Three Plans for Reconstruction

Lincoln’s Plan

President Lincoln was never able to carry out his plan for reconstruction, which was referred to as the Ten Percent Plan. From the beginning of the Civil War and his first inaugural address, Lincoln was focused on returning all regions of the country peacefully to the Union. He reiterated this concern in his second inaugural address: “With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and for his orphan—do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”

Under Lincoln’s Ten Percent Plan (outlined in his 1863 Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction), 10 percent of residents in former Confederate states would need to sign an oath of loyalty to form a new government and rejoin the Union. A full pardon (or amnesty) would be offered to all Southerners, even those who supported the Confederacy. States would then need to accept Emancipation.

Radical Reconstruction

Many Republicans in Congress felt Lincoln’s plan was too lenient on those they considered traitors to the Union. Led by a group known as the Radical Republicans, members of Congress passed the Wade-Davis Bill in 1864. In this plan, 50 percent of state residents would need to swear an oath to the United States, and that number excluded any known supporter of the rebellion. It did not ask states to ratify Emancipation, but left it up to the courts to enforce.

Johnson’s Plan

Andrew Johnson, a Southern Democrat with a disdain for the Southern privileged class, took over after Lincoln’s assassination. Under Johnson’s plan for Reconstruction, any high-ranking Confederate official or wealthy plantation owner had to obtain a presidential pardon before he would be allowed to vote or hold office. The new state government needed to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, which outlawed slavery. His plan did not provide much protection for the newly freed slaves and would allow Jim Crow Laws and Black Codes to exist for decades. Under Johnson’s plan, many former Confederate leaders were re-elected after their pardons.

Sources:
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