. As the volume of work required it, Grant also periodically hired the labor of one or two slaves from neighbors to augment his labor force. Grant like many other Southern slave holders worked alongside these blacks in the field and shared the hardships of farm labor. Indications are that Grant treated these men humanely. His wife, Julia, also owned a total of four slaves who worked directly with her on the farm.12

In spite of Grant's best efforts and the labor of these slaves, illness and bad luck took its toll and "in the fall of 1858 . . . [Grant] sold . . . [his] stock, crops, and farming utensils at auction, and gave up farming."13 Grant, however, did not sell William, his only slave, to a new owner. Instead, ignoring the financial loss his action entailed, Grant freed William. Julia, in contrast, elected to keep her slaves until their eventual move to Galena, Illinois, a "free state" caused her to lease them to others. Later, during the war, Julia resumed control of her slave, also named Julia, and brought her on visits to the General's headquarters.14 Although within less than thirty years Grant, in his biography, expressed wonder at the South for having "fought for or justified institutions which acknowledged the right of property in man," it must be recognized that he and

12 McFeely, Grant, 58-63.
14 McFeely, Grant, 62-3.
his wife had at one time held their fellow beings as property.\textsuperscript{15}

Grant then moved on to real estate forming a partnership with his wife's cousin, Harry Bogg. Grant believed that the "business might have become prosperous if . . . [he] had been able to wait for it to grow."\textsuperscript{16} But he was not willing to do so. His wife found other reasons for this business failure. According to Julia she could never "imagine how . . . [her] dear husband ever thought of going into such a business, as he could never collect a penny that was owed to him" if the debtor "only expressed" regrets at not being able to pay the money back. She found that he "always felt sorry for them and never pressed" the issue.\textsuperscript{17} He also tried his hand at running for the office of county engineer in St. Louis, Missouri, but was defeated. In May 1860, Grant rejected both the real estate business and local politics and suffered the indignity of moving to Galena, Illinois, where he accepted a position as clerk in his father's tanning business. Grant's attempts at private enterprise had failed miserably, and he found it very difficult to meet the needs of his family.\textsuperscript{18}

The American Civil War rescued Ulysses S. Grant from obscurity and possibly from poverty. Following the call for volunteers, Grant went back to the life of a soldier. During

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 117.
\textsuperscript{17} Simon, ed., \textit{Julia Dent Grant}, 80.
\textsuperscript{18} For additional information regarding Grant's business years see, McFeely, \textit{Grant}, 41-66 and Lewis, \textit{Captain Sam Grant}, 333-93.
this third stage in his life, Grant established himself as one of the premier Union generals. His activities at the battles of Belmont, Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, solidified Grant's reputation as a hard fighting officer. Indeed, Grant's "ungenerous and unchivalrous" demand for "an unconditional and immediate surrender" of Confederate Brigadier General Simon B. Buckner at Fort Donelson in February 1862 brought Grant fame as "Unconditional Surrender" Grant.19 Although later, taken by surprise during the battle of Shiloh, Tennessee, on April 6, 1862, Grant impressed President Lincoln and demonstrated that under his command the Union Army would fight and inflict damage on the Confederate forces.20

While describing Shiloh in his autobiography, Grant introspectively noted the two sides of his own personality—the grim warrior determined to stem the tide of retreat and the gentle man repulsed by the sights and sounds of war. In the evening following the decisive stand of the Union forces, in which thousands lost their lives, Grant sought refuge from the rain that pelted the survivors. "The log-house under the bank" in which he took shelter "had been taken as a hospital, and all night wounded men were brought in, their wounds dressed, a leg or arm amputated as the case might require." Grant found this "sight... more unendurable than encountering the enemy's fire, and ... [he] returned to

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20 For additional information regarding the battle of Shiloh see, Wiley Sword, Shiloh: Bloody April (New York, 1974).
Grant, the resolute general of the Union forces, was also a gentle man who could not stand the sights and sounds of the wounded. Grant fully understood the negative side of warfare and the pain that it created. This knowledge had a significant impact on his approach to Reconstruction and helped make peace and the avoidance of conflict the primary goal of his presidency.

Although Grant experienced personal disappointment and accusations of drunkenness following Shiloh, he subsequently oversaw a chain of northern victories. On April 30, 1863, for instance, having survived the initial frustrations and failures of a rigorous campaign, the General's command crossed the Mississippi River below the Confederate positions at Vicksburg. Cutting lose from his base of supplies, Grant in a series of daring attacks defeated the divided Confederate commanders and forced Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton to retreat into Vicksburg. After a lengthy but successful siege, the "Rock of Gibraltar" of the Southern Confederacy, was surrendered to Grant's forces on July 4, 1863, cutting the rebellious states in two. This victory, in conjunction with that of General Gordon Meade at Gettysburg, turned the course of the war against the Confederacy.22

From Vicksburg, Grant assumed overall command of the Union forces in the West and directed the operations


resulting in the total rout of Confederate General Braxton Bragg's forces at Chattanooga, Tennessee. Next, Grant, freshly promoted to the grade of Lieutenant General of the Army by a special act of Congress, assumed the overall command of the Union Armies. Working in conjunction with President Lincoln, and Generals William Tecumseh Sherman and Philip Henry Sheridan, Grant developed and implemented plans for the final defeat of the South. Although the road to Appomattox Court House was a long and bloody one passing through places like the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, North Anna Crossing, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg, Grant's army helped batter the Confederacy into submission. Grant "the butcher" finally, on April 9, 1865, forced General Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia to surrender. 23

Although this harsher side that made Grant such a determined warrior is obvious, his softer side has often been overlooked. Even though Grant had shown little mercy in battle, in victory he revealed both mercy and forgiveness. His liberal surrender terms at Vicksburg and Appomattox Court House furnished clear examples of this tendency. On July 3, 1863, Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton, the commander of the Confederate forces at Vicksburg, proposed an armistice, to explore terms for the city's surrender. This provided Grant an opportunity offered few Civil War generals, the total destruction of an Army in the field by its surrender.

23 For additional information regarding the course of the Civil War in 1863-1865 see, Bruce Catton, Grant Moves South (Boston, 1960), Catton, Grant Takes Command (Boston, 1968), and Noah Andre Trudeau, Bloody Roads South: The Wilderness to Cold Harbor, May-June 1864 (Boston, 1989).
Grant quickly advised Pemberton that "the useless effusion of blood you propose stopping by this course can be ended at any time you choose, by the unconditional surrender of the city and garrison." Although at first harsh, these terms were softened considerably by subsequent discussions between Pemberton and Grant, which took place between the lines on July 3, 1864, and by a subsequent exchange of correspondence. Grant allowed the Confederates to sign a parole agreeing not to take up arms against the Union until properly exchanged. This meant that the Confederate soldier could not with honor return to active duty until they were traded for a Union prisoner of war of equal rank, a Confederate private for a Union private for instance. In the interim, instead of being shipped off to a prison camp to await a prisoner exchange, as was the standard practice, they were allowed to go home. In addition Grant agreed that "officers . . . [would] be allowed their private baggage and side-arms, and mounted officers one horse each." The army, which had denied the North the city of Vicksburg and killed thousands of its men, was allowed to quit the war and return to their families in the hope that they would never return to the front. Grant advised his superiors that it was "a great advantage to" the Union to be free of the burdensome prisoners. He declared that their parole would save time, and free up both his troops and their transport ships for prompt reassignment. Nonetheless, Grant

25 Ibid., 292-96.
26 Ibid., 297.
had in truth shown his former enemies mercy by granting them an opportunity to escape the confines of unhealthy northern prison camps. Thus, Grant as early as 1863, had adopted a basic mind set that advocated that when the fighting stopped, the former Confederates should be allowed to go home without recriminations or punishment.

The liberal surrender terms granted to the Army of Virginia in 1865 revealed the same approach. To understand how liberal these terms were, it is necessary to reflect on the horribly bloody battles during the final year of the war. In May, 1864, the Army of the Potomac under Grant's command had moved across the Rapidan River to confront the Army of Northern Virginia. Over the next twelve months these two armies were locked in almost constant struggle until the surrender at Appomattox on April 9, 1865. During that period of combat, the Army of the Potomac suffered in excess of eighty thousand casualties. It would have been easy for General Grant, after being forced to expend the his troops in exhausting combat, to have sought revenge against his enemy. Instead, he sought to end the bloodshed quickly and to bring peace to the nation.27

On April 9, 1864, when Grant received an inquiry from General Lee as to possible terms, he responded that he was "equally anxious for peace." Grant advised Lee that "the terms upon which peace" could be obtained were "well

27 For information regarding the fighting during 1864 see, General Horace Porter, Campaigning With Grant (New York, 1897), 35-466 and Bruce Catton, A Stillness at Appomattox (Garden City, 1953).
understood" and that "by the South laying down their arms" it would "hasten the most desirable event, save thousands of lives, and hundreds of millions of property not yet destroyed." Grant's plan for peace was a simple one. If the Confederates surrendered their weapons and stopped fighting, the war would end.

In effect, those were the conditions that Lee and Grant finally settled upon. Lee's army agreed to give up their weapons and military equipment, with the exception of the officers' pistols, personal baggage, and private horses. In addition, each company or regimental commander was required to "sign a parole for the men of their commands" not to take up arms against the Union, until properly exchanged, while the officers signed personal paroles to the same effect. When this was accomplished, Grant promised that "each officer and man ... [would] be allowed to return to their homes, not to be disturbed by United States authority so long as they observe[d] their paroles and the laws in force where they reside." Again, as at Vicksburg, Grant offered to allow the Confederate soldiers to go home, and live undisturbed unless they violated the surrender terms. Even as Lee's army carried out the formalities of surrender, Grant treated his former adversaries with sensitivity. "When news of the surrender first reached" the Army of the Potomac's lines at Appomattox, his troops "commenced firing a salute of a hundred guns in the honor of the victory." Grant promptly

29 Ibid., 556-57.
sent orders "to have it stopped" as "the confederates were
... prisoners, and ... [he] did not want to exult over
their downfall."30

After Lee's surrender at Appomattox, the final events of
the Civil War were quickly played out. President Lincoln was
assassinated, Andrew Johnson assumed the vacant office, the
remaining armies of the Confederacy surrendered, and
Jefferson Davis, the President of the defeated Confederacy,
was captured. During this period, Grant helped bring the war
to a conclusion and returned home a hero to the North.

In December 1865, Grant toured the South. He reported
to President Johnson that based on his observations "the
citizens of the southern states ... [were] anxious to
return to self-government, within the Union, as soon as
possible." They were, he advised "in earnest in wishing, to
do what they think is required by the government," but "not
humiliating to them as citizens" in order to return to equal
status in the Union. Grant declared that "if such a course
were pointed out," southerners "would pursue it in good
faith." According to Grant, peace was possible, if the Union
under the direction of President Johnson and the Republican
Congress would only designate the proper course.31

As Grant later explained in his autobiography, he
believed from the beginning of Reconstruction that "the
people who had been in rebellion must necessarily come back

30 Ibid., 559.
31 Senate Executive Document No. 2, 39th Congress, 1st
Session, 107, cited in Walter L. Fleming, ed., Documentary
History of Reconstruction (Gloucester, Mass., 1960), 51-52.
into the Union, and be incorporated as an integral part of the nation." But the North would have to take certain steps to accomplish the reunion expeditiously. Grant felt that "the nearer they [the South] were placed to an equality with the people who had not rebelled, the more reconciled they would feel with their old antagonists." The former rebels "surely would not make good citizens if they felt that they had a yoke about their necks." Thus, the essential prerequisite, was to find a plan which allowed for the speedy admission of the South back into the Union on an equal basis, and with minimal insult to their feelings, while simultaneously maintaining the fruits of the victory. Although this was not an easy combination to discover, it was the goal to be pursued.

In the eyes of many contemporaries, including Grant, President Johnson refused to follow the guidance of Congress and thereby failed to find the right approach to Reconstruction. As a result Grant, the military hero, became a natural choice for the presidency. Grant, rather than Johnson, could deliver that office to the Republican Party, based on his popularity with northerners in general and the Union veterans in particular. He was a popular figure among both white Americans in the North and black Americans in the North and South. Unlike other Union generals before him, Grant had defeated Lee. He and his men


33 For additional information on President Johnson and Reconstruction see, Foner, Reconstruction, 176-333 and Hans L. Trefousse, Andrew Johnson: A Biography (New York, 1989).
had won the war and helped destroy slavery. As Frederick Douglass declared to his audience on August 3, 1869, in Medina, New York, Grant as President, "with powers augmented and conceded, with a great party . . . behind him, with a military record dazzling all over with splendor, with a character that defies impeachment," possessed all that was necessary to overcome the opposition.\(^{34}\) According to Douglass, Grant held the power needed to resolve the many difficulties facing black Americans and the nation.

But, by Grant's own admission, there was one flaw in Douglass' projection. The potential candidate was not a politician. Indeed, up until the end of the American Civil War, the political arena held little attraction for Grant, the civilian or the soldier. His only previous personal political involvement had ended in defeat. As Grant reminded the nation in his final Annual Message to Congress on December 5, 1876, it had been his "fortune, or misfortune, to be called to the office of Chief Executive without any previous political training." After his seventeenth birthday he had but twice "witnessed the excitement [of] a Presidential campaign" prior to his own election, and had been "eligible as a voter" only once.\(^{35}\) Grant had exhibited absolutely no interest in politics either as a witness to the political process or as an actual voter, failing to even establish his own eligibility to vote for much of his life.

\(^{34}\) Blassingame and McKivigan, eds., Frederick Douglass Papers, IV, 236.
\(^{35}\) Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 399.
Further, his civilian business ventures, which had consistently failed, offered no help to the potential candidate.

Instead, Grant's successful experiences in dealing with people came in the military context where he gave orders that were to be obeyed. As President, he would need to give orders diplomatically and persuasively and to insure they were complied with as requested, and it was precisely in this area that Grant lacked experience. This deficiency, combined with his previous "press ahead" style practiced so effectively at the swollen river and during the war, seriously limited Grant's political skills.

Nevertheless, as the political crisis escalated and the conflict deepened between President Johnson and the Republican Congress, Grant was drawn into the world of politics. In the end, Grant accepted the Republican nomination. As he explained to his friend and wartime ally, William T. Sherman, the office was not one that he would "occupy for any mere personal consideration" but rather one that he had "been forced into . . . in spite of" himself. Grant claimed that his refusal to run would leave "the contest for power . . . between mere trading politicians, the elevation of whom, no matter which party won" would jeopardize "the results of the costly war."36 While these statements appear self-serving, it must be remembered that they were written to Grant's personal friend and that

36 John Y. Simon, ed., The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant (20 vols., Carbondale), XVIII, 292.
throughout the subsequent eight years he steadfastly held to these beliefs.

On May 21, 1868, General John A. Logan nominated Grant to head the National Union Republican party ticket, and he accepted eight days later. In his letter of acceptance to Joseph R. Hawley, Chairman of the Republican party, Grant outlined the program he would follow faithfully during his tenure as President. He stated that if elected he would "endeavor to administer the laws, in good faith, with economy, and with the view of giving peace, quiet and protection every where." These, in simple terms, were the basics of Grant's plan to help the nation through Reconstruction. He declined to give further details, for "in times like" those it was "impossible, or at least improper, to lay down a policy to be adhered to, right or wrong, through an Administration of four years." Grant explained that "a purely Administrative Officer should always be left free to execute the will of the people" and that he, had "always . . . respected that will" and would continue to do so. In closing his letter of acceptance, Grant declared that "Peace, and universal prosperity, in sequence, with economy of administration" would "lighten the burden of taxation" and reduce "the national debt." And he emphasized "let us have peace."\(^{37}\) Indeed, this was the same clear message conveyed by his surrender terms at Vicksburg and Appomatox and in an April 1868 letter to Thaddeus Stevens, Chairman of the Committee on Reconstruction. In it Grant recommended "the

\(^{37}\) Ibid, 263-64.
removal of the disabilities, imposed by the reconstruction acts," on the Confederate General James Longstreet. Although Longstreet had been a fierce adversary, Grant argued that his behavior "since the surrender of the rebel army, and his high character always, both before and since the rebellion, entitle[d] him to the confidence of all good citizens." Later, when opportunity presented itself, Grant as President, would extend, by signing the Amnesty Act of 1872, the same consideration to all repentant southerners who behaved as had Longstreet.

As the election neared, the nation undoubtedly pondered the qualifications and skills of presidential candidate Grant. In light of the stated views of current historians such as E. B. Long, Brooks D. Simpson and William S. McFeely, it is interesting to note that the American electorate of 1867 had a very good knowledge of Grant's background, personality, and skills. Everyone knew of his plebeian heritage and his work as a clerk in his father's tanning business. Indeed, references to Grant's childhood were used as the title of a publication on his early years, which was advertised in the May 16, 1864, issue of the New York Tribune. Readers were promised that the new book, entitled "The Tanner Boy, and How He Became Lieutenant-General," which was "written by a well-known author," would provide the reader with "a complete and authentic record from boyhood to the present time" of the General's life. It also promised, with total assurance, that when the work was completed it

38 Ibid., 240-41.
would record Grant's role as the "Savior of His Country" and man who would oversee the successful "Overthrow of the Rebellion." Grant's prior civilian profession was no secret to the voters in the election, although the extent of his failures in business may not have been such common knowledge.

His grim determination not to retire in the face of resistance and his military skills were widely known for they had been consistently reported to the nation throughout the lengthy war. During the conflict both the New York Times and the New York Tribune described in detail the determined and unrelenting approach of Grant to the military conflict. As an example, the New York Times in a May 26, 1863, editorial cited Grant's strong points as a general as an: "absolute singleness of purpose," and "a most extraordinary combination of energy and persistence." These traits made him, "the most serviceable, and, therefore, the most valuable, officer in the national army." The New York Tribune on the other hand almost pitied the hapless Confederates confronting a relentless General Grant. The newspaper noted on May 14, 1864, as the Army of the Potomac under Grant hammered its way into Virginia, that it was "terrible - this devouring, unwearied, cold energy with which Gen. Grant presses the enemy over whom he has obtained an advantage." Only those that had not read a newspaper or had ignored the events of

the war, could have been unaware of this side of Grant's personality.

Grant's war record was also well known throughout the nation. National newspapers, such as the New York Times and New York Tribune had heralded each of his successes. Upon hearing the news of Grant's victory at Vicksburg, the New York Tribune on July 8, 1863, proclaimed that "the steady purpose, the unshaken fortitude, the fertile talent, the heroic determination of Gen. GRANT, and the courage of his noble army, are crowned at last with success." The story went on to proclaim that "Unconditional Surrender" Grant, by his victory had divided the Confederacy, destroyed "its political coherence," and "shattered" its military strength.42 The New York Times, as early as May 1863, declared that "U.S. Grant--or, as his soldiers style him, Unconditional Surrender Grant" had "given the Confederacy blows such [as] no other arm . . . [had] dealt" and that if he were not diverted by the politicians he would "in due time bring the whole concern to the dust." The newspaper predicted total victory from the western general. This same day, upon the conclusion of the war, continued to praise Grant by reminding the nation that "three rebel armies . . . [had] surrendered to Gen. Grant--that under Buckner . . ., that under Pemberton . . . and that under Gen. Lee . . ." and that he was "the only one . . . who . . . ever induced a rebel army to surrender"43 Few who

42 Ibid., July 8, 1863, pp. 1-4.
43 New York Times, April 11, 1865, p. 4.
read these articles and editorials could mistake that Grant was the war's premier Union commander.

Grant's actions to hasten the end of the war were also greatly appreciated and reported with favor in the press. On April 12, 1865, the New York Times, applauded Grant's decision to send the Army of Virginia home in peace. The article asserted that Grant's peace negotiations made "the cumbrous and dubious phrases of diplomacy . . . unnecessary" and saved "the national authorities . . . the unsavory task of covenaniting with the political leaders of the rebellion."44 Grant's surrender terms not only brought an end to the conflict in Virginia but expedited a national peace as well. Much later, during the presidential campaign itself, the New York Tribune also recalled Grant's efforts as a soldier and military diplomat in bringing the war to a conclusion. Grant "was ever a magnanimous foe" and "he fought, not to degrade, and destroy, but to exalt and to save."45

Further, the nation knew that Grant lacked "political" experience; however, this was deemed a credit rather than a debit. In the initial stages of the presidential campaign, his opponents questioned whether "success in war [should] be the highest recommendation to the Presidency?"46 But as the conventions were held and the people moved to support Grant, the New York Tribune ceased its resistance and acknowledged that "the people had already decided that they would vote for

44 Ibid., April 12, 1865, p. 4.
46 Ibid., January 6, 1868, p. 1.
ULYSSES S. GRANT, and nobody else." The paper acknowledged that it had "tried for a while to persuade them that they could do better, but they would not hear" of it. The Tribune conceded that Grant would win and predicted "that both his Electoral and Popular majorities" would exceed those received by either candidate in the election of 1864.47 The New York Times on the other hand simply changed the handicap to a strength by arguing that the nation would be better served by a man who had no political experience or alliances. In June 1867, the Times observed that the former General was the only Presidential Candidate who was not so involved in "party projects, so committed to special policies . . ., so hampered by having 'friends to reward and enemies to punish' as to destroy all public faith in his disinterested independence." The paper asserted that Grant would "make the public good" his "sole guide."48 Grant's lack of political experience was either overlooked or applauded.

Finally, no promise meant more to both the North and South than Grant's promise of peace. The nation and the press demanded it. According to the New York Times, he offered the nation a candidate who could reasonably draw support from both his friends and former foes. On June 11, 1867, the newspaper argued that there was no "reason to believe that the people of the Southern States would regard . . . [Grant's candidacy] as galling to their pride or in any

way hostile to their welfare."49 The General through his efforts on the behalf of the former rebel soldiers at Vicksburg and Appomatox offered the South peace rather than war. On January 22, 1868, the New York Times further argued that "the temper and manner in which . . . [Grant] accepted the surrender of Gen. Lee and the Confederate army and the Confederate cause" had marked him "above all others, best able to lead the nation to a just, solid and abiding peace."50 The more cautious New York Tribune also deemed Grant's election a boon for the chances for peace. As the election neared, the paper advised the nation that "if Gen. Grant shall be elected President no man fears, or even affects to fear, a reign of violence or terrorism."51 Peace and an end to conflict was the promise that Grant made, and the people found it a distinct possibility.

Regardless of which of these factors had the greatest influence on the electorate, historians readily agree that Grant's national reputation made his election almost inevitable. Historian Eric Foner contends that Grant had "emerged from the conflict as the preeminent Union military hero" and that as early as 1866 "influential Republicans were [already] predicting his nomination."52 Brooks D. Simpson, determined that by late 1867, "it appeared obvious to all but the most die-hard Radicals that Ulysses S. Grant would be the

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., January 22, 1868, p. 4.
51 New York Tribune, August 14, 1868, p. 4.
52 Foner, Reconstruction, 337.
Republican nominee for president in 1868."53 William S. McFeely concurred when he noted that "Grant's political position in the spring of 1868 was unassailable." He was "hated by few voters and by no close observers powerful enough to influence the electorate." Further, he had managed to remain aloof "from the vulgar business" of Johnson's impeachment trial and "alone appeared clean" out of all of the potential candidates for the office.54 McFeely also found that Grant's position was further strengthened by a vote of confidence from the Civil War veterans who met in Chicago in that same year and announced their support for their former commander.55

In any case, by 1868 Grant clearly was the leading candidate for the office, and the American people concluded that Grant could fulfill his promise to them. They also felt that they understood the man, along with his skills and personality traits, and that he would make a good president. His sterling military record and promise of peace helped convince a majority of the American voters to chose him as their President, and he defeated his Democratic opponent, Horatio Seymour, by a popular vote of 3,012,833 to 2,703,249 and a electoral vote of 214 to 80. As Brooks D. Simpson noted, Grant's "vote totals exceeded by over 110,000 those of the Republicans running with him, suggesting that he was more
popular than the party and may have been essential to its triumph."\textsuperscript{56}

Upon assuming the highest political office of the land Grant brought with him his own varied experiences as a business failure, as the nation's most successful military officer, and as a political leader who possessed an almost total absence of previous political training as a voter or office holder. In addition, Grant harbored a grim determination based largely upon superstition, to finish what he had started without altering his course. Upon reporting the decision of the American electorate the New York Tribune declared that with the General's election "the last of the great issues--the social and political Reconstruction of the South, was also determined," and that the nation could "now look forward to a long era of peace and prosperity."\textsuperscript{57} The prediction was premature.

\textsuperscript{56} Simpson, \textit{Let Us Have Peace}, 251. For additional information on the election of 1868 see, Foner, \textit{Reconstruction}, 333-345.

\textsuperscript{57} New York \textit{Tribune}, November 4, 1868, p. 2.
CHAPTER 3

THE FORMER PLANS OF RECONSTRUCTION

From his election in November 1868 to his inauguration in March 1869 Grant had several months in which to develop his plans for rebuilding the nation. He had certain distinct advantages over his two immediate presidential predecessors in formulating his blueprint for Reconstruction. Lincoln had been at a severe disadvantage since the nation was engaged in a savage war in which winning was of paramount importance and by no means certain. His program necessarily had to take into consideration the application of the majority of the nation's resources to fighting the enemy rather than making peace. Johnson had faced a different set of difficulties. Forced into the office by an assassin's bullet, he had to make plans which took into consideration those of his predecessor, could be formulated quickly, and would be implemented when the war was ending and victory was at hand.

The newly elected Grant, however, had time to carefully develop his approach to Reconstruction from his election in November 1868 to his inauguration in April 1869. In addition, Grant had three programs to review: those of Lincoln, Johnson, and Congress. He could have examined the key elements of each of them in order to determine their strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, to fully understand
Grant's options, it is necessary to examine each of the three plans which had been implemented prior to his election.

On December 8, 1863, Lincoln had presented the first Reconstruction strategy to the American people. In this plan, known commonly as the "10 percent" plan, Lincoln stipulated how a Confederate could obtain a full pardon and how a rebellious state could rejoin the Union. First, Lincoln advised that the only condition for obtaining a pardon was that a person must "take and subscribe an oath" and then keep it. The oath required rebels to "... solemnly swear, in presence of Almighty God" to abide by and preserve the Constitution of the United States and to support the programs of both Congress and the President as they related to the institution of slavery.1 Having done so, individuals were allowed to rejoin the ranks of the Union population as loyal citizens. Lincoln's plan excluded some ex-Confederates who had taken a leading role in the rebellion and might pose a continuing threat to the Union. This ban included key Confederate governmental officials and military officers who had held at least the rank of colonel in the army or lieutenant in the navy.2

Lincoln also outlined how seceded states could regain their previous status within the Union. Whenever one-tenth of the population of a repentant state, based on the number of votes cast in the presidential election of 1860, had given

2 Ibid., 214.
their oath and remained faithful to it, then the people of that state were authorized to reform their government. The new state was also required to adopt and insure a republican form of government.  

Lincoln advised that he would look favorably on any provisions adopted by the newly formed state governments that recognized and declared for the "permanent freedom" of the former slaves and provided for their "education." He also indicated that he would concur with the actions of any state that used the same name or boundaries which had been in use before the war. The only states excluded from Lincoln's rather brief Reconstruction plan were those such as Maryland and Kentucky in which the government had remained loyal to the Union during the rebellion at hand and, therefore, did not require reconstruction. In the final sentences of his plan, Lincoln reminded the rebellious states that Congress alone would determine who would be seated as members of that body in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution of the United States of America. In this way Lincoln attempted to warn the South not to send their former Confederate leaders to represent them in Congress.  

Lincoln's plan had much to recommend it to Grant. The very simplicity of this proposal seemed to work in its favor. It promised the speedy return of the states to their peaceful and equal status within the Union on very liberal terms.

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3 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
Since it called for only 10 percent of a state's 1860 voters to support it, the plan required little or no support from rebellious southerners. Moreover, Lincoln had to be magnanimous if his plan were to be adopted by the South, because he was still in the midst of the war. In December 1863, although the North held an apparent and significant military advantage, the war had yet to be won. Thus it was to Lincoln's benefit to offer peace at such a small price compared to the severe cost of continuing a tragic conflict. Grant, on the other hand, faced a situation in which the war was over, but a true and lasting peace between the two sections had yet to be realized.

For a period of approximately one year Lincoln's plan appeared workable. Lincoln, in his fourth annual message to Congress on December 6, 1864, had reported that "12,000 citizens in each of the States of Arkansas and Louisiana [had] organized loyal State governments, with free constitutions" and they were "earnestly struggling to maintain and administer them." He noted similar movements in Missouri, Kentucky, and Tennessee and proclaimed "complete success" in Maryland. Lincoln confidently reminded the South that peace could be obtained "simply by laying down their arms and submitting to the national authority under the Constitution." He made it clear that his program of Reconstruction was open to modification: "If questions should remain, we would adjust them by the peaceful means of legislation, conference, courts, and votes, operating only in

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6 Ibid., 251-52.
constitutional channels."^7

Grant also knew that Congress in its own way had made it clear that the price of rebellion would be much higher. In direct response to Lincoln's 10 percent plan, Congress approved the Wade-Davis Bill in 1864. This legislation challenged not only the President's primary role in Reconstruction but also his plan as well. The bill required a majority of the white voting population of a rebellious state to take the loyalty oath before establishing their new state governments. In addition, it mandated laws insuring equality for black Americans in their respective states. Lincoln responded to this legislative challenge with a pocket veto, signaling the beginning of a struggle between the President and Congress over the correct course of Reconstruction. While Lincoln, a noted debater and brilliant negotiator, might have been able to convince Congress of the justice of his position or have negotiated an acceptable compromise, John Wilkes Booth ended the president's participation in the debate.

Lincoln's plan, while simple and brief, offered limited advantages for Grant. Although this plan appeared to offer a speedy peace, Congress had already challenged it and its brilliant author was dead. The plan's moment had passed, and

^7 Ibid., 254. For additional information on Lincoln's Reconstruction policies see, Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York, 1988), 1-170.
even if it had remaining viability, Grant was not the skillful debater or negotiator that Lincoln had been.

The second plan available for Grant's review was that of President Andrew Johnson. While the "accidental president" did not immediately announce his own programs during his brief Inaugural Address of April 15, 1865, Johnson did put his plan before the country in a Presidential Proclamation, dated May 29, 1865. The new President offered an "amnesty and pardon" to all who had joined in the rebellion. This act of forgiveness would be granted when the individual agreed to "take and subscribe" to the oath provided in the President's proclamation. Johnson's new oath was much shorter than the one proposed by Lincoln, but it covered the same basic requirements. It called upon the signer to "faithfully support, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States" and to "support all laws and proclamations which have been made during the . . . rebellion with reference to the emancipation of slaves." 8

Of course Johnson, as had Lincoln, listed the types of individuals who were excluded from his amnesty and pardon provisions. Those people banned from consideration were divided into fourteen specific groups that ranged from Confederates who had served as diplomats or military officers above the rank of colonel in the army or lieutenant in the navy and who had resigned from the United States military to avoid duty in putting down the rebellion, to "all persons who . . . [had] voluntarily participated" in the rebel cause and

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8 Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VI, 310.
whose "estimated . . . taxable property" exceeded $20,000.  

The President, however, did not absolutely preclude even those who fell within these groups from receiving a pardon under his proclamation. Instead, he allowed for "special application" directly to the President and assured these excepted classes that "clemency . . . [would] be liberally extended" if the individual maintained "the peace and dignity of the United States."  

This Proclamation of May 29, 1865, not only outlined a significant part of Johnson's program for Reconstruction, it also informed the Union of two facts. First, it established that, as far as Johnson was concerned, almost anyone in the South could be excused for their past deeds as long as they were willing to sign the necessary oath or seek a "liberally extended" Presidential pardon. Clearly, this provision advised all former Confederates that retribution would not be an integral part of Johnson's program. Second, the proclamation revealed that President Johnson wanted to direct the course of Reconstruction and that he expected Congress to follow his lead. Guilty parties from the South had to seek Johnson's personal Presidential pardon which, in turn, would not be subject to the review and approval of any other branch of the government. The South, it appeared, needed to concentrate on satisfying Johnson rather than Congress. 

On that same day, Johnson issued not one, but two Presidential proclamations. In the second of these he... 

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9 Ibid., 311.

10 Ibid.
informed the nation that the rebellion in the South had "been almost entirely overcome." He advised, therefore, that since the war had deprived the citizens of North Carolina of "all civil government" it was now his duty under the Constitution to help them establish a new and loyal one. Johnson appointed William W. Holden as the state's provisional governor and directed him to develop essential guidelines for a convention to revise North Carolina's constitution. Johnson argued that this process would allow the "loyal people" of the state to renew their "constitutional relations to the Federal Government." Johnson stipulated that no elector for or participant in the convention was to serve unless he had already "taken and subscribed" to Johnson's Amnesty Oath. Further, only those who were eligible to vote prior to May 20, 1861, the date North Carolina passed its ordinance of secession, were allowed to participate in this process.\textsuperscript{11} This, of course, excluded all new potential voters, such as newly emancipated black Americans, since they had not been eligible to vote before that date.

Thus, President Johnson encouraged not only North Carolina, but all the former Confederate States, to expeditiously reestablish their relationships with the Federal Government by state constitutional conventions under his guidance. Unlike Lincoln, Johnson did not require that a certain percentage of the people take the "oath" of allegiance before the state held its convention. No guidance was given on this question, thus allowing the people of each

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 312-13.
state to decide how many people needed to take the oath before they rewrote their constitution. Johnson also authorized the states to thereafter "prescribe the qualification of electors and the eligibility of persons to hold office under the constitution and laws of the State," thus effectively removing these decisions from the authority of the federal government and allowing blacks to be excluded.12

This second part of Johnson's announced plan enabled the former Confederate States to define their own state governments and their relationship with the federal government. Even further, as part of his proclamation regarding North Carolina, Johnson instructed all military and naval personnel within that state to aid the people.13 Between May 29, 1865, and July 13, 1865, seven such proclamations were issued, including the one for North Carolina. Johnson called on the states of Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, Alabama, South Carolina and Florida to accomplish the necessary steps to return to the Union under the provisions of his plan.

During this same time period, Johnson continued to dismantle the Union's war machine. He sought to send everyone, including the captured Confederate soldiers, home and to insure a peaceful resolution of the nation's difficulties. For example, on June 6, 1865, Johnson issued General Orders, No. 109, outlining the steps to be followed

12 Ibid., 313.
13 Ibid.
in releasing prisoners of war. Under his orders, all Confederate enlisted men and seamen, as well as naval petty officers, were to be released after taking the prescribed oath. Certain junior army and navy officers were released under the same conditions. Thus, Johnson sent Confederate prisoners home with few restrictions and without retribution.  

By December 1865, Johnson proclaimed Reconstruction under his plan complete, but he, as Grant knew well enough, had underestimated the reactions of both the North and South to his plan. Although his programs promised a speedy reunification of the North and South, Johnson had failed to take into consideration a wide range of issues which produced a bitter and fruitless battle with the opposing Radical Republicans.

The North, although lacking a specific plan for rebuilding the South, had certain expectations of the President’s plan. They desired that slavery, destroyed by the war, be replaced with the northern principles of free labor. They also required that the South be placed under the firm control of the federal government and kept in line so rebellion would not resurface.  

Even more important, the Republican party had certain demands that were unmet by the President’s program.

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Republicans wanted the former Confederate states to understand that they had lost the war and in that understanding to accept the repudiation of secession, the reality of emancipation, and the dominance of the Republican party. The Republicans required a repentant South, and not a resistant one.\textsuperscript{16}

The Radical Republicans, a small and powerful sub-group within the greater Republican party, added one more demand to the President's program. These "Radicals," joined by many former abolitionists, had initiated a program in 1865 to persuade the North that suffrage for the freedmen was an essential element of Reconstruction. Without it, they were convinced the process could never be successful.\textsuperscript{17}

But, Johnson's plan did not include specific provisions to insure compliance with these northern demands. His program was too easy on the former Confederate states and allowed them immediate access to the Federal Government which others were not so willing to grant. Moreover, the South betrayed Johnson's generosity by establishing the harsh "Black Codes" through state legislative action.

In Mississippi for instance, the "codes" required all freedmen to have written documentation of employment by the first of each new year. Failure to do so could result in the individual being arrested as a vagrant, punishable by fines or forced plantation labor. Southerners even reenacted all previous state laws that had pertained to the conduct of

\textsuperscript{16} Foner, \textit{Reconstruction}, 224.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 221.
slaves and free blacks prior to the war. South Carolina's "codes" limited the freedmen's choice of occupations in the state. A free black was welcome to become a farmer or servant, but had to pay a special yearly tax to the state if he pursued another career, such as that of artisan or craftsman. These state laws served to restrict and confine the freedmen to specific roles within southern society and denied them their political and civil rights. Indeed, they were in reality a southern attempt to reestablish slavery by another name and method.\textsuperscript{18}

In addition, many of the former rebellious states decided to reelect to office the same men that they had followed during the war. For example, the Georgia State Legislature sent Alexander H. Stephens, the former Vice President of the Confederacy, to the United States Senate. Many Northerners were outraged at the South's audacity.\textsuperscript{19}

In response to these events, the Thirty-Ninth Congress rejected and condemned Johnson's plans for Reconstruction. Both the Senate and House of Representatives refused to seat the elected delegates from the "reconstructed" southern states. Congress countered with its own programs by passing the Freedmen's Bill and then the Civil Rights bill. The first of these sought to extend the one year life span of the Freedmen's Bureau, which had been established in March 1865, to provide aid to both freedmen and refugees in the South. This government agency helped the recipients find jobs,

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 199-200.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 196.
sought to establish fair labor contracts with land owners, and investigated freedmen's claims of unfair treatment. It was intended that the new bill would extend the bureau's operations indefinitely and provide for direct federal funding. The second law attempted, at the Federal level, to define the rights and privileges of American citizenship and to prevent others, including the government, from denying these rights to American citizens, regardless of their race.

Johnson vetoed both bills and initiated a bitter quarrel with Congress over the course of Reconstruction. On February 19, 1866, the president expressed "much regret" that he could not approve the Freedmen's Bureau bill. Johnson argued that there was "no immediate necessity for the proposed measure," that it would "keep the mind of the freeman in a state of uncertain expectation and restlessness," and would to the rest of the South "be a source of constant and vague apprehension."20

On March 27, 1866, The Civil Rights Bill met the same fate. Johnson informed Congress and the nation that the bill contained measures which were unacceptable based on his "sense of duty to the whole people" and his "obligations to the Constitution of the United States." While Johnson marshaled a wide variety of arguments to defend his veto, he summarized them by declaring that the bill was designed "to operate in favor of the colored and against the white race," that it interfered "with the municipal legislation of the states," and that it promoted "the centralization and the

20 Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VI, 398-405.
concentration of all legislative powers in the National Government."21

Congress passed both bills over the President's veto. From this point on, Johnson and Congress struggled continually over who would direct the rebuilding of the nation, until Johnson's opponents sought his impeachment. As the New York Tribune argued the prosecution's case on April 20, 1868, Johnson was "an aching tooth in the National Jaw, a screeching infant in a crowded lecture-room, and there . . . [could] be no peace nor comfort till he . . . [was] out."22 Although Johnson narrowly averted impeachment in 1867, the conflict destroyed his power as chief executive.

As a model for President Grant, Johnson's battered plans offered little, except an example of what to avoid. Johnson had turned to the nation and particularly the South for support in his contest with Congress, and he had lost. Grant understood this lesson; in his autobiography, he observed that Johnson had by "fighting Congress on the one hand, and receiving support of the South on the other" compelled the Republican-controlled Congress to pass "first one measure and then another to restrict his power." This conflict, according to Grant, eventually forced Congress and the majority of the Northern state legislatures to grant suffrage to black Americans in the South in order to gain their

21 Ibid., 405-13.
support for Republican policies. Grant clearly recognized that Johnson's plans had led to disaster.

When President Johnson vetoed both the Freedmen's Bureau and the Civil Rights Bill, Congress had developed the final plan for Grant's review. It was intended to replace the President's unacceptable proposals. Since it was in effect throughout much of the South at the time of Grant's election, it commanded his attention.

In March 1867 Congress established the first major plank of that program by passing the first Reconstruction Act, which effectively divided the South into five military districts. United States Army officers governed these districts and were charged with the responsibility of helping reconstruct these former Confederate states. They reported directly to General Grant, the commander of the Army. This law effectively destroyed the state governments established under Johnson and reduced his power since the military governors no longer reported to him. As a result, the various states proceeded to draft constitutions which authorized suffrage for black American males and established state governments based on Republican support. In July 1867 Congress passed supplemental laws which further granted the military governors the authority to select and to replace state officials when necessary to advance the cause of Republican Reconstruction in the southern states.

The Fourteenth Amendment had even greater significance. Developed in 1867 and eventually ratified by the requisite states in 1868, this amendment firmly established the congressional approach to Reconstruction. This legislation contained five sections. The first established that "All persons born or naturalized in the United States . . ., are citizens" of this country, and in turn served to grant the rights of citizenship to the freedmen within the South. It further prohibited any state from passing laws or acting in such a manner that would deprive any citizen of his constitutional rights under the law.25

The second section was specifically aimed at any state, particularly those in the South, that sought to deprive its citizens of the rights guaranteed to them under the amendment. The punishment for such an act was to reduce the offending state's representation in Congress in direct proportion to the number of individuals deprived of their rights as citizens. The third section was aimed at reducing President Johnson's power to pardon former Confederates and restricted them from holding specified state or federal offices unless specifically pardoned by a vote of two-thirds of each house of Congress. This provision empowered Congress rather than the president with the authority to pardon former Confederates.

The fourth section of the Amendment repudiated the Confederate war debts and declared that "neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of" the Confederacy or by "the loss of emancipation of any slave." These debts were declared invalid. The final section simply established that Congress had the "power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article." Not only did this final section provide Congress with the power to enforce this amendment, it also clearly placed Congress in control of Reconstruction. Congress's plan had been made a part of the Constitution and was therefore much more difficult for opponents both inside and outside of the Government to attack.

Perhaps the only weakness of the Congressional program, as specified in the Fourteenth Amendment, was the fact that Section 5, the enforcement clause, did not state how far Congress was willing to go in enforcing it. As was the custom then and now, the framers of the amendment merely assigned the enforcement responsibility to Congress. They did not attempt to specify within the document itself the steps Congress would or could take to insure compliance, any more than did the framers of the Thirteenth, Fifteenth, Eighteenth, Nineteenth, Twenty-third, Twenty-fourth or Twenty-fifth Amendments. As a result the decisions on enforcement were left to the determination of both the President and Congress as events dictated. The plan did not authorize Grant, or any one else, to use force, for instance,
in insuring the law was obeyed. Instead it was necessary for the executive office to seek Congress's guidance and new laws if necessary to carry out any acts of enforcement. As time passed this factor steadily increased in importance as the make-up of Congress changed from election to election. Nevertheless, by applying pressure to the southern states that sought to return to "normal" relations with the Federal Government, the Fourteenth Amendment became law and was adopted in 1868 before Grant actually took office.

These then were the key elements of Congress' plan which Grant had available for review. The Congressional plan had the most to offer to Grant. First, it was already in effect, and it did not necessarily require modification. Second, it was primarily a Republican party plan. For example, the House had passed the Fourteenth Amendment in June 1867 with unanimous Republican support and unified Democratic opposition.26 Third, the nation, by the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, appeared to support it. As the New York Times described the situation "Congress, sustained by the loyal States . . ., [was] master of the situation, and the South . . . [would] commit an irreparable blunder" if it were to "spurn the proffered terms of restoration."27 Thus, as the leader of the Republican party, Grant could have simply adopted Congress' current plan and openly supported it as his own. Yet, strangely enough, Grant elected not to follow that course of action. Nor did he elect to follow in

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26 Foner, Reconstruction, 254.
the footsteps of either Lincoln or Johnson by adopting one of their plans of action or by attempting to establish his own blueprint for reconstruction. Instead, Grant chose a different course, derived from the lessons learned from his predecessors.

As Grant advised the nation in his eighth and final Annual Message, he determined that "the wrangling between Congress and the new Executive [President Johnson] as to the best mode of reconstruction," had "much embarrassed by the long delay" the task of reconstructing the nation. Grant, therefore, understood before taking office that conflict with the legislative branch of the government would not be conducive to an expeditious unifying of the North and South, a process that he felt "virtually commenced" with his inauguration.28

Grant also understood that there was one common element to all three of the previous plans for Reconstruction. Each of them sought to rebuild a divided nation into one that was at peace with itself. Lincoln had sought by his plan to bring an end to the war by enticing the rebellious states back into the Union. Johnson had attempted to bring about peace by rapidly reuniting the states under a single government with a minimum of preconditions. Congress sought a peaceful national unity, but with the assurance that the South would be repentant for their transgressions and unable to resume resistance and that the freedmen would enjoy civil and political rights. The common element in each was the

28 Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 400.
desire to comply with the people's demand for an end to the conflict. By 1868, this desire had become the paramount issue and as the New York Times reported, "the whole country repeats the demand 'Let us have Peace.'" The Times considered "Grant's election as the harbinger of peace."29 None of these Reconstruction plans called for a continuation of conflict between the South and the Union. They did not lay out plans for how a President might at the point of a bayonet enforce a free and open election process or deal with rebellious activities. In addition the American people, while considering Reconstruction, spoke in favor of peace and prosperity, not of conflict and war. As a result of these understandings, he set a new course that would avoid conflict and bring peace to the nation.

On March 4, 1869, Ulysses S. Grant was inaugurated as President of the United States. The new President's inaugural address was neither spectacular nor long. He seemed to offer little information concerning his plan for the complex issues of Reconstruction.

In his speech, Grant advised that he had taken the oath of office "without mental reservation and with the determination to do to the best of . . . [his] ability all that" was required of him. Further, he declared that he would "commence his duties untrammled" and that he would seek to work "to the satisfaction of the people." While these announcements appeared to offer little information to the listener, they were, in fact, important for they introduced to the nation Grant's plan for administering his office and resolving the issues that faced it. First, Grant assured his listeners that he would accept his responsibilities and try to do his best for the nation. Second, he told his audience that he had assumed an office which he had not sought and that he was not bound by political promises or preconceived notions of how things

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should be done. Third, in his own way, he informed the
nation that his primary goal was to do those things which the
majority of the American people favored, but he did not
reveal how he would proceed.

Grant promised that he would "always express" his "views
to Congress," that he might on occasion "exercise the
constitutional privilege of interposing a veto to defeat
measures" he felt obligated to oppose, and that he would
"faithfully" execute all laws "whether they . . . [met his]
approval or not." These statements are critical to
understanding Grant's plan for his presidency. He
established that while he would play an active role in
overseeing the nation's progress, his opinion would not
decide all issues. Instead, standing law and the demands of
the people would be decisive. These statements demonstrated
that Grant would not follow Johnson's path by insisting on
his preferences and rejecting out of hand the will of
Congress and the people. As to formalized written plans or
goals, Grant, unlike Lincoln or Johnson before him, had none
to offer on the subject of Reconstruction. Grant advised the
nation that he would "on all subjects have a policy to
recommend, but none to enforce against the will of the
people." He did not, however, lay before the nation a
program of his own making nor did he advocate the adoption of
any currently before it in his first address to the American
people. By declining to formulate a proposal, Grant avoided

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2 Ibid., 6.
3 Ibid.
being challenged by any faction on the issues of Reconstruction.

This in itself was no easy task. Not only were there the discontented Southerners who had supported President Johnson's attempts to bring the South back into the Union at a minimum cost to themselves, there was also a wide variety of other factions present in the nation. There were, for instance, the Radical Republicans who were committed to bringing about vast changes in the South. For the most part they believed that governments could not legally abridge the natural rights—those of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,"—of either white or black men. They also argued that guaranteeing fair and equal treatment of the former slaves under the laws of the land, common and criminal, was essential to their protection. Further, they advocated the granting of suffrage to black Americans in the belief that this was the only way political self-protection was possible. But this mind set of equality did not necessarily extend to American social life. There, the Radical Republicans were more cautious and attempted to assure northern and southern whites that they did not seek to place the black American on an equal footing in the realm of social relationships between the races. In addition, the Radical Republicans believed that the Federal Government was not only responsible for making these changes but had the power to do so as well. Led by such men as Senators Charles Sumner, Ben Wade, and Henry Wilson and Representatives Thaddeus Stevens, George W. Julian and James M. Ashley, they had battled President Johnson over
Reconstruction and they and their followers were prepared to continue the conflict with Grant if necessary.4

There were also the Moderate Republicans, led by men such as Senators Lyman Trumbull and John Sherman and Representatives James G. Blaine and John A. Bingham, who were not willing to completely support their more radical colleagues. They sought to steer a more moderate course, one which would allow the South back into the Union but only if the new state governments were loyal to the nation and followed the principles of free labor in the South. Unlike their radical counterparts, they had initially attempted to work with President Johnson's plans for Reconstruction and to modify them as needed. Even more important, they were not totally convinced that black suffrage was a desirable goal to be pursued by their party. Rather, they looked upon it as an issue which weakened their case with both Northern and Southern whites. On this point they differed significantly from the more vocal radicals. They also did not share the radical belief in the enhanced powers of the Federal Government. Instead they maintained their more conservative views on the "legitimate rights of the states" and a limited central government. Thus they did not believe that, as a result of the war, the government should be entitled to interfere in local affairs or give away land to the Freedmen.5

There were, of course, the northern Democrats who as members of that national party had opposed Grant and the

5 Ibid., 241-46.
Republicans in the election of 1868 by running New York Governor Horatio Seymour. In that campaign they had argued against the opposition's Reconstruction program and raised the issue of race to defeat their opponents. They attempted to show that the Republican policies would place the South under the domination of black Americans and create a general intermixing of the races. But their position fared badly at the polls in 1868.6

Finally, there were many Northerners who simply wanted peace, an end to the conflict and a return to more normal times. This group, although relatively silent, was of critical importance to the President and Reconstruction. If Grant and his party alienated them, the President would encounter severe political difficulty. Without their votes the Republicans ran the risk of losing elections and the opportunity to make the changes they desired.

One final group, around whom most of the controversy swirled, were the Freedmen themselves. They sought to protect their newly-won freedom and hoped to carve out a niche in the "new" Southern economy. They called upon the government to protect their rights and to provide them with the resources they needed to lead productive lives.7

Given these divergent and often contradictory factions and viewpoints, it was difficult to present a speech or program which met everyone's needs and did not offend someone. Despite his limited skills and almost non-existent

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6 Ibid., 338-41.
7 Ibid., 346-411.
political background, Grant attempted to do just that, to establish a flexible but unwritten plan that would meet the nation's requirements and this remained his consistent policy throughout his presidency.

Grant informed the nation that it would be "desirable" for them to approach the issues arising from the rebellion "calmly, without prejudice, hate, or sectional pride, remembering that the greatest good to the greatest number . . . [was] the object to be obtained." Although Grant did not tell the nation his specific plans, he hoped to resolve matters peacefully. Although flexible concerning the means or process, Grant clearly had as an ultimate objective "peace" and national harmony.

Only at the end of his speech did Grant address the crucial issue of suffrage. He deemed it "very desirable that this question should be settled" by "the ratification of the fifteenth article of amendment to the Constitution." This amendment (passed by Congress on February 26, 1869) prohibited the federal or state governments from denying a male citizen the right to vote "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." The adoption of this amendment, which was clearly a key element of Congress' expanding Reconstruction program, was the only legislation that Grant mentioned specifically and supported directly in his first inaugural address to the nation. By recommending it to the nation, Grant added his prestige to those who

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8 Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 6.
9 Ibid., 8.
desired its passage, without seriously committing himself to the overall plan of congressional Reconstruction.

Grant's position on the Fifteenth Amendment did not represent a dramatic change in his viewpoint toward black Americans. Even though Grant and his wife Julia had owned slaves before the war, this did not prevent him from perceiving the need to provide freedmen assistance during and after the war. As early as the fall of 1862, while Grant was waging his campaign against Vicksburg, he paused to aid the freed slaves in Mississippi. Confronted with "an army of them, all ages and both sexes," and prevented by "humanity" from "allowing them to starve," Grant sought ways to extend relief. Under the outstanding leadership of Chaplain John Eaton, Grant helped set up a program which hired the slaves out to plantation owners and the government to pick cotton and they "together fixed the prices to be paid for the Negro labor." Although the money for the work was not turned directly over to the Freedmen, it "was expended judiciously and for their benefit." According to Grant, this program and one other involving the cutting of wood along the Mississippi for use by steamers were extremely beneficial to both sides. Not only did it solve his problem of dealing with a flood of freedmen who needed assistance and prevented his army from moving freely, it enabled the blacks to become "self-sustaining" and provided them with "many comforts they had never known before."10

Later, as the war progressed, Grant moved to support not only emancipation but the active recruitment of black Americans into the Union army.\textsuperscript{11} When the details of the massacre of black Union troops at Fort Pillow on April 12, 1864, became known, Grant condemned these atrocities and supported the administration's decision to halt prisoner exchanges. Since the Confederacy did not consider black troops on an equal footing with white soldiers, Grant recommended suspending the exchanges until this situation was corrected.\textsuperscript{12} Although each of these measures aided the Union cause by depriving the enemy of manpower or increasing the number of Union men in the field, the actions simultaneously aided the blacks in their quest for freedom. Therefore, Grant's support of the Fifteenth Amendment was a natural step for both aiding the freedmen and at the same time seeking to resolve a point of contention in the nation.

With a call for "patient forbearance one toward another throughout the land," Grant concluded his speech and avoided tying himself to any one plan, save for his stand on the Fifteenth Amendment.\textsuperscript{13} He had adroitly left his options open and was therefore able to pursue a flexible program to meet the stated needs of the people. Grant had also avoided challenging Congress' power to govern and had made no lasting enemies.

\textsuperscript{11} Brooks D. Simpson, Let Us Have Peace: Ulysses S. Grant and the Politics of War and Reconstruction, 1861-1868 (Chapel Hill, 1991), 35-46.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 58-59.
\textsuperscript{13} Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 8.
This short and relatively vague speech in actuality contained all of the key elements of Grant's plan for dealing with Congress, the American people and the issues of Reconstruction. Grant had promised to seek guidance from both the American people and Congress as to a preferred course based on the laws already enacted or forthcoming. Grant implied that the American people and Congress would be responsible for the legislation enacted and subsequently enforced within the nation. By taking this stance, Grant indicated that he would work within the parameters established jointly by Congress and its constituents. Together with this assurance, Grant advised that it would be his job to enforce all of the laws regardless of his personal views. He would enforce both good and bad laws to the best of his ability, thereby demonstrating their strengths and weaknesses and allowing Congress to respond accordingly.

Grant also indicated that he would recommend legislation for Congressional consideration, but he would not advocate nor demand that these acts be adopted. This approach was devised to avoid the kind of conflict with Congress which both Lincoln and Johnson had experienced. Certainly, Congress should not find severe fault with such a recommendation, when they had previously been forced to respond to Lincoln's and Johnson's specific and detailed plans of action. By taking this approach, Grant could address an issue without risking a severe defeat or rejection. This flexible and deferential approach became a trademark of Grant's administration. Finally, Grant sought
to capitalize on the nation's desire for peace. Having viewed the horrors of war and the devastation that it caused, he consistently reminded the electorate that peace was possible through forbearance in dealing with others and compliance with all the laws of the land.

These then were the key elements of the unwritten plan with which Grant sought to avoid conflict with Congress and bring peace to the troubled Union. Grant elected to guide the nation through Reconstruction by adopting a flexible approach and without making a permanent commitment to a specific published plan. He hoped to rely on the nation and Congress to prescribe a legislative plan which he as president would enforce. In this manner, Grant could play the role of advisor and law enforcer but not premier national legislator.

Despite the brevity of his approach, as outlined in his inaugural address, the American people recognized Grant's program. An editorial in the New York Tribune, of March 5, 1869, demonstrated this point by restating each plank of Grant's unwritten plan for reconstructing the nation. The editor argued that "those who doubt the man's statesmanship should analyze his brief speech, and see whether he . . . left anything unsaid." They divided the speech into a total of 13 points for the readers' consideration, of which four bear directly upon Grant's Reconstruction program. In the first point, the paper noted that he promised to "advise Congress--but not war upon it," a critical element of avoiding Johnson's unhappy fate. Next, the Tribune
understood that Grant had stated that his "business . . . [was] to execute the laws" of the nation as President, rather than seek new legislation. The editors also found that he had brought forth the key plank of his presidential campaign in that the nation had fought a war and that now it "must have peace." Finally they caught the tone of his promise to the Freedmen by noting that "as for the Negro,—equal rights in all the States."\textsuperscript{14} This editorial clearly demonstrated that Grant had been successful in expressing his plans for his presidency and Reconstruction, and that the nation had not missed his meaning. It also demonstrated that others applauded his strategy.

Initially, it might have been assumed that Grant was merely buying time in order to develop more specific plans for presentation at a later date, but this was not the case. Not once, in all his speeches and proclamations on Reconstruction, did he seek to present his own all-encompassing plan and then advocate its adoption. During the eight years of his administration, Grant on only one occasion personally broke away from Congress' leadership and advocated a specific item of legislation which he related to Reconstruction. In that one case, Congress rejected Grant's plan.

Examples of Grant's determination to allow Congress to lead appeared regularly in his presentations to the nation. In his first annual message of December 6, 1869, barely eight months after assuming office, he announced that the nation

\textsuperscript{14} New York \textit{Tribune}, March 5, 1869, p. 8.
was "blessed with peace at home" and therefore no exceptional actions were necessary. While others might have claimed responsibility for this sudden and surprising success, Grant did not. Instead, he praised the legislators and noted that "the work of restoring State governments loyal to the Union" and "protecting and fostering free labor" had "received ample attention from Congress." In addition, he excused the legislative branch for not succeeding in all areas by arguing that although their efforts had "not met with the success in all particulars that might have been desired, yet on the whole" they had "been more successful than could have been reasonably anticipated." In Grant's opinion Congress, as the leader in developing legislation to solve the ills of Reconstruction, had done a good job.

In fact, on December 6, 1869, Grant found little to criticize within the Reconstruction process. Not only did he praise Congress for its positive actions, he also lauded Southern freedmen. The President concluded that "under the protection which they have received" blacks were "making rapid progress in learning, and no complaints" were being received as to a "lack of industry on their part where they receive fair remuneration for their labor." All, according to Grant, was progressing satisfactorily as far as the nation's efforts to reunite itself were concerned and no recommendations seemed warranted.

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15 Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 27.
16 Ibid., 28.
17 Ibid.
Turning to the enforcement of the nation's laws, Grant maintained his original position. In his second annual message of December 5, 1870, he proudly declared that his administration had seen to the "thorough enforcement of every law" passed by Congress. Later, on December 4, 1871, the President announced that it was "gratifying to be able to state that during the past year success has generally attended the effort to execute all laws found upon the statute books." He added that his policy had not been "to inquire into the wisdom of laws already enacted, but to learn their spirit and intent and to enforce them accordingly." Grant chose not to question the validity of the laws of the land, but rather to enforce them as he had promised from his first day in office, and he maintained these same primary beliefs throughout his presidency. In his final message to the people, he again reminded them that he had "acted in every instance from a conscientious desire to do what was right, constitutional within the law, and for the very best interests of the whole people." He also stated that the process of Reconstruction had been solely "the work of the legislative branch of government."

This then was Grant's administration program—to consistently maintain a flexible approach to Reconstruction without developing or adopting a specific written plan of action against which all of his actions could be compared. Further, Grant sought the advice of the American people and

18 Ibid., 112.
19 Ibid., 142.
20 Ibid., 400.
recommended for Congress' consideration those actions which he felt might be appropriate to meet the needs of the nation. Once Congress passed legislation, Grant attempted to enforce it, without consideration of his personal beliefs concerning the benefits of the laws themselves. Finally, Grant continued throughout his administrations to advocate national peace and forbearance.

Included within this plan was Grant's clear indication that he would continue to support the Freedmen in their efforts to gain political rights and to become self sufficient. Grant's support of the Fifteenth Amendment was a logical continuation of his efforts during the war to aid black Americans, through emancipation, employment and recruitment into the army.
CHAPTER 5

GRANT'S COOPERATIVE PLAN SUCCEEDS

In the spring of 1869, Grant's administration faced a wide variety of problems in dealing with the unresolved issues of Reconstruction. Foremost among these was bringing the remaining states, which had seceded in 1861, back into the Union. Even though Congress had readmitted seven former Confederate states during 1868, four more remained under military rule. Only Texas, Virginia, and Mississippi had failed to meet the requirements of Congress' Reconstruction program and in September 1867, they were joined by Georgia when that state expelled its black legislators. These four states still needed to complete the process dictated by the first and second Reconstruction Acts of 1867.

The first of these acts, after dividing the remaining former Confederate states into five military districts, required each state to hold a constitutional convention in order to reestablish their new civil government. The state's voters, whose ranks in accordance with the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment included black Americans and excluded certain classes of former rebels, were responsible for electing delegates to this convention. In turn these rebel-free representatives were to draft a new constitution that included a provision eliminating racial barriers to suffrage.
Once this had been accomplished and the state ratified both its new constitution and the Fourteenth Amendment, Congress would seat the state's representatives.¹

The second Reconstruction Act, which was passed when the South failed to act, provided a detailed set of instructions to the military on when the process was to start and how it was to be completed. As a result, the South acted and all but four states successfully completed the prescribed process.²

While Johnson might have demanded these states' readmission, Grant demanded nothing of Congress. Rather, as part of his unwritten plan, he called Congress' attention to this issue and then relied on them to resolve it. On April 7, 1869, Grant suggested to Congress "that it . . . [was] desirable to restore the States which were engaged in the rebellion to their proper relations to the Government and the country." Thereafter, he recommended that the legislators take into consideration Virginia's attempts to return to the Union on an equitable basis. Grant advised that he was "led to make . . . [that] recommendation from the confident hope and belief that the people of that State . . . [were] now ready to cooperate" with the federal government.³ Grant, however, did not insist on congressional action nor prescribe

¹ Brooks D. Simpson, Let Us Have Peace: Ulysses S. Grant and the Politics of War and Reconstruction, 1861-1868 (Chapel Hill, 1991), 170-73.
² Ibid., 176.
a plan to be followed for the readmission of Virginia or any of the remaining former Confederate States still outside the Union.

In spite of the fact that Grant had not called for a specific action from Congress, his statements were received with appreciation by the New York Tribune. The newspaper declared in its editorial section that the President's message of April 7, 1869, was "eminently wise, judicious and timely." The editor was pleased with "the immediate effect" of his remarks and firmly believed that Congress would see to "the speedy return of Virginia and Mississippi to their natural relations to the Government."  

Throughout 1869, Grant maintained his position on this issue. As late as December 6, 1869, he continued to call upon Congress to rectify the situation, while noting his own efforts to bring about resolution. In his first annual message Grant explained that he had done all that Congress had asked in its joint resolution authorizing the "Executive to order elections in the States of Virginia, Mississippi, and Texas, to submit to them the constitutions..." which each state had developed. Elections had been held in each of the three former Confederate states, and Grant sincerely hoped "that the acts of the legislatures of these states" would receive Congressional approval "and thus close the work of reconstruction."  

The New York Tribune continued to support the President's position. In an article dated

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4 New York Tribune, April 8, 1869, p. 4.
5 Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 29.
December 7, 1869, the newspaper noted Grant's stance and called on Congress to "evince equal alacrity in complying with these . . . judicious recommendations." Eventually, Congress acknowledged Grant's appeals by allowing the other Confederate states to return, the last being Georgia in July 1870. In each case the state was admitted only after it had reorganized a new state government in accordance with provisions of the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 and had ratified the Fifteenth Amendment.

Although it is true that the southern states were responding to Congress' conditions, Grant's low key approach had facilitated the situation. It placed firm and popularly supported pressure on Congress to end this divisive condition. It also allowed the remaining states to avoid being caught in a conflict between the two governmental branches, which in the past had helped delay their readmission. Grant's support for their return had made the process easier and resolved not one but two issues in the Reconstruction process. By allowing Congress to take the lead and then pressuring them to act in a favorable manner, he had alleviated tension between his office and Congress. And he achieved his desired objective, the peaceful return of the remaining four states.

The accomplishment of this goal was one of the few successes of Reconstruction, and it did not come at the expense of the freedmen themselves. Instead, the reunion of the former Confederate States with the national Union brought

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with it the adoption of both the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. These constitutional revisions sought to improve the condition of the former slaves and at the same time provide them with the right to vote. The unification process was also intended to establish a new civil government in which blacks could participate. These were positive attempts to meet their needs, although as time passed these goals were lost to the "redeemers'" intimidation and violence.

The ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment was another successful outcome of Grant's unwritten plan emphasizing cooperation with Congress. It took place on February 2, 1870. This measure, as proposed by Congress and ratified by the nation, extended the right of suffrage to black Americans. The Republicans believed that by its passage they had provided the freedmen with the tool necessary to protect themselves by voting for and possibly electing men to office who would safeguard their interests. The President had announced his support for the amendment in his first inaugural address. Addressing the issue of suffrage, Grant found it very "desirable that this question should be settled" at once and he hoped that it would be resolved by the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. Its adoption promised to complete the congressional Reconstruction process.

As ratification seemed imminent, Grant quickly countered the impact of rumors that some states might repeal their

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8 Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 8.
earlier ratification of the proposed amendment. On March 28, 1870, the New York Tribune reported rumors in Washington that the Virginia legislature was "preparing to abrogate its ratification of the Fifteenth Constitutional Amendment by a coup de main." But the paper learned that the President had already responded to these rumors by declaring that he would issue a "proclamation announcing the adoption of the Amendment as soon" as Texas ratified the amendment and was readmitted to the Union.\footnote{New York Tribune, March 28, 1870, p. 1.} By promptly taking this position, Grant signified that he favored the Amendment and would act to insure its passage.

As promised, on March 30, 1870, Grant notified Congress of the ratification of that amendment. In celebrating its passage, Grant announced that it made "at once 4,000,000 people voters who were . . . [once] declared by the highest tribunal in the land not citizens of the United States" and it was "indeed a measure of gronder importance than any" since "the founding of our free Government."\footnote{Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 55-56.} Again this support cost Grant nothing, since it was not a plan of his making and the necessary number of states had already made it law by ratifying it. This demonstration of Grant's approval of Congress' efforts to complete the rebuilding of the nation strengthened his positive working relationship with Congress and minimized possible conflicts.

Following his previous method of operation, Grant used this opportunity to "call upon Congress to take all means
within their constitutional powers to promote and encourage popular education throughout the country" for everyone, including the freedmen. Grant hoped this would make everyone a better voter under the Fifteenth Amendment.\textsuperscript{11} He once more recommended that Congress take action, without giving directions concerning either programs or funding. Nor did he define what he meant by an "education." Rather, he highlighted an area that would benefit from congressional actions, but he did not seek to intervene in the legislative process. It was Congress' responsibility either to bring the ideas to fruition or to ignore them.

Grant's call for Congress to consider expanding the educational opportunities for everyone, including blacks, was consistent with his frequently demonstrated desire to aid the freedmen. It followed from Grant's previous actions on their behalf during the war and his declarations of support for the passage of the final Reconstruction Amendment.

Grant's cooperative working relationship with Congress also produced a positive joint effort in the handling of the Ku Klux Klan. Organized in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1866, by Confederate veterans, this loosely structured secret organization made its presence known on the national level by 1868. Klan members, often acting on their own decisions rather than those of their leaders, sought through violence and intimidation to influence the outcome of elections in

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 56.
southern states. As time passed the organization spread to other states, until on August 28, 1869, James Abram Garfield, a staunch Radical Republican, warned southerners that if they persisted "in forming Ku Klux Klans in the South to murder Union men, white or black" that the North would "use the bayonet." Further, he declared that it was the government's intent to "see the rights, liberties and lives of Union men, white and black, protected." Clearly, declared the Tribune, the Klan "who scourges, robs, and sometimes kills, inoffensive Negroes" had captured national attention. By March 1870, Congress was in the process of investigating "the necessity of using the United States forces in maintaining order" in such states as Tennessee.

Left to its own devices, Congress acted to restrain the activities of such violent pressure groups. In May 1870 it passed legislation commonly known as the "Enforcement Act" to help curtail discriminatory abuses in the election process. The bill prohibited state authorities from excluding voters based on race and authorized the President to investigate such abuses through the use of election administrators. These individuals in turn were authorized to pursue the

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15 Ibid., March 25, 1870, p. 1.
federal prosecution of persons committing election fraud.\textsuperscript{16}
The Klan took no notice of the new law, because no one within the Federal Government attempted to enforce it. This reluctance to act was based on a belief shared by Grant and many other key Republicans that the Federal authorities could only act after the State Governors had depleted their own resources in trying to resolve the crisis. Faced only with a threat of punishment, the Klan continued its violent ways.\textsuperscript{17}

Despite Klan actions and the national response, Grant made no direct reference to them in his first inaugural address nor in his first annual message. When he did finally take note of their activities in his second annual message of December 5, 1870, he merely advised that it was "to be regretted . . . that a free exercise of the elective franchise" had been altered "by violence and intimidation" and that the right to vote had been "denied to citizens in exceptional cases in several of the States lately in rebellion."\textsuperscript{18} But he proposed no new special legislation to resolve the problem. In typical fashion, he left the matter of a regulatory response to Congress.

When the Klan's activities continued unabated, however, Grant did eventually take action under the legislation of May 1870 to combat violence in the South. He first provided reports on these occurrences as requested by Congress. For example, on January 13, 1871, Grant forwarded extensive

\textsuperscript{16} Foner, Reconstruction, 454.
\textsuperscript{17} Trelease, White Terror, 215, 385.
\textsuperscript{18} Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 96.
reports from the War Department "relative to the outrages in North Carolina and . . . the other Southern States." Then he provided additional information in a special message to Congress, dated March 23, 1871. In it he contended that "a condition of affairs . . . exist[ed] in some of the States of the Union rendering life and property insecure." The President believed that "the power [needed] to correct these evils" went well "beyond the control of the State authorities"; he was uncertain whether or not "acting within the limits of existing laws" he could control the situation by use of Federal authority. Therefore, Grant "urgently recommend[ed] such legislation as in the judgment of Congress shall eventually secure life, liberty, and property and the enforcement of the law."20 As on previous occasions, Grant recommended that Congress act, but he did not tell them what he specifically wanted or needed to solve the crisis. It was, as usual, left to the legislators to find the answers to the questions posed by this crisis.

Congress acted quickly and passed the second enforcement act in April 1871. This law's provisions were stronger than those of the first act and were aimed specifically at groups like the Ku Klux Klan. The legislation declared that any acts by organizations bearing firearms, such as the Klan, could be defined by the President of the United States as rebellion and dealt with by federal military force. In addition it identified specific crimes which were punishable

19 Ibid., 117.
20 Ibid., 127.
under federal instead of state law. These crimes included conspiring to deprive individuals of their legal rights to vote, obtain public office, serve on juries, and be equally protected by the law. Grant was also authorized to use the military as necessary and to suspend the writ of habeas corpus to help suppress the activities of such groups.\textsuperscript{21} Congress, therefore, provided Grant with the specific laws that he felt he needed to enforce peace in the South and could exercise in accordance with his perception of the appropriate powers of the President. Armed with this new legislation, he did exactly that.

On May 3, 1871, Grant announced his intention to use this new law "to enforce the provisions of the fourteenth amendment of the Constitution of the United States." He called upon "all good citizens, and especially upon all public officers, to be zealous in the enforcement" of this new legislation. He warned insurgents "to abstain from committing any of the acts" precluded by its provisions. Grant also told the nation that the failure of both the people and the state governments to resolve the crisis created by rebellious individuals would impose upon the federal government "the duty of putting forth all its energies for the protection of its citizens of every race and color and for the restoration of peace and order throughout the entire country."\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{21} Foner, \textit{Reconstruction}, 455.
\textsuperscript{22} Richardson, ed., \textit{Messages and Papers}, VII, 134-35.
Speeches alone did not curb the acts of violence and intimidation, and Grant acted accordingly. After issuing yet another warning proclamation on October 12, 1871, which identified nine counties in South Carolina as being in a state of rebellion, Grant suspended the writ of habeas corpus in these counties on October 17, 1871. Federal marshals and the military under orders from Grant and armed with this new authority promptly moved against the insurgents and their armed organizations. Grant had proceeded only after Congress had taken the initiative by providing him with new legislation which he could enforce.

In this case Grant's operational plan was successful. As the President reported in his third annual message to the nation on December 4, 1871, he had used "the act of Congress approved on April 20, 1871, and commonly known as the Ku-Klux law" to defeat that organization in South Carolina. Grant claimed that individuals presumed to be "members of such unlawful combinations" had been arrested. Approximately 168 alleged criminals were, according to the President, delivered to the authorities in the counties of York and Spartanburg. Grant further alleged that once "it appeared that the authorities of the United States were about to take vigorous measures to enforce the law" others who had participated in the rebellious activities had fled to avoid prosecution.

23 Ibid., 137.
24 Ibid., 150-51.
25 Ibid., 151.
Although Grant acknowledged that the affairs within the South were "unhappily, not such as all true patriotic citizens would like to see," he seemed satisfied with the results and refrained from calling for further legislation. Instead, Grant reflected on his vision of a happier future, "when the old citizens" of the South would "take an interest in public affairs, ... vote for men representing their views, and tolerate the same freedom of expression and ballot" for those who held opposing positions. By the time of the 1872 presidential election, federal military troops and marshals had broken the Klan's power.26 Unfortunately for the nation, Grant's vision regarding a happier time did not materialize.

The President's unwritten strategy was successful in dealing with insurgents in the South. Grant had called upon Congress for legislation, without specifying what he wanted or needed. Upon receiving the empowering legislation, he proved willing and able to enforce the laws in the South. Grant's simple, unpublished plan to suggest but not demand, to encourage Congress to look at certain problems and to solve them, worked well in his first term as President. It helped him maintain a reasonable working relationship with Congress and a general peace in the nation. As Grant's presidency progressed through the first four years, the President retained his original methodology of dealing with Congress and the nation. To have done otherwise would have

26 Trelease, White Terror, 399-418; see also, Foner, Reconstruction, 457-59.
required him to reverse course in conflict with his fundamental persona.

This is not to contend that Grant's plan and administration did not encounter resistance from other groups within the country. It had of course drawn attacks from the Democratic party, which resisted his actions while minimizing or ignoring the unlawful acts of such groups as the Klan.27 Grant had also drawn resistance from within his own political organization, and fractures in party unity appeared during his first administration.

One such break occurred when Senator Charles Sumner from Massachusetts, a Radical Republican, came to resist Grant's actions and then supported his opponent in the presidential election of 1872. Sumner in 1870 authored the Civil Rights Bill, which proposed guaranteeing the freedmen equal access to public transportation, room accommodations, common carriers, churches, public schools, and jury service. Sumner argued that the passage of this bill would have insured that the nation lived up to the promises made to black Americans. This legislation repeatedly failed passage. It met resistance from many diverse sectors, including members of the GOP. In part, Sumner blamed Grant for this failure because he felt the President could have forced the bill through Congress. As a result, he turned from Grant and endorsed Horace Greeley, another former Republican who had also broken with the President. In so doing the senator

27 Trelease, White Terror, 389-96.
helped fragment Republican ranks and disrupted Grant's pursuit of total party unity.

Horace Greeley, the owner and editor of the New York Tribune, had broken with the President in 1871 over the need for a quick end to Reconstruction and chose to run against him in the 1872 election. Greeley's defection was a severe blow to Grant in that he not only faced a member of his own party in the election but also lost the support of an influential Republican newspaper. In turn, the Democrats, recognizing that they could not run their own candidate with any hope of beating Grant, threw their support behind Greeley as well. As the campaign developed, Greeley ran on a platform which advocated a return to local home rule, amnesty for the former rebels, and civil service reform. He also called upon the people to forget the tragedy of the war and forgive their enemies so that Republican Reconstruction could be brought to an end.\footnote{Foner, Reconstruction, 502-3.} This forced Grant to fight a campaign on two fronts, one against breakaway Republicans and the other against the Democratic party.

Grant's plan of minimizing resistance and allowing others to recommend and lead paid off in this situation. Supporters, such as the New York Times, who agreed with his desire for peace and the reduction of political conflict, rallied to his cause and fought back throughout 1872. When the attacks became tiresome, this newspaper attempted to divert attention from the more substantive issues by searching for the source of the "intense animosity" toward
Grant and argued that the real problem was not the President but his inability to award favors to demanding office seekers. According to the newspaper's editorial of March 21, 1872, "the curse of the Presidential office" could be found in the necessity of distributing offices to those who sought them and the fact that there were "many places to give away, and there . . . [were] about ten times as many applicants as . . . places." Thus Grant, declared the New York Times, was the victim of greedy and demanding office seekers who saw the lucrative positions go to others and retaliated by attacking the President.\textsuperscript{29} While this may indeed have been one of many problems faced by Grant, it was not the most critical. The Democrats were proposing nothing less than an end to Reconstruction and an abandonment of Republican policies. This was the real issue that challenged Grant's abilities.

Six days later, this same newspaper continued its defense of Grant by first comparing his actions as President to the promises of the Republican party and then declaring that his administration had "been, in a marked degree, in complete harmony with the pledges of the Republican Party, and with what the people expected of it." In April, the New York Times argued that the "renomination of Gen. Grant . . . [was] insisted upon, not by him, but by at least the majority of those who first nominated and then elected him." The editorial argued that this majority believed "that although all of his acts . . . [had] not met with unqualified approval

\textsuperscript{29} New York Times, March 21, 1872, p. 4.
of his supporters," Grant had still "administered the affairs of his office faithfully, and on the whole wisely and well."\textsuperscript{30}

These defenses of Grant provide evidence that he had, through his unwritten plan, managed to convey his own basic goals to others without alienating such powerful supporters as the New York \textit{Times}. Although his actions did generate opposition, at times from breakaway members of his own party, they did not create the overwhelming resistance that Johnson's had between 1865 and 1868. Instead of facing impeachment as had Johnson in his final year of office, Grant received the presidential nomination of his party in 1872.

Grant and the Republican party were not content simply to exchange barbs through the newspapers. Instead, Grant sought to improve his position by supporting Congress' attempts to pass the Amnesty Act of 1872. It proposed the removal of the disabilities imposed on former Confederates by the Fourteenth Amendment. This legislation had in a similar format been first proposed in 1870 and again in 1871, but like the Civil Rights Act it failed to pass. The New York \textit{Tribune}, one of Grant's detractors, had argued as early as April 8, 1869, for an end to the "odious policy of disfranchisement" and recommended that the former Confederate States' political institutions rest "upon the broadest, and therefore, the safest, basis of suffrage."\textsuperscript{31} Both the Democrats and Greeley's supporters continuously argued for

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., April 9, 1872, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{31} New York \textit{Tribune}, April 8, 1869, p. 4.
the passage of an amnesty act to end disenfranchisement, which they believed divided the nation along sectional lines.

On December 4, 1871, Grant stole their thunder by throwing his support behind this legislation. In his third annual message to the nation he advised that "more than six years . . . [had] elapsed since the last hostile gun was fired between the armies" and that it therefore was an appropriate time to consider whether "the disabilities imposed by the fourteenth amendment should be removed." Grant went on to argue that no additional benefits would be gained by continuing to exclude anyone, with the possible exception of "any great criminals," from enfranchisement.32 He recommended the matter for Congress' careful consideration, and in so doing signified his support for the proposal; in the name of good will and peaceful coexistence he had removed this issue from the opposition's arsenal. The New York Times promptly backed the President and argued on December 9, 1871, that there was much to support the removal "of those disabilities which experience . . . [had] proved . . . a mistake to impose." The newspaper followed the same line of reasoning by pointing out that once they were enfranchised the former Confederates "would . . . turn their entire attention to the work of honest and effective government, to the maintenance of order . . ., and the promotion of local industry and commerce."33 The Amnesty Act became law in 1872.

33 New York Times, December 9, 1871, p. 4.
Grant's unwritten plan of quiet recommendation had again proven successful by defusing a dangerous issue.

Grant defeated the opposing candidate, Horace Greeley, in 1872 by a popular majority of 3,597,132 to 2,834,125. In the South, according to Eric Foner, the election "outcome reflected the loyalty of the black electorate, a stabilization of scalawag support, and the fact that a number of Democrats, unable to stomach Greeley, remained at home." In the North, Grant carried every state, and only in Massachusetts did significant voter defections take place.34 In researching this election, historian William S. McFeely found that the effectiveness of the opposition was limited because "Grant could hold the vote of Midwestern farmer . . . , the vote of the freedmen . . . and he could hold the vote of the soldier he had led into battle." McFeely also noted that Grant "the warrior stood for peace and for order" and that he represented safety and dependability to the people.35 Although part of his victory can be attributed to his hero status, much of it must be assigned to Grant's choice of methods. It was Grant's plan after all to insure "peace and order" in the nation and to provide the nation with safety and dependability. As a result, he had avoided radical programs which generated opposition in Congress and had acted to decrease the tensions between the North and South. He had supported those programs which were developed and supported by Congress and sought to enforce federal laws

34 Foner, Reconstruction, 508-10.
to the best of his ability. His continuing popularity and reelection to a second term appeared to vindicate his choice of methods. The New York Times, which had for the most part supported Grant throughout his first four years, calmly notified the people upon his election for a second term that they "could hardly have a safer man at the helm in calm or stormy times."36

He had accomplished much. In 1868 four states remained outside of their normal relationship with the Union. In 1873 all of the former Confederate states had been returned to the Union. In 1868 Congress had been at war with the President and the office seemed in great danger. In 1873 the President and Congress worked together with the executive suggesting action, and the legislature passing the necessary laws. In 1868 sectional conflicts pulled at the nation's unity, and disaster threatened its security. In 1873 the nation seemed secure from the threat of civil war and the activities of such rebellious organizations as the Klan. In 1867 most black Americans in the North and South, as well as many white Americans in the South, could not vote. By 1873 the Fifteenth Amendment had been adopted. The Amnesty Act of 1872 had removed the last restrictions from former rebels. Although it can be argued that Grant's plans had not solved all of the problems of the nation nor even guaranteed that the laws passed would be obeyed, the American people had responded favorably and returned him to Washington. His margin of victory, which comprised over 55 percent of the

ballots cast, represented the largest majority since the election of Andrew Jackson in 1832. Grant's unwritten program for conflict avoidance and peace seemed to have worked well.
CHAPTER 6

GRANT'S COOPERATIVE PLAN FALTERS

Grant's planned course of action for dealing with Congress and the nation, although relatively successful for the first four years, was not foolproof. The weakness of this course of action was that Grant had offered very little in the way of guidance to the nation. As the captain of the ship of state, he had left it up to the crew (Congress), and the passengers (the American people), to decide the ship's final course. A captainless ship could run aground.

Yet another enemy of Grant's plan was time itself. As long as loyal and sympathetic Republicans maintained control of Congress and the people remained interested in Reconstruction, his plan could work. But, if with the passage of time the Republicans lost control over Congress or key Republicans like Summer and Greeley continued to abandon Grant or the people themselves grew tired of Reconstruction, the Republican program of rebuilding the nation might falter without executive leadership. This latter hazard offered the greatest threat to the continued operation of the cooperative relationship between Grant and Congress. If the American people lost interest in the burdensome issues of race and Reconstruction, then Grant's administration would be cast adrift without the people's guidance.
On December 2, 1872, Grant claimed that disorder in the South had been greatly reduced. The president predicted the complete suppression of "combinations" prohibited by the enforcement acts in the near future, "when the obvious advantages of good order and peace" would prevail.¹ But the time of which Grant spoke never arrived.

The reasons for this failure were clear. Grant had overestimated the strength of his position, which steadily eroded over the next four years. The forces weakening his authority included economic disaster, accusations of corruption, the determined intervention of the opponents of Republican Reconstruction, and the general weariness of the American people in the face of rapid social change. To these was added the growing opposition from within his own party.² In each case Grant's course of action faltered, and the administration drifted without congressional leadership.

This is not to say that Grant did not attempt to head off his opposition and to mend political fences, for in fact he made significant attempts to do just that. But they did not work. For example, when Sumner broke with the President prior to the election of 1872, Grant understood the basis of this fracture was, in part, his failure to push through Sumner's Civil Rights Bill. Although Grant had offered his

support and made it known through the newspapers "that he sympathized fully with the [freedmen's] desire to obtain the rights of citizens" and "that all citizens should be equal," he still needed to win men like Sumner over to his camp. In an attempt to remedy this deficiency, Grant in his second inaugural address, threw his support behind the premise of the Civil Rights Bill, if not the bill itself.

In his address, delivered in March 1873, he noted that although "the effects of the late strife . . . [had] been to free the slave and make him a citizen," the freedmen still did not possess "the civil rights which citizenship should carry with it." Grant declared that this situation was "wrong, and should be corrected" and that he stood "committed, so far as Executive influence . . . [could] avail" to accomplishing that task. He called upon the nation to give the freedman only what he deserved, "a fair chance to develop what there . . . [was] good in him, give him access to the schools" and when he traveled to grant him the assurance that only his actions would "regulate the treatment and fare" that he received.

As he had so many times before, Grant elected to advocate a position but did not demand the passage of Sumner's specific Civil Rights Bill or any other for that matter. Instead, he called upon the nation as a whole to grant the freedmen the opportunity to enjoy their rights as citizens without interference and asked for the legislation to accomplish this. This message elicited a mixed response.

4 Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 221.
The New York Times, his standard bearer, congratulated the President on his "blunt, straight-forward, and practical" address, noted Grant's opinions on the Civil Rights issue, and declared that it was "safe to conclude that all" available "Executive influence" would be applied "to accomplish this object."5 Others, such as the delegates from the National Civil Rights Convention of 1873, called on the President to thank "him for his continued friendship" to the freedmen and "his recommendation to Congress to secure for them the civil rights of which they" were denied.6 Even though Grant maintained this position on this question for the balance of his administration, it had limited positive results. Sumner maintained his opposition to Grant's administration until his death in March 1874, and it was not until 1875 that Congress finally passed a version of Sumner's Civil Rights Act. Grant had been unable to accommodate either his opposition or to insure the prompt passage of the desired legislation. This was in fact one of the more significant signs that Grant's cooperative program with Congress was no longer effective. Congress had not done as Grant recommended, and the disagreements and strife over the Civil Rights Bill continued for over two years after Grant cast his support behind the measure.7

Grant's support of the Civil Rights bill is another typical example of his refusal to abandon what he had decided

5 New York Times, March 5, 1873, p. 4.
6 Ibid., December 13, 1873, p. 1.
7 Foner, Reconstruction, 504-5, 553-56. See also, David Donald, Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man (New York, 1970), 531-47, 579-80, 586-87.
to support. Even though Grant could have forsaken this legislation developed for the benefit of black Americans, he did not turn back. He had announced his support and he continued to offer his presidential prestige to bolster the act in the face of opposition which successfully delayed its passage for some five years and minimized its effectiveness.

But in spite of such failures, Grant retained his unwritten plan. As early as February 25, 1873, even before his second inauguration, he utilized this approach once again when he respectfully called Congress' attention to the election abuses of the southern Democrats and White League in the State of Louisiana. As he described it, there had been "an organized attempt on the part of those controlling the election officers and returns to defeat . . . the will of the majority of the electors of the State" in the 1872 presidential elections. On his own authority and in accordance with the provisions of the law passed on May 31, 1870, "entitled 'An act to enforce the right of citizens of the United States to vote in the several States of the Union,'" Grant had ordered the United States marshal to intervene and to use troops if necessary. The result was that "a full set of State officers had been installed and a legislative assembly organized, constituting, if not a de jure, at least a de facto government." Grant, however, acknowledged that this "de facto government", was still confronted by a second group of people who also claimed to be the state government. And he conceded that an investigation of the election irregularities had revealed "so many frauds
and forgeries as to make it doubtful what candidates received a majority of the votes actually cast." Yet, with all of these difficulties so clearly documented and placed before Congress, Grant offered no new solutions or plans. Indeed, he told the legislators that he had "no specific recommendations to make upon the subject" at hand. Instead, he urged Congress to devise "any practical way of removing these difficulties by legislation." If Congress chose not to act, Grant advised that despite his anxiety "to avoid any appearance of undue interference in State affairs" he would continue to support the state government that he had recognized and helped establish.

Although Grant proclaimed in his second inaugural address of March 4, 1873, that he had sought "to maintain all laws" and "to act in the best interests of the whole people" during his first administration and promised to do so in his second term, the task became much more difficult to accomplish. By May 1873, he was again forced to direct "turbulent and disorderly persons [Democrats and armed groups of white natives in the State of Louisiana] to disperse and retire peaceably" to their homes and to obey the law. With Grant's presidential support and the efforts of Republicans in Louisiana, the opposition forces were repulsed.

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9 Ibid., 213.
10 Ibid., 221.
11 Ibid., 224.
temporarily. It is important to note that on this occasion Congress passed no new laws to help curb this "turbulent" opposition. Grant was left to his own devices as Congress failed to place new and more powerful laws on the books. The inherent danger of Grant's plan now became apparent. If Congress could not or would not think of new ways to prop up Grant's administration by additional legislation and the President's proclamations no longer commanded respect, then the nation had no Reconstruction policy to enforce.

The crisis of 1873 and the ensuing depression further complicated Grant's situation. This depression diverted the attentions of both the government and the people from the pressing issues of Reconstruction. The impact was felt particularly in the North, where Reconstruction became a southern problem to be tabled in deference to economic issues.

The changing composition of Congress compounded the problems of depression. In 1870, with all of the former Confederate states able to send representatives to Congress, the makeup of that organization began to change. More and more southern Democrats added their votes to opponents of Reconstruction in the North, and Grant found Congress much less cooperative. By 1874, the Democrats had won control of the House of Representatives, turning a dominant Republican majority into a stubborn Democratic one. Even though the Republicans continued their control of the Senate, the

12 George C. Rable, But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction (Athens, Ga., 1984), 122-143.
13 Foner, Reconstruction, 512-534.
Republican Congress of Grant's first term no longer existed. After 1874, when Grant went to Congress for guidance in accordance with his flexible plan, the response he received was no longer as helpful as it had been under a Congress controlled by Republicans.\textsuperscript{14}

Moreover, by 1873 the desire to confront the former Confederacy had subsided. During the election campaigns of 1872, Liberal Republicans had called for reconciliation with the South and an end to Reconstruction as practiced by Grant's administration. These arguments had found an increasingly sympathetic public ear.\textsuperscript{15} Grant, as he delivered his fifth annual message on December 1, 1873, acknowledged this fact by again recommending to Congress the adoption of an all-encompassing "general amnesty program" toward those who were still prevented from participating fully in the political process. According to Grant, the number of rebels still excluded was "very small, but enough to keep up a constant irritation" and "no possible danger . . . [could] accrue to the Government by restoring them to eligibility to hold office."\textsuperscript{16} Congress responded positively to this recommendation by adopting a program of general amnesty. Yet, when Grant suggested in December 1873 that Congress consider passage of legislation to "better secure the civil rights" of freedmen, he prompted no immediate action in Congress.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} Foner, Reconstruction, 523-24.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 497-511.
\textsuperscript{16} Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 255.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
But violence and disturbances within the South continued and demanded presidential action. Unrest in Arkansas elicited still another proclamation on May 15, 1874, but the political violence persisted. Indeed, it appeared in one state after another over the next three years as the southern "redeemers" seized control of the state governments.

In Mississippi, for instance, Governor Adelbert Ames, a Republican, who with the support of black political leaders had solidly defeated incumbent Governor James L. Alcorn in 1873, found his administration under paramilitary attack. On July 29, 1864, Ames telegraphed Grant for assistance. The governor informed the President that an "alarming condition of affairs" existed in the town of Vicksburg, Mississippi. He claimed that unofficial "infantry and cavalry organizations exist[ed]," in the city, and he had received word that artillery pieces were en route. According to Ames, these units were "organized and armed without authority and in violation of law" and had proclaimed themselves "to be guardians of the peace." He argued that although this was clearly a "political situation" between Democrats, "represented by the whites," and "Republicans, consisting mainly of blacks," he still deemed the intervention of federal troops necessary to "save many lives."

Without direct guidance from Congress or any opportunity to issue yet another proclamation, Grant responded to Ames through the Secretary of War, William W. Belknap. On August

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18 Ibid., 272-73.
19 Rable, But There Was No Peace, 163-85.
20 New York Times, August 1, 1874, p. 4.
1, 1874, the New York Times informed the nation that Belknap wired Ames on July 31, 1874, that the President had received the Governor's communication and had declined "to move the troops, except under a call made strictly in accordance with the terms of the Constitution." Desiring to maintain his policy of peace and reunification, Grant elected not to send troops. He feared the violence and political repercussions that might result and believed that Ames had made no attempt to solve the crisis by using the powers available to him through the state government. But Grant's refusal to send troops did not pacify the troubled state. In the absence of federal troops, the conflict continued from August 1874 to January 1975 as Ames and his supporters held out against their more aggressive and violent opponents. In December 1874 Grant issued yet another "Proclamation" and finally in January 1875 dispatched troops. His refusal of military aid in the name of peace had only helped to sustain the violence. During this same period, Governor William P. Kellogg of Louisiana continued to confront rising violence and resistance to his administration. On August 30, 1874, according to Kellogg, six prominent Republican supporters who had surrendered to authorities "were set upon and deliberately murdered in cold blood," presumably by "members of the White League of Caddo Parish."

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21 Ibid.  
22 Rable, But There Was No Peace, 144-62.  
23 New York Times, September 4, 1874, p. 1. For additional information see, Rable, But There Was No Peace, 122-43.
On September 2, 1874, Grant expressed his concern regarding "the recent atrocities in the South, particularly in Louisiana, Alabama, and South Carolina" and declared that they showed "a disregard for law, civil rights, and personal protection, that ought not to be tolerated in any civilized government." He went on to advise that it was "the duty of the Government to give all aid for the protection of life and civil rights legally authorized." Grant then directed the Secretary of War, General William H. Belknap, to consult with Attorney General George H. Williams and to send troops to "the localities where the greatest danger" existed.24

Later in September 1874, Grant issued another futile proclamation aimed at Louisiana and thereafter called upon the military to assist the recognized government of that state.25 Under Grant's orders, federal troops were sent to New Orleans and on September 18, General William H. Emory asked for and received the capitulation of the "State" forces in the city.26

In contrast to his previous actions, Grant was forced to defend the use of these federal troops against the recriminations of southern Democrats. In December 1874 Grant cited the Fifteenth Amendment as the authority for federal intervention. Any other interpretation of this amendment, he argued, left the "whole scheme of colored enfranchisement . . . worse than a mockery and little better than a crime."27

26 Rable, But There Was No Peace, 139-40.
27 Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 297.
Clearly, Grant found that his flexible plan of cooperation with Congress no longer worked. He had asked them to consider new legislation and none had been enacted; so, as promised, he had sought to enforce the current statutes.

Grant minimized the extent of federal intervention in this instance. This emphasis was consistent with the President's constitutional proclivities and the evolving national temper. He noted that only 4,082 federal troops were stationed in all of the garrisons between Delaware and the Gulf of Mexico. This was an insignificant number for an area encompassing fourteen states.\(^{28}\) Grant assured the nation that he understood that "the whole subject of Executive interference with the affairs of a State . . . [was] repugnant to public opinion" and that as President, it was his desire "that all necessity for Executive direction in local affairs . . . [would] become unnecessary and obsolete."\(^{29}\) Grant had not forgotten the nation's desire for peace, and he did not intend to make "Executive Intervention" a common practice.

Perhaps sensing that his flexible plan of congressional cooperation was no longer viable, Grant attempted to shift the responsibility for solving these matters from Congress to the American people themselves. He invited "the attention, not of Congress, but of the people of the United States, to the cause and effects of these unhappy questions" in the hope that they could help solve his and the nation's dilemma. Grant believed that "if public opinion could be directed to a

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 298.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.
correct survey" of events and "to rebuking wrong and aiding the proper authorities in punishing it," progress could be made.\textsuperscript{30}

Grant's attempt to shift the responsibility for maintaining peace to the American people themselves was an obvious effort to continue to use his flexible plan of seeking guidance from others and then acting upon it. These explanations and maneuvers did not satisfy Grant's critics, and yet another Louisiana incident forced Grant to defend his actions. On January 4, 1875, Federal troops under the command of Colonel Phillipe de Trobriand removed five Democrats, who claimed disputed seats, from the Louisiana State Assembly house. This apparent governmental intervention at the point of a bayonet outraged the President's critics.\textsuperscript{31}

Therefore, in January 1875 he provided the Senate still another long report detailing political violence in Louisiana. Grant justified his decision for military intervention by arguing that "lawlessness, turbulence, and bloodshed" had "characterized the political affairs" of Louisiana since its return to the Union. As a result, "a shameful and undisguised conspiracy" had been organized in 1872 "against the Republicans, without regard to law or right, and to that end the most glaring frauds and forgeries" had been committed.\textsuperscript{32} He then cited one atrocity after another, demonstrating the severe nature of the crisis. He

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 299.
\textsuperscript{31} Foner, Reconstruction, 554-55.
\textsuperscript{32} Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 305.
documented specific examples of violence, such as when six men from Coushatta were "seized and carried away from their homes and murdered in cold blood." According to Grant, this evidence demonstrated the necessity of maintaining a small garrison of federal troops in the area to provide Governor Kellogg with the means to enforce the law "and repress the continued violence which seemed inevitable the moment federal support should be withdrawn." Such actions, Grant continued, had been essential to enforce the provisions of the Fifteenth Amendment.

Having acted on his own volition during the crisis, Grant returned again to his flexible plan for working with Congress in the conclusion of this report. He reminded Congress that when he had first recognized the state government headed up by Governor Kellogg as the legitimate one in Louisiana he had called upon the legislators "to take action in the matter" if they did not agree with his decisions; otherwise he would "regard their silence as an acquiescence" in his program. Since they had taken no action, his subsequent course was justified. The President once more challenged Congress to take take "such action . . . as to leave . . . [his] duties perfectly clear in dealing with the affairs of Louisiana." He promised that whatever legislation they adopted would "be executed according to the spirit and letter of the law, without fear or favor." But the formula no longer applied. Congress once more failed to

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33 Ibid., 308.
34 Ibid., 309.
act; Grant's proclamation fell on deaf ears; and violence and fraud continued until in 1876 only the state governments of Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida remained in Republican hands. And only the presence of federal troops kept these Republicans in office. In summary, Grant's flexible approach to dealing with Congress had failed to stop either the violence on a permanent basis or to save the Republican state governments in the majority of former Confederate states.

Why did Grant fail to alter his plan when it began to miscarry? Why did he not send troops into the South in sufficient numbers to terminate the violence and intimidation? First, it is unlikely that Grant could have sustained a decision to send extensive numbers of troops into the affected areas. Even the stationing of 4,082 troops in the entire South had drawn harsh criticism from his opponents. Increasing the number of men would have drawn even greater censorship, something Grant dearly wished to avoid. Also, from the end of the Civil War in 1865, Congress, with Johnson's and Grant's blessing, had worked to reduce national spending and the deficit created by the war. One method of doing that had been to cut the military budget severely. As early as February 9, 1869, Representative James Garfield had declared proudly that "as the necessity of a military police in the late Rebel States diminished," the military had been allowed to decline until "the full strength
of the army was 38,575 enlisted men, and a few less than 3,000 commissioned officers."36

This process continued throughout Grant's administration. By December 1870, an article in the New York Tribune questioned whether or not the United States could defend itself in case of a foreign war. The article declared that the United States had "no army except a small, scattered force, which could not be spared from its present duty," and the Army had "no breech-loading guns" with which "to arm new troops;" nor was there a "navy worth mentioning." The only solution was to "wisely conclude to keep the peace."37

Similar concerns surfaced during the crisis of September 1874 in Louisiana. The New York Times reported that Army officers believed "that the army . . . [was] not large enough for the protection of the frontiers; and at the same time to act as a posse comitatus to judicial officers" in the southern states.38 Clearly, to have mustered the troops necessary to confront insurgent groups in the South, Grant would have had to disregard the wishes of the American people for peace and a reduced Federal budget. Having promised to follow the desires of Congress and the people, Grant would not do this. Nor would his own character, fashioned in part by superstition, permit the reversal of his intended course regardless of the difficulties. Thus, extensive intervention was not a realistic option for Grant.

37 New York Tribune, December 6, 1870, p. 5.
Second, he did not want to risk either open or guerrilla warfare within the South. All of Grant's actions since 1862, beginning with his victory at Fort Donelson, had been aimed at bringing peace to the nation. The surrender terms offered at Vicksburg and Appomattox had been designed to send the Confederate soldiers home and to leave them undisturbed. His actions as President through 1874 were designed to reduce conflict between the North and South. He believed that sending large numbers of troops to confront the insurgents, seizing their stores, arresting their leaders, and firing upon them would have regenerated the conflict. This Grant could not do. It was, he concluded, better to move forward following an unwritten plan that did not work in all areas than to forge a new one that risked all out conflict and racial war.39

Finally, Grant on at least one major occasion had already set out on his own and tried to convince both Congress and the nation to do something that he specifically recommended, the annexation of Santo Domingo. The background of the drive for acquiring the island was relatively simple. Like other expansionists, Grant became convinced that obtaining new territory would benefit the nation. He believed that this particular island would increase America's military and political power in the Caribbean. Commodore Daniel Ammen and Senator Cornelius Cole from California convinced him that Samana Bay, located on the northeastern shore of the island, would make a great U. S. naval base.

Peter J. Sullivan, William L. Cazneau and Joseph W. Fabens, three businessmen who stood to profit considerably, also helped persuade Grant of the plan's benefits. Finally, even the dictator of Santo Domingo, Buenaventura Baez, seemed interested in joining his island with the United States. As a result of their persuasion, Grant decided to annex the island with the Senate's approval.40

Having made that decision, Grant marshaled all of the forces available to him—his prestige, his supporters, and his limited persuasive skills—to convince the Senate and the nation that he was right. At first, it seemed that Grant would prevail. As early as July 17, 1869, the New York Tribune, still one of Grant's supporters, indicated in a headline article that "the annexation of the Island of Santo Domingo . . . [was] admitted to be merely a question of time."41

But as time passed the proposed treaty encountered increasingly stiff opposition for a variety of reasons. Within the nation there were those who opposed the acquisition of lands overseas on general principles, while Radical Republicans rejected the idea of taking lands away from blacks for financial gain. Some whites opposed the treaty because they did not wish to expand the black population that already existed in the nation.42

42 Campbell, American Foreign Relations, 52-53.
Grant's response to this opposition was typical; he only worked harder to insure passage of the annexation treaty. During the first week in January 1870, Grant visited Charles Sumner's home in the hope of obtaining his personal support for the treaty's passage. After a short and friendly discussion, Grant returned to the White House firmly convinced that Sumner had promised his help. But according to Sumner, no such assurance was given. In fact, Sumner, the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, blocked the treaty's path. As early as March 25, 1870, the New York Tribune noted Sumner's speech opposing annexation and concluded that the treaty would "not receive the requisite two-thirds of the Senate in ratification." Sumner argued against the treaty because he believed that annexation would be extremely costly to the United States, and that acquiring the island would only be the first step in acquiring other islands such as Haiti and the rest of the West Indies. He also pointed out that Santo Domingo was a land occupied by blacks and that it should remain so, rather than being annexed to an "Anglo Saxon" nation like the United States. In effect, Sumner argued the race issue in reverse; he contended that whites should not mix with the black race and deprive them of their island.

43 Donald, Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man, 434-52.
46 Donald, Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man, 442-43.
In March 1870, a furious and determined Grant urged the Senate to ratify the treaty annexing Santo Domingo. Later in May, with no action forthcoming, Grant forwarded to Congress an addendum to the treaty authorizing an extension of the expiration date so that it could remain under consideration. Grant expressed "an unusual anxiety for the ratification of this treaty," because he believed it would "redound greatly to the glory of the two countries interested, to civilization, and to the expiration of the institution of slavery." He listed his justifications, which included the alleged desire of Santo Domingo to join the United States, to the rich resources of the country, to the fear that some other nation would annex the island. Of more importance to the process of Reconstruction, Grant implied that the area's resources, properly developed, would "give remunerative wages to tens of thousands of laborers not now on the island." Grant later explained in his autobiography that he was referring to the persecuted black Americans of the South. Grant noted with some bitterness that he "took it that the colored people . . . [of the United States] would go there in great numbers, so as to have independent states governed by their own race." He argued, after the fact, that they would still have been citizens of the United States and insured of its protection, but would have been able to avoid persecution in the South. The

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48 Ibid., 61.
49 Ibid., 62.
settlement of this issue, declared Grant, had led him "to urge the annexation of Santo Domingo."\(^{50}\)

The validity of such arguments is clearly debatable and Grant's opponents disagreed with him. More important than whether he was right or wrong was that Grant went out of his way to obtain the annexation of the island. He not only openly advocated a specific proposal, which contrasted with his earlier unwritten plan to avoid such conflict, but he also called upon Congress to follow his lead in this case and they refused.

On June 30, 1870, Grant lost the battle for annexation. Congress soundly rejected the treaty. The best that Grant and his supporters could accomplish was a dismal 28 to 28 tie in the Senate. But Grant refused to concede. He continued to apply notable pressure to the opposition, so much so that his chief opponent Charles Sumner found it very discomforting. In a letter to John Bigelow, dated August 7, 1870, Sumner advised that Grant "had but one idea . . ., it was to annex St. Domingo" and that "Punishment & [sic] reward were equally employed."\(^{51}\)

The President attempted unsuccessfully to revive the treaty the following year. Grant remained bitter over this defeat. In his final annual message of December 6, 1876, he broached the subject one last time and attempted to vindicate himself by pointing out the error of the Senate's actions.\(^{52}\)


\(^{51}\) Palmer, Letters of Charles Sumner, II, 515.

\(^{52}\) Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 413.
The failure of the treaty clearly demonstrated that as early as June 1871 Grant was unable to adopt a position on a particular issue and then by argument and personal prestige convince Congress and the nation to follow his guidance. Even though it is true that Grant was, as stated by historian Charles S. Campbell, "butting his head against a massive wall of opposition to southward expansion" and he "was out of touch with the traditional and still fervent opposition of his countrymen to overseas expansion," the critical point remains that the President with all of his power and prestige was not able to lead Congress where he wanted it to go in 1870. How then could he have steered Congress into a program of intervention by federal marshals or the military that would have risked either heightened racial conflict or a renewal of the civil war itself? His only option was to maintain the most reasonable cooperative relationship between his office and Congress. Any other decision, considering the complexity of the Reconstruction issues and Grant's limited skills, might have generated a drive to impeach him, similar to the one aimed at Johnson in 1867-68.

Ultimately, neither Grant's flexible plan nor his declining popularity could sustain the weight of Reconstruction. As early as May 1875, under pressure from the press, the Democrats, and members of his own party, Grant addressed the issue of a "third" term in an open letter to the nation. Grant expressed regret that he was forced to address that topic before the "competent authority" of the political process rendered a decision. He informed the
people that he did "not want" the nomination any more than in 1868 and would accept only "if it were tendered . . . under such circumstances as to make it an imperative duty--circumstances not likely to arise." The Republican party and the American people took him at his word and nominated Rutherford B. Hayes as the GOP candidate.

The lame duck Grant did not give up on Reconstruction. Instead, in the final months of his term he attempted to insure an "honest canvass" at least in the remaining Republican strongholds in the South. When the election had been concluded and the outcome was challenged in the states of Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida, Grant directed that the military in the disputed states "be vigilant with the force at their command to preserve peace and good order;" they were "to see that the people and the legal Boards of Canvassers . . . [were] unmolested in the performance of their duties." Grant's efforts did not change the final outcome of Reconstruction, the abandonment of the freedmen, but they demonstrated that he remained committed after others might have withdrawn.

By January 1877 the South was firmly under the control of the redeemer governments, with the exception of the three southern states protected by federal troops. Then, on March 5, 1877, as President Rutherford B. Hayes took office, the last remnants of Republican Reconstruction collapsed. Although Hayes expressed great concern over the status of the

54 New York Times, November 11, 1876, p. 1.
55 Rable, But There Was No Peace, 183.
South and the conflicts which existed there, the new goal was "local self-government." According to Hayes, "the inestimable blessing of wise, honest, and peaceful local self-government" was "the imperative necessity required" by all parties. This return to "home rule" marked the final days of the Republican-supported governments in South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana, and guaranteed the dominance of the southern Democrats.

The response to Hayes' message was just as warm and friendly as had been the response to Grant's, when he first took office. For instance, the New York Tribune, now freed from opposing Grant, declared that President Hayes' presentation would "give a fresh impulse to the revival of hope and cheerfulness throughout the country." As to his policy for solving the "Southern problem" the editorial declared that "the real South [would] take heart in hearing it, and honest Republicans at the North," would "hold their heads higher and rejoice in the dawn of a nobler day."

By July 18, 1877, the President of the United States no longer issued proclamations to order insurgent forces in the South to disperse and cease their activities. Instead, Hayes' proclamations against insurrection dealt with domestic violence during the railroad strike of 1877 in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Then on December 3, 1877, in his first annual

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56 Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers, VII, 443.
57 For additional information on President Hayes' administration see, H. Wayne Morgan, From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877-1896 (Syracuse, 1969), 1-19 and Ari Hoogenboom, Rutherford B. Hayes: Warrior and President (Lawrence, 1995).
58 New York Tribune, March 6, 1877, p. 4.
message to the nation, Hayes defended the "discontinuance of the use of the Army for the purpose of upholding local governments in two States of the Union." According to him, this action was "a constitutional duty and requirement" that "was a much-needed measure for the restoration of local self-government and the promotion of national harmony." Hayes argued that "the withdrawal of the troops from such employment was effected deliberately, and with solicitous care for the peace and good order of society."\(^{59}\) Having gained the assurances of southern Democratic leaders that the civil rights of black Americans would be protected, he believed the withdrawal could be safely effected. He was wrong, and the benefits gained by the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments to the Constitution were largely lost for eighty years or more.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

It is upon this note of Northern capitulation to Southern forces, that the Reconstruction process commenced officially by President Lincoln on December 8, 1863, reached its conclusion in 1877. Four Presidents and the nation's Congress had wrestled with the issues growing out of the American Civil War and the destruction of the institution of slavery. Each group had attempted to bring peace and unity to the nation, with some success and many failures. The roles of three of the four presidents are clear.

President Lincoln had attempted to use Reconstruction as one more presidential measure to bring an end to the war and had offered liberal terms to entice the South to surrender. His plan drew opposition from Congress, and his assassination foreclosed the possibility of negotiating a workable agreement with Congress.

President Johnson elected to develop a plan of his own design. He differed from Lincoln in offering even more liberal terms to the white South, although his plan held little hope for the freedmen. When Congress challenged Johnson's leadership and passed opposing legislation, he fought back. By resisting Congress with bluntness and determination, he helped destroy any opportunity, however
slight it may have been, for the nation to reconstruct itself between 1865 and 1867. Johnson's plans were rejected, and he was almost impeached.

President Hayes opted for withdrawal and an end to the conflict over Reconstruction. The retreat, which had clearly begun during Grant's presidency, was completed during Hayes' first year. This marked the end of Reconstruction.

But, what of Grant, "the tanner boy," and Reconstruction? His administration, which encompassed eight critical years of Reconstruction, is often obscured by the cloak and designation of "Congressional Reconstruction." Yet, clearly Grant's decisions and actions had a significant impact on the process.

Although Grant's plan of action, unlike those of Lincoln and Johnson, was not specifically written down, it had just as much impact on Reconstruction as those of his predecessors. As Grant assumed the Presidency, he chose not to attempt to assert a leadership role in the development of Reconstruction legislation. He did not present for the people's consideration a plan of his own design; rather he relied on Congress to both plan and direct. Grant sought to reduce conflict within the nation by enforcing existing laws in a fair and equitable manner. He praised new laws, such as the Fifteenth Amendment, which he considered beneficial.

In enforcing these laws, Grant was very careful not to exceed the popular will. He did not insist on using the military to end incidents of rebellion in the South. Nor did he place armed guards on the polling booths to protect Union
sympathizers or freedmen as they attempted to vote. Not even in the face of riots did he commit the armed forces for extended periods of time. Instead, he used the army only for brief interventions to resolve a particular emergency or to stabilize insecure state administrations. He employed the threat rather than the act of intervention to maintain limited order. In the final analysis, Grant did not wish to risk the fragile peace by possibly creating a guerrilla war in the South, and he understood that the people did not want additional conflict. By adopting this course, Grant hoped to maintain "peace" within the United States and to avoid the partisan warfare so common in the aftermath of a civil war.

This flexible plan, designed to reduce conflict between Congress and the presidency and within the nation, worked well during the first four years of Grant's administration. This was to Grant's credit and in turn was very beneficial to the nation. As a result of his actions, the severe conflict between Congress and Johnson and its threat to the office of the President was largely ended.

In addition, under Grant's unwritten plan, all of the remaining states had returned to their former constitutional relationship with the federal government by 1872. This was accomplished without further strife between the two branches of government. With the return of the Southern states, the nation could begin healing the emotional wounds of war. Secession had torn the nation apart in 1861 and made the Civil War all but inevitable. The reunification of the nation made further armed conflict between the North and
South highly unlikely. Had this healing process been prevented by shutting the former Confederate states out of the Union, the risk of a renewed conflict would have increased and the trials of Reconstruction worsened. But, with Grant's assistance, this unhappy circumstance was avoided and the nation was reunited into a single political entity.

Grant's procedure of recommending rather than demanding legislation helped smooth the passage of the important Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution. He did not demand its passage, which might have served to generate increased Southern resistance out of an incorrect belief that the situation demanded obstruction rather than grudging acquiescence. Nor did he attempt to reshape it or resist it as Johnson had done, which might have delayed its passage. Instead, by quietly placing his prestige as the nation's most famous civil war general and as President behind its adoption, he helped expedite its passage. Although it would be almost a century before the amendment was fully enforced, Grant helped place it on the books.

In combating insurgent activities of the Klu Klux Klan, Grant's plan worked well again. He did not activate the militia to increase the power of Federal troops and employ them to control the situation. Instead, he issued proclamations of warning, calling for the groups to disperse and return to their homes. He recommended that Congress take the situation under consideration and suggested that it might pass any legislation deemed appropriate to deal with the
crisis. In response, Congress gave him the new "Enforcement Acts," and armed with this legislation, he dealt with the Klan. By 1872, the power of the KKK was broken, and the insurgents were compelled to abandon that organization as an effective means of intimidation and terror.

These then were the beneficial results of Grant's Reconstruction policies. He clearly had helped reduce conflict between his office and Congress and between the North and the South, which had led the nation to war in 1861. He helped pass the Fifteenth Amendment, which would eventually be used to guarantee the rights of all citizens to vote, and helped break the power of the Ku Klux Klan.

But, as time passed, and the nation grew tired of the political and social issues raised by Reconstruction, Grant's flexible strategy faltered. The impact of an economic depression during his second administration turned the people's minds away from the "Southern" question and toward their own personal needs.

The return of the Democrats to Congress in large numbers from both the South, as the redeemer governments gained a foothold, and the North after the congressional elections of 1874, reinforced this change of direction. Grant could no longer simply turn to Congress for the answer to some new problem and be assured of receiving new and improved legislation. With this altered composition, Congress was far less willing to comply with Grant's suggestions. This was the major flaw in his flexible approach. As long as Grant and Congress were of the same mind, Republican
Reconstruction progressed, but when they differed, the course grew uncertain.

This uncertainty was particularly apparent when Southern insurgents continued their violent attacks on the Republican-backed State governments. Grant was unable to determine exactly what he needed to do when the guidance from Congress faltered. He intervened cautiously with federal troops on a piecemeal basis and attempted to walk the tightrope of maintaining peace while controlling the violence. In the end, he failed in this balancing act. Grant was not successful, as he had been with the Klan, in dealing with the activities of these new political insurgents, the southern Democrats and the white leagues. Although these groups did not wear disguises, their violent ways were just as deadly. To make matters worse, portions of the nation and Congress actively condemned his actions as tyranny, and others failed to speak out on his behalf. His own reluctance to meet violence with violence, born out of his experiences in the Civil War, prevented him from calling out the limited troops available for determined use in quelling the violent insurrections.

Finally, Grant's own beliefs and plan precluded using the only remaining alternatives left after his cooperative relationship with Congress failed. Other Presidents might have attempted to seize control and assume overall leadership by demanding action or utilizing, as had Lincoln, the powers of the presidency to intervene directly on a significant scale. Still others might have turned their backs and given
in altogether, refusing to deal with the issues at hand and letting events take their own course. But Grant had already rejected these alternatives in his first administration. He had adopted a cooperative approach to government, had taken a stand to support the Reconstruction policies of the government, and had worked to aid the freedmen. Moreover, his own personal commitment not to waver from a chosen course of action insured that he could not scrap the old plan and adopt a new one in the final years of his presidency.

It is also highly unlikely that Grant, with his limited political background, could have seized the initiative. His willingness to support and failure to gain acceptance of the Santo Domingo treaty demonstrated his limited political capacity. Grant simply was not the man to commandeer the legislative process and lead the nation where he wanted it to go. In summarizing his presidency, his faithful supporter, the New York Times, noted that in the end "it was the misfortune of Gen. Grant that with one step he passed from the command of the Army to the direction of the affairs of State" and that "the habits of thought which worked smoothly in one sphere were unsuited to the other." The newspaper concluded that Grant as "the leader of a victorious army found himself at the mercy of pretentious politicians who abused his confidence and made him the scapegoat for their sins."\footnote{New York Tribune, March 4, 1877, p. 6.}

But, to Grant's credit, he never abandoned the battle, as did President Hayes, by withdrawing troops from the last
two states. Instead, he continued to seek to enforce the law of the land and to guarantee the right of both white and black Americans to vote. He intervened, however moderately, to aid the Republican Unionists and the black Americans in the South. Also, he successfully avoided the development of outright partisan warfare in the South, and he maintained at least a limited peace.

In addition, Grant never quit trying to assist the freedmen and protect them from their enemies in the South. Throughout his administration Grant offered his support to those legislative proposals which called for aid to black Americans. He supported the Fifteenth Amendment which promised African-Americans suffrage. He advocated patience and understanding for the freedmen and called on the American people to extend them an equal opportunity in the areas of education, suffrage, and their legal rights. He signed the Civil Rights Act of 1875 into law, and he sought to support Republican state governments that resisted the redeemer's counterrevolutions in Mississippi and Louisiana. Even the New York Tribune, an outspoken critic of Grant's final four years, acknowledged that "it was certainly a merciful Providence for the freeman that he found at that critical time a President" who was so willing to adopt such "a liberal view of the power and duty of the Executive in extending over him the protecting shield of the Union." Grant truly tried to help the former slaves, but all of his support and actions did not insure their social, civil, and political rights.

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including suffrage in the face of the redeemers' resistance. That he did not succeed in many of his endeavors should not erase the evidence that he did try to and did delay the final collapse of Reconstruction.

In summary, the final results of Grant's Reconstruction policies were mixed. He did help reunite the nation, pass the Fifteenth Amendment and break the power of the Klan in 1872. He also refused to abandon the Republican-based state governments or the freedmen in the former rebel states. He did not, however, make the Reconstruction process in the South work, and he was unable to stop either the violence or the resurgence of the redeemer-controlled governments. Nor did he enable black Americans to retain their full rights as American citizens under the law. Both the successes and failures resulted to an extent from the unwritten plan by which he acted as President. While it may well be said that the years between 1867 and 1877 were ones of "Congressional" Reconstruction, it must also be said that President Grant had a definite hand in what occurred. And considering his limited social and political background and the overwhelming complexity of the issues addressed in Reconstruction, Grant did take a position and held it until the opposition became overwhelming and his allies abandoned the field before him. For in the end, it was Grant who assured that Congressional legislation was enforced to the best of his ability long after others had lost interest in the process. Reconstruction's successes and failures must be ascribed to
Grant and Congress, the partners who failed to meet all of their obligations to all of the people.
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