

Essay On Reconstruction (Structure/Outline)

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Introduction

Reconstruction was a period from December 1863 to March 1877 after the US Civil War when the country went through a massive transition, working to rebuild and reunite the black population into society.

US Reconstruction was a tumultuous time for the US, with many goals on the table for both sides of the conflict. The US government sought to rebuild a nation fractured by bloodshed and find legal ways to lay a foundation for equal rights among former Confederate states.

The Union was determined to accomplish its objectives, which included creating just governments in war-torn US territories, extending US citizenship rights to those previously enslaved, and punishing treasonous states.

Additionally, US leaders wanted to bring about economic prosperity and political stability within newly formed states that remained loyal to the US federal government. All these attempts were vital efforts toward healing a broken nation.

However, Reconstruction was an unfinished task – one that remains constantly evolving.

Phases of Reconstruction

The Reconstruction era can be divided into three main phases: Presidential, Congressional, and Radical.

Presidential Reconstruction

Presidential Reconstruction was the period from 1863-1866 when President Abraham Lincoln and his successor, Andrew Johnson, had full control of reconstruction policies.

Presidential Reconstruction generally sought to reunite the nation as quickly as possible with minimal interference from Congress. This meant that it focused primarily on restoring former Confederate states to their previous political arrangement before the Civil War.

While presidential reconstruction affirmed federalism and law and order, it did not bring forth a lengthy period of stability in terms of national solidarity and social justice.

Ultimately, it laid a framework for presidential power over traditionally regional affairs which paved the way for future abuses of presidential authority.

Radical Reconstruction

Radical Reconstruction began in 1865 and lasted until 1877. This period of reconstruction was led by Radical Republicans in Congress who sought to punish the former Confederate states, extend civil rights to African Americans, and redistribute land among former slaves.

To do this, they passed several key pieces of legislation including the Freedman's Bureau Act, Reconstruction Acts, and the Fourteenth Amendment. Radical Reconstruction was met with stiff resistance from former Confederate states and much of Southern white society.

It was also a period of great political turmoil as African Americans began to exercise their newfound political rights for the first time.

Congressional Reconstruction

The Congressional phase (1866–1877) saw much progress toward racial equality, most notably in the passage of the 14th Amendment, which granted African Americans full citizenship and set the basis for the civil rights movement.

However, it was also a period of political corruption and economic struggle. The majority of southern states were placed under military rule, which allowed for oppressive policies such as poll taxes and literacy tests used to prevent black citizens from voting.

It was seen by many as a continuation of Radical Reconstruction. During this time, Congress focused on enforcing civil rights and curbing the power of former Confederates in Southern state governments.

It also involved efforts to protect African Americans from threats such as vigilante violence and legal discrimination through the passage of additional laws and constitutional amendments.

End of Reconstruction

The end of Reconstruction came in 1877 when President Rutherford B. Hayes withdrew federal troops from the South, effectively ending Radical Reconstruction and ushering in what became known as the "New South" era.

Amendments of reconstruction

The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments were passed during Reconstruction.

1- The 13th Amendment

The 13th Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude in the United States.

2- The 14th Amendment

The 14th Amendment declared all persons born or naturalized in the United States to be citizens and prohibited states from denying any person "life, liberty, or property" without due process of law or equal protection under the law.

3- The 15th Amendment

The 15th Amendment ensures that the right to vote will not be denied based on race, color, or previous condition of

Pros and Cons of Reconstruction

Pros of reconstruction

Pros of reconstruction include:

- The establishment of civil rights for African Americans.
- The reunification of the United States.
- The economic growth in the Southern states.
- It brought about an end to slavery.
- Increased representation for African Americans in government.

Cons of reconstruction

Cons of reconstruction include:

- Continued resistance from former Confederates who refused to accept change.
- Increased violence against African American citizens.
- The emergence of Jim Crow laws severely limited their civil rights.
- It also created divisions between the North and South that still linger today and led to escalating racial tensions in the South.

Many of the gains made by African Americans during Reconstruction were rolled back following its end.

Reconstruction was a complex and multifaceted period in US history with both positive and negative consequences. It established a foundation for equal rights among all citizens but also left many issues unresolved.

FAQS

What was the era of reconstruction?

The reconstruction era lasted from December 1863 to March 1877.

Why reconstruction was started?

Reconstruction was started to restore former Confederate states to their previous political arrangement before the war, and extend civil rights to African Americans.

Why was reconstruction important?

Reconstruction was important because it was a pivotal period in US history that set the stage for many of today's civil rights policies. It also demonstrated the power of political action and government intervention to create positive social change.

Was reconstruction successful or not?

It achieved some of its goals, such as bringing an end to slavery and creating a foundation for civil rights policies. However, many of its accomplishments were reversed following the end of Reconstruction.