DEEP UNRECONCILIATION

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# Table of Contents

Abstract .............................................................................................................................................. 1  
Lee and the Question of Reconciliation ....................................................................................... 3  
Forgotten and Lost Causes ........................................................................................................... 6  
Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 13  
About the Authors ....................................................................................................................... 15  
Bibliography ..................................................................................................................................... 16  
Terms of Use ..................................................................................................................................... 19
Abstract

In August 2017, three people were killed and 33 were injured during a white nationalist rally that clashed with counterprotesters near a statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, in Charlottesville, Virginia. More than 150 years after the formal end to hostilities, they were the latest victims of the American Civil War. The violence in Charlottesville proved to many that the issues surrounding the war remain unresolved and are part of a continuing struggle, which includes the North-South divide, debates over the reasons for the war, and the consequences of a partial reconciliation and a reunion forged at the expense of racial equality. This paper frames those disputes in a deeper unreconciliation and the unfinished business of an ongoing, albeit cold, civil war: race and the legacy of slavery in the US. Only a decade after the war ended, reconciliation policies would replace, and effectively suppress, emancipation. As Northern acquiescence set aside the issues that caused the war, the South could be reborn with a story of honor and victory in loss and fortify a Confederate culture that endures today.  

The coverline of Time magazine’s 2015 issue marking the sesquicentennial of the end of the US Civil War read, “Why We’re Still Fighting the Civil War.” 2 When General Robert E. Lee surrendered the bulk of the Confederate Army to Union commander General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, in April 1865, the war seemed over—even if pockets of fighting continued and armed conflict did not formally cease until President Andrew Johnson declared an official end to hostilities, on 20 August 1866. 3 Set against an image of a weeping Abraham Lincoln, the Time cover challenged the near-universal assumption that the war had ended a century and a half before.

The editors clearly intended the cover to shock and to provoke the average American 150 years after nearly everyone recognized the end of the war. It clashed, for example, with the bells that rang out across the United States, north and south, for four minutes on 9 April—one for each year of armed conflict in the war—marking the anniversary of reunion and

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1 This study draws on work for a book by James Gow and a joint book chapter (the final version of the study) to be published in Rachel Kerr, Henry Redwood, and James Gow, eds., Reconciliation After War: Historical Perspectives on Transitional Justice. New York: Routledge (forthcoming 2021). The research was carried out for a large project, “Art and Reconciliation: Conflict, Culture and Community,” funded by the (UK) Arts and Humanities Research Council (ARHC) under its Conflict Theme with the Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research, and supported by the Global Challenges Research Fund. (Dr. R.C. Kerr, Prof. A.J.W. Gow, Dr. Denisa Kostovicova and Dr. Paul Lowe) AH/P005365/1.


3 Proclamation 157—Declaring that Peace, Order, Tranquility, and Civil Authority Now Exists in and Throughout the Whole of the United States of America August 20, 1866 By the President of the United States of America. At https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-157-declaring-that-peace-order-tranquillity-and-civil-authority-now-exists, accessed 29 November 2019. The end of the war is commonly taken to be Lee’s surrender, just as the end of the First World War is generally given as 11 November 1918, when the armistice was signed. But in both cases there is a distinction between active combat and hostilities on one side, and the phenomenon of war on the other. Combat is interpreted as war and the ending of active combat is used to mark the end of war. In both cases, the formal end to war came the following year—20 August 1866, for the Civil War and 28 June 1919, for World War II.
reconciliation. The *Time* cover, as well as the choice of four former Confederate states not to take part in any “official commemorative effort,” hinted that perhaps reconciliation was not as complete as most people believed.⁴

Observers had made the same point four years earlier, for example, in a BBC report marking the anniversary of the start of the war. It described a divided country.⁵ These included the divisions symbolized by individuals who emerged from attics and went onto the streets to reenact battles and to celebrate Confederacy culture.⁶ The South passionately embraced reenactments, surrounded by a mythology of noble, heroic military conduct and sacrifice, even in defeat. To a large extent, the reenactments fueled a culture of continuing division, supported by a strong Southern sense of having paid greatly for a heroic, if unsuccessful, defense of its way of life. Despite the war having ended a century and a half before, it continued to spark conflict, for example, concerning the causes of the war. As the BBC reported, Southerners maintained that “the cause was individual state’s rights.” An academic said in the same report, “[S]outherners were of the opinion they were defending the Constitution...against a brutal, materialistic invasion force from the North.”⁷ The war was not, in this view, about class, race, or slavery—an interpretation heard far more often north of the Mason-Dixon line.

The war’s cause—slavery versus states’ rights—was not the only unresolved issue. Another was the trajectory of the war: why it continued for four years and ended as it did. This can be seen in the outbreak of violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017, where three people died and 33 more were injured—a clash prompted by the contested and slowly changing interpretation of American history, focused on a local statue of Robert E. Lee. This was only one of many such statues across the South that had inspired competing campaigns to remove or preserve statues associated with the Confederate cause and its legacy. The challenge around statues of Lee was particularly acute, because he reluctantly had led the Confederate Army of Virginia through the war and headed all Confederate armed forces in its final stages. Yet, after his surrender at Appomattox, Lee became a strong spokesman for, and the greatest human symbol of, North-South reconciliation. Was the contest and violence near his statue, therefore, calling into question the very notion of the reconciliation of which Lee had been a lynchpin? The answer, as we shall show, is that the battles over Confederate statues continued and intensified in the years after 2017, and are part of an unfinished struggle between North and South, not simply over the reasons for the war and the role of certain individuals in it, but also over the consequences and ultimately the legitimacy of a subsequent reunion based on a partial reconciliation.

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⁷ *BBC*. 12 April 2011. Professor David Aiken of the College of Charleston is a founder of the League of the South, a movement advocating Southern independence.
In this study, we review the circumstances and conditions of that partial reconciliation and deeper nonreconciliation—despite the reunion forged between soldiers in blue and gray. In the first half we consider how the struggle over statues and monuments reflects a continuing civil war, which calls reconciliation into question; above all, Lee, as a symbol of reconciliation, frames that question. In the second half we consider the way in which the reconciliation was pursued and celebrated, and which eventually allowed Southern redemption and resurgence, but undermined emancipation. This analysis reveals profound unreconciliation and a continuation of the Civil War.

**Lee and the Question of Reconciliation**

The debate over Lee in Charlottesville (and other monuments to him) is more particular than those surrounding other Confederate figures. This is because Lee was not only a Confederate figure but also, and perhaps more importantly, he had long been honored as the epitome of North-South reconciliation. The contestation around his image is a shock to those who still view Lee as the quintessential figure of reunion and reconciliation that he had been for almost a century and a half after his death in 1870. For much of that time he had been a revered figure, celebrated by presidents and generals. To many in the North and South, he seemed to represent the best of America. The discord was grating as the focus on removing statues of Lee sharpened. How could this icon of reconciliation be the target of US citizens’ desire to bring down his statue—let alone of such discontent that deaths and injuries resulted from the violence?

Great presidents held Lee in high esteem. Theodore Roosevelt captured the essence, on the centenary of Lee’s birth in 1907, when he remarked, “out of what seemed failure he helped to build the wonderful and mighty triumph of our national life, in which all his countrymen, north and south, share.” Almost thirty years later, Franklin D. Roosevelt unveiled a statue of Lee on his horse, Traveller, accompanied by an everyman Confederate soldier (representing Southern youth and Lee’s inspiration of it), in Lee Park, in Dallas, Texas. In a brief speech proclaiming the subject’s mythical status as not just a great general, but, “one of the greatest American Christians and one of our greatest American gentlemen.” President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who as supreme commander of the allies led the D-Day landings, called Lee “one of the supremely gifted men produced by our Nation,” who was “a poised and inspiring leader, true to the highest trust reposed in him by millions of his fellow citizens,” as well as “personally courageous” and “selfless almost to a fault… noble as a leader and as a man.” This tribute from one great general and leader to another captured everything about Lee that furnished his reputation and

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8 Blue and gray were the colors of the uniforms worn by Union and Confederate forces in the Civil War, respectively.


made him so admired for so long—war hero, agent of reconciliation and dignified, selfless leader—even if questions can be posed about the war and the reconciliation he led. Almost no other US figure has been more commemorated or more important in his commemoration. With two official US Mint coins and five postage stamps carrying his image, alone or accompanied by Traveller or another historic figure, perhaps only Lincoln and George Washington have been more honored in this fashion. These examples of 20th century presidential encomiums illustrate the symbolic reconciliation that celebrated the story of the South and the Confederacy as part of a national story. As painful as it was, that reconciliation resulted in a union restored.

Lee's position as an icon of reconciliation did not render him a figure beyond dispute. Indeed, in the 21st century in particular, he has become a much-debated figure. Some see honor in the man, from his difficult decision to forgo his glittering US military career to be loyal to his native Virginia despite opposing secession, and then to his leadership of the Army of North Virginia and eventually, of the Confederate forces. Some point to evidence that he was troubled by slavery, carried out his father-in-law's will to free the family slaves, and that he and his wife gave educational support to former slaves. Some celebrate him for his role in preventing a Southern insurgency and in recommending reconciliation. Yet, others raise counterarguments to each of these points, even sometimes drawing on the same fragments of evidence. Given the passage of time and the absence of other evidence, as well as the competing historical and ethical perspectives, such debates have rarely been conclusive, leaving Lee as a figure onto which views and preferences can be projected. As much as Lee was the symbol of reconciliation, he also was undeniably a Confederate icon. In all of this, the real Lee is elusive and he, himself, is perhaps not the real issue. He is a feature in a struggle of symbols and stories or ideas and passions—and a core aspect of the problem is that the evidence is insufficient.


13 For example, those condemning Lee, such as Serwer, cite his evidence to a Congressional Committee, but fail to note that his answers were always cautious and never went beyond his experience and understanding, and that, for instance, answers indicating that Virginia would be improved without the Black population are taken as proof of his racism. If read in context, Lee's answers are clearly part of a view of "gradual emancipation" in which the blacks' leaving, in Lee's view, is an aspect of emancipation, a release from a prison. See Serwer, "The Myth," 7; and “Robert E. Lee’s Testimony before Congress, February 17, 1866,” Transcription from Original, available at https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Robert_E_Lee%20%5BTestimony%20before%20Congress%20February%2017%2C%201866%5D accessed at 25 March 2020.
to conclude properly one way or the other exactly what his views and actions were, let alone how they should be interpreted a century and a half later.  

What mattered most was the symbolism of it all. Deep into the 20th century, Lee’s standing and reputation made him especially attractive to those promoting the Confederate legacy and supporting racial segregation. They did not disregard other figures—some famous, such as General Stonewall Jackson, others less so—who were also memorialized with commemorative sculptures all over the South. Nor was the president of the Confederate States, Jefferson Davis, ignored, although relative to Lee he was a more difficult figure for Southerners to romanticize broadly and with longevity due in large part to his postbellum conviction that Southern secession was a sin that neither he nor the Southern cause had committed. At the time of Davis’s death, the decision to honor him with a military ceremony—a choice that upset some vocal Northerners—was an indication of the powerful feelings of loss among Southern whites, both for the man and the cause he so vehemently represented. Many flocked to New Orleans to attend the ceremony in person. Across the region, simultaneous memorial services featured a civic procession, eulogies, and replica caskets. Aware of a Northern depiction of Davis as a uniquely treasonous leader, Southerners took the opportunity to demonstrate a degree of public admiration and loyalty to Davis and the pride he (and by association, they) took in the principles of self-government that the Confederacy was said to have embodied. Across the South, Davis’s remembrance brought public confirmations of the Lost Cause in not only the speeches of Southern politicians but also in the “intergenerational transmission of historical memories by southern whites...[which] indicated that the Lost Cause would outlive its original progenitors”. This was a cause for concern for many Northern Republicans. But others displayed equanimity not only at his death but also three years later at his final internment, as evidenced by fulsome news coverage from Philadelphia to Boston. The result of affirming the Southern right to commemorate heroes in such a public manner was a deep misunderstanding of the depth of Southern grief. While many in the North stood their ground, Northern acceptance of reconciliation on Southern terms of moral equivalence would set the tone for reconciliation for decades to come. Lee was the focus in both the Northern acquiescence in a reconciliation that set aside the issues that had caused the war and allowed Southern rebirth, and also in the Southern promotion of a story of honor and victory in loss. The controversy was, in essence, about the way in which Lee had become a symbol for a Southern narrative, as we discuss below, even though the man himself had neither sought nor condoned such a role. Indeed, we might suppose that his death in 1870, in the earliest years of redemption and the Lost Cause, gave those twisting the cause of the war from protection of slavery to defense of a way of life the perfect icon to develop and color as they wished. He was simultaneously a symbol of the great reconciliation and of the reality that it was a handmaiden to redemption and

14  This is a matter that we address in the longer study on which the present paper draws.

the Lost Cause—and so, to an incomplete reconciliation (white with white), which did not encompass Black Americans, whose status had been the cause of the war. And, just as much as Southern recidivism could regard Lee as a token of its white supremacist idea, so Black Americans could see little positive in this icon.

The contest at Lee’s statue at Charlottesville, then, was a battle about neither the man himself nor the historical facts of his life nor even his subsequent reputation. It was about preserving or rejecting the emblems of white domination, and about defending an inherited vision of the Confederate way of life—and so, about the persisting, unfinished business of the unreconciled Civil War: race and the legacy of slavery in America. In this sense, those killed or injured in August 2017 by violence in Charlottesville were only the latest victims of the American Civil War—even if no one died in a blue or gray military uniform. They were losses in a cold war that continued after the formal end of armed hostilities in 1865 under the umbrella of an incomplete, if not failed, reconciliation that is linked to the failure fully to address the status of those who had been the very reason for the war: Black American slaves.

As David Blight has shown in a brilliant cultural account of the reunion, which informs the treatment of reconciliation below, it was made in particular circumstances and at the expense, in effect, of those about whom it could be said to have been fought—those who experienced slavery and their fellow Americans of African origin.16 Reconciliation was partial and reunion at the expense of race. The cause of the war had not been fully addressed and would not be formally and legally for another one hundred years—and a century on and then another half-century and more, remained work in progress.

Forgotten and Lost Causes

With the contest of military strength completed, the war of ideas and values continued in America. The South had lost and was in ruins, with cities like Richmond and Atlanta devastated, when Lee surrendered. Within a decade, reconciliation between the warring parties was spreading rapidly. This reconciliation replaced Union policies of emancipation and reconstruction. In doing so, reconciliation left unfinished business, despite the fraternal spirit of “collective victory” that marked blue-gray reunion.17 Reconciliation begat unreconciliation. Slavery was almost entirely forgotten or even erased as the cause of war. Emancipation was suppressed. The limited revolution in civil rights and sociopolitical restructuring of the policy of Reconstruction was curtailed and a whites-focused coming together harbored or perhaps rested on racial definition and notions of white supremacy. We chart this development in the present section.

Emancipation was compromised from the outset, so its mothballed fate might have been expected. It did achieve the de jure liberation of four million Black slaves, an achievement that could never be forgotten or underestimated. But its original proclamation lay in necessity and ingenuity and was limited in scope and by circumstance. Although Lincoln opposed slavery, his celebrated Emancipation Proclamation of 1 January

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1863 was couched in language that stressed the necessity of warfare. In July 1862, Lincoln concluded that “it was a military necessity absolutely essential for the salvation of the Union” to set slaves free.18

Although the proclamation immediately gave more than three million people freedom, in law and principle, it left one million in bondage, not covered by the emergency war powers. This is because, for example, it did not cover 425,000 slaves in loyal border states. That exclusion, in turn, was because the basis for emancipation was a military necessity, to support prosecution of the war in the rebel states. Liberating slaves would both undermine the enemy by removing its props and also allow those freed to join Union forces. As a first step, the 1862 Militia Act was quickly passed, permitting recruitment of Black men into the Union military. By the following summer, Black regiments were starting to be deployed as part of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), and the number of such troops would eventually rise to 180,000. This was a major step and an important contribution to strengthening Union forces, with the famous 54th Massachusetts Regiment, led by Captain Robert Gould Shaw, leading the way. But it was not straightforward: Black soldiers were initially paid less, were denied sign-on premiums, and were excluded from the officer corps. Unequal pay had been a political necessity to ease the passage of legislation to allow recruitment of Black soldiers and would take time to be resolved. It was March 1865, with the end of the war near, when Congress finally passed legislation allowing equal pay, with full retrospective force. By that time, 40,000 Black soldiers had died in service and almost a quarter of a million of them had served, making up 10 percent of the total GAR. All had contributed to a victory that promised to consolidate and expand their freedom.

Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation expressed enduring liberty, stipulating that the slaves were and “henceforward shall be free,” yet it was born of necessity and, as an action under emergency war powers, no guarantee existed that it would hold after the fighting ended.19 The solution to this was to embed the end of slavery as swiftly as possible in what became the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution. That amendment was vital but again, it was also limited and not easily achieved. Even as the prospect for the amendment grew, there was a strong “fear,” related to Lincoln by Congressman James M. Ashley, who had promoted the bill in Congress, that they would lose the vote if the Confederates were involved in peace talks, as was rumored to be the case.20 Lincoln communicated that there were no Southern Peace Commissioners in the capital, so far as he knew, focusing on the rumors that talks were afoot in Washington, D.C.; yet he failed to mention that while debates in Congress continued during January, there was a meeting between three senior representatives of Davis and Secretary of State William H. Seward, hosted by General Grant, at Fort Monroe, Virginia—the location where Lincoln would meet these same commissioners to negotiate

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peace on 3 February, just four days after the 13th Amendment was adopted by Congress.

Even embedding the principle of emancipation in the US Constitution proved insufficient; giving force to the principle was a difficult and contested matter. From 1863, in practice, and 1866, formally, a policy of Reconstruction was adopted to enforce emancipation. This was initially strongly applied, with some confiscation and redistribution of land. It was, in the description of historian Eric Foner, “America’s Unfinished Revolution.”

Three days after Lincoln had announced that some Blacks might get the right to vote, he was assassinated. Following his death, commitment to his revolution and to the reconstruction of the South withered as Johnson adopted his own version of presidential reconstruction, which was largely a repudiation of the vision held by Lincoln and the radical Republicans. Johnson articulated his approach, making clear that the Southern states had always had the right to govern themselves—a keynote of Southern political thought—and that the Union had no place to decide matters like voting rights for them. As part of Johnson’s Presidential Reconstruction, confiscated property reverted to prewar owners. While Johnson remained an opponent of slavery and favored a strong union, his deference to states’ rights remained more important. Johnson’s soft approach assumed that Southerners would honorably take the path of reconstruction but they did not. Instead, Black Codes, labor laws limiting emancipation, were introduced and the South reverted to old attitudes and approaches, constraining former slaves to work under poor conditions as free labor, even if emancipation itself could not be turned back.

Although emancipation in law could not be reversed, realizing it in practice required more. That architecture came with the 14th and 15th Amendments to the US Constitution. The 14th Amendment broadened the definition of citizenship, enshrining the rights of all who were born in the United States or naturalized, and crucially, pushed the notion of equality before the law that drove the radicals. These cornerstones of civil rights were necessary because the previous two years had shown that without such enforcement, much of the promised emancipation was moot. It was not enough, either. The 15th Amendment, which was passed in February 1869 and was adopted the following year, sharpened the definition of emancipation by guaranteeing a citizen’s right to vote, irrespective of race, color, or past enslavement. These were measures pushed by the radical Republicans, who throughout the years of debates over emancipation had favored strong forms of action at every stage and had driven law and practice during Grant’s presidency.

Radical Reconstruction was a revolutionary campaign to transform the South. This revolution achieved much in terms of constitutional and civil rights, even if it did not assure that all citizens possessed the full capacity to enjoy the rights it had introduced. Despite its inevitable limitations, this revolution (like so many others) provoked a counterrevolutionary movement. The expansion of rights for Black citizens—indeed,
the very act of making them citizens—was anathema to most Southern whites (and some Northerners). It confronted both the core values and the economic model on which the South was built. This model had made some whites wealthy while leaving others in low socioeconomic condition. But not being property was a difference that helped legitimate the system in the eyes of poor whites. Although white resistance in the South was not able to restore slavery, it did succeed in wearing down the will to enforce Radical Reconstruction. In its own terms, white resistance might redeem its land and way of life and prosper again. Once again, of course, this came at the expense of the Black population—for whom freedom in principle did not mean full freedom in practice—and certainly not security.

The range of rights and opportunities provided by constitutional amendments and the enforcement laws of Radical Reconstruction was not small. As a result, Black Americans could exercise their rights and benefit from change, socially and politically. Hiram Rhodes Revels became the first Black citizen elected to the US Senate, in 1870; others were elected and took office in various jurisdictions. Public schools were established across the South to educate and underpin social development for the freed population. There was genuine change that was positively regarded by abolitionists, by Black and white, and by North and South—even as critics would point to more that could be done.

The progress in emancipation was a painful loss to those who had dominated the white supremacist system in the South. This system had been unraveled and replaced by upheaval. White Southerners were dominated by perceptions of anarchy and fear of Black power enforced by extraordinary federal might. Revolutionary enforcement was increasingly characterized as oppression by white Southerners—missing the irony of making these claims against a background of defending slavery. Reconstruction overturned their order and destroyed their way of life. Southerners responded by preserving historical memories, by rebelling against Reconstruction, and by seeking redemption—to the extent possible south of the Mason-Dixon Line. One contemporary commentator touring the battlefields in the war's immediate aftermath judged it “disloyalty subdued,” not overcome and transformed.

In the early 1870s, calls for redemption rang across the South. White Democrats found it hard to abide the presence of free Black citizens, especially the sight of those dressed in the uniform and authority of the Union. Although no full-blown armed conflict erupted, the war quietly continued. The revolutionary idea of Black liberty was pitted against the counterrevolutionary claims of white supremacy, Republicans against Democrats. The ascendancy of Black electoral opportunity and office was countered by mob and paramilitary violence, in the form of the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist organization that conspired to promote the return of the old order, including the removal of civil rights for Black men. More significantly, it used violence to intimidate and obstruct Black individuals and communities, and white Republican politicians who supported Reconstruction. Lynch mobs, house burnings, murder, and the

23 Blight, Race and Reunion. John T. Trowbridge, who wrote an account of the South after touring its battlefields and cities in 1866. 44.
assassination of politicians wrought terror. The federal government passed enforcement laws targeting, in particular, the Ku Klux Klan. Armed force fragmented and disbanded many Klan elements. Although Grant and the army were reluctant to be involved, using the military proved a necessity. Force was required to uphold principle. About 300 Klansmen were arrested and prosecuted, ending its terror for the moment. However, those convicted were the tip of an iceberg. Thousands who had participated in terrorism escaped justice. Moreover, for all the organization was dismantled, the strength of feelings and ideas it supported and prompted was not quelled. After 1877, these would become stronger and stronger, as North-South reconciliation moved ahead apace against a backdrop of weariness with implementing Radical Reconstruction and economic crisis.

Grant’s weak and corruption-ridden administration faced difficulty with managing Reconstruction. Tales of carpetbaggers (Northern businessmen who profited from Reconstruction) strengthened a sense of regional dishonor. None of this involved the unimpeachable president, but it did weaken the authority and morale of the federal government. Grant himself was reported to believe that enough was enough and that the job had been done: in 1875, as his time in office was nearing its end, Grant refused to use the army to tackle violence in Mississippi. Following his second inauguration in 1873, an economic crisis hit the United States. The economic crisis also affected the North. As in the South, business clamored for relief, leaving unspoken that this meant white-owned businesses. Pressure from business spurred—and actively sponsored—the North-South reconciliation between the former combatants, although Black veterans were largely excluded. So did a sense of fatigue with Reconstruction, in both North and South. Under these conditions, the elections of 1874 produced a majority of Democrats in the US House of Representatives for the first time since the war. The presidential election in 1876 split the country and produced a crisis. Although Democratic candidate Samuel J. Tilden won the popular vote, the Electoral College that chose the president could not produce a clear outcome, with several election results disputed because of intimidation and questionable validity of votes. Eventually, a compromise was struck to elect Republican Rutherford B. Hayes as

Tellingly, Du Bois quotes an investigation in North Carolina which, covering six months, reported only four murders, one beating, sixteen “outrages” and no instances of torture or sexual offences committed by Black people (with no information on the race, color, or gender of victims). This contrasted with crimes committed by the Klan: 35 lynchings and other murders of Black men, 262 whippings of Black men and women, 101 “outrages” (including shooting, mutilation, and arson) against Black people and two sexual offences against Black women.

Hayes was in a weak position because he had communicated “discreet assurances” to Southern Democrats that, if elected, his administration would give “kind consideration” to the South. That kind consideration effectively marked the end of Radical Reconstruction. The Compromise of 1877, reached between the political parties and in particular between Hayes and the Democrats, granted Southern states the right to determine their own laws, including on electoral rights and conditions, education, and any other aspect of life. Whites below the Mason-Dixon line claimed ideological and sociopolitical resurgence: the South was redeemed.

Political weakness, weariness of Reconstruction, and economic crisis led the North to let Reconstruction go. Tacit forgetfulness on the part of the North and a collective memory imbued with honor and patriotism in the South set the tone for a reunion culture. While Union veterans fought to preserve memories of a war that was fought expressly against the institution of slavery—for reasons of moral duty or emancipationist legacy—another Union narrative deserves equal attention. An address given by the former governor of Ohio and Union Army veteran Capt. J. B. Foraker in memory of the Union General William Tecumseh Sherman, illustrates this twofold narrative. Although slavery was explicitly linked to the causes of disunion, “neither demands for racial equality nor empathy for the plight of former slaves” was articulated. Even if the issue of slavery was being avoided altogether, memorialization of the war highlighted the reality of shared racist assumptions between white Americans in the North and South. Union soldiers came to see the war effort as a preservation of the union of states rather than as a battle over emancipation. In the South, the quiet rejection of reconciliation based on racial equality allowed mass disenfranchisement and segregation—a figurative re-enslavement—to proceed with impunity. Racist assumptions in the North did not just condone the ugly fruit of white supremacy in the South: they were allowed to bleed into the very fabric of the nation and to spread well beyond the Mason-Dixon line.

In the postwar years, the North began to cultivate its own images of reunion, one that served its own agenda. This became evident as early as 1876, when Grant admitted his concerns to the members of his cabinet that the 15th Amendment had been a mistake and served no “political advantage to the North.” In light of the Gilded Age and the social turbulence that came with it, Northerners would eventually “cast southern blacks outside their reunion framework altogether, portraying them as strangers and as foreigners, as a people who were best placed under the supervision of those southern whites who

26 Foner, Reconstruction. 577.
27 Foner, Reconstruction. 577.
knew them best.” This paved the way for a noticeable shift from the 1860s, which was filled with optimism regarding space for African Americans in the postwar polity, to the 1890s, when Northerners became openly pessimistic about and derisive of Southern Blacks. Many would eventually make the leap of connecting social problems with migration and racial diversity, thereby paving the way for Northern whites to exploit a “cover of ignorance, using it to de-emphasize the place of blacks in the American past and to overlook the racial troubles in the American present.”

Those racial issues were, indeed, present. Redemption was seen as a rebirth in the South. Although Reconstruction had ultimately failed in many respects, it also had left important changes, some of which could not be removed. But many could, and over time a new South was forged, largely reflecting the values and practices of the old South. Across the political spectrum, there was common cause in dismantling reconstruction. The political advances and power of Black citizens would be rolled back. Laws were passed to govern labor relations and to shape racial segregation. Social support mechanisms were cut because leaders withdrew funding for public hospitals and educational facilities that had benefitted Blacks. Although it was acknowledged that the 14th and 15th Amendments “may stand forever,” the intention was to “make them dead letters on the statute-book”—a possibility allowed by the ambiguities and lacunae in those amendments. Electoral machinery was used, effectively, to disenfranchise Blacks or at a minimum, to limit their impact. In Mississippi, all Black voters were concentrated in one long, strange district drawn along the banks of the river, leaving six other districts predominantly white, and the machinery built overwhelming white majorities for any votes taken in the legislature. Everywhere, boundaries were arranged to ensure Democrat—that is, white—majorities. Poll taxes in Georgia, for example, limited Black voting. In Alabama and North Carolina, responsibilities for choosing county commissioners and justices of the peace were transferred to the legislature, where white Democrats were in control, rather than resting with the electorate, in which Black voters could still make a difference. In some cases, such as Mississippi, bonds were required by officeholders and, if sufficient funds could not be deposited, the governor removed them from their position—a move intended to affect Black individuals, who lacked the required resources. A range of statutes was passed from the late 19th century through the mid-20th century known as Jim Crow laws; their constitutionality was contested. Yet, they were confirmed by the Supreme Court in the landmark Plessy v. Ferguson judgment, which spawned a doctrine of “separate but equal” to justify laws on segregation while reconciling them with the 14th Amendment; later, of course, this doctrine would be challenged and changed, as judges and their interpretation of texts changed but its effects were not fully removed until the 1960s.

31 Silber, The Romance of Reunion. 141.
32 Foner, Reconstruction. 590.
Most of the constriction of Black rights and conditions for living took place even before the Southern states introduced new constitutions to replace those imposed by Reconstruction. Once those constitutions were in place, the effective and almost complete disenfranchisement of Southern Blacks was achieved, despite the 14th and 15th Amendments, which were intended to ensure citizens' voting rights. In addition to the range of legal and constitutional measures affecting voting and civil rights, South Carolina started hiring out Black convicts as labor. And Black convicts there were aplenty, as harsh codes were brought in for petty crimes. Black officers were pushed out of police and militia forces. Although some Black officeholders remained and there was some scope for Blacks to influence election outcomes, it was severely constrained. An alternative movement in Virginia, the business-influenced Readjuster Party, had success with Black support at the ballot box and invested in public services, such as schools, that benefitted Blacks (and the economy, as a whole). But this was limited success against the tide of redeemer hegemony.34

As redemption ruled, alongside it grew the theme of the Lost Cause, which had emerged with the Democrats’ counterrevolution. It had begun with the attempts of the Southern Historical Society Papers to create a history of the South, an account of the world that was lost and a way for the South to explain to itself how it had lost.35 The Lost Cause was the self-justifying legend that the South had been defeated by overwhelming numbers on the battlefield, but had not otherwise been beaten; its noble defiance was a triumph of heroism and honor in fighting to protect a Southern political culture that was not about slavery, but about self-government and states’ rights. It was about a way of life and an economic model that was some form of heaven on earth, in which slaves featured as happy toilers of the land, in harmony with their white masters, always content. With the downfall of Reconstruction came the narrative that the South had lost in warfare, but had won the war, as Southerners had truly redeemed their states by winning the war against Negro rule and the federal government. In the end, loss was victory. The battle of ideas had been won. As defeated and imprisoned rebel leader Davis put it, this was a “great victory,” one that “regained self-government” and could “legislate uncontrolled by bayonets”; there could be no more interference in the “domestic affairs of states.”36 Despite its devastating loss, within two decades the Old South and its values would be resurgent and by the semicentennial of the Battle of Gettysburg, slavery aside, white supremacy once again dominated.

Conclusion

The South lost the armed conflict, yet the war continued in a cold form. As in the more familiar Cold War that dominated the second half of the 20th century, Americans conducted an internal cold war in the realms of ideas, culture, and values, as well as in economic and social freedoms. In that US context, Southern redemption, with the Lost Cause narrative chiming harmony, was the central line of engagement in the continuing war of ideas. Opening the space for it eased


36  Blight, Race and Reunion. 264.
the speedy journey towards reunion and a “remarkable” reconciliation that was “little short of a miracle,” in such a short time.\textsuperscript{37} Three streams flowed together to generate this reconciliation: the desire for healing; business and economic dynamics; and recognition of soldiers’ honor. Yet this reconciliation was at best partial and limited. Indeed, beneath its surface was deep unreconciliation and damnation. It cast Black citizens backward and suppressed the freedom—and quality of freedom—that emancipation, the Civil War, and Reconstruction had brought them as Black citizens today are economically degraded, disenfranchised, and separated from society in very structural and systemic ways.

It took a century after Lee’s surrender and Johnson’s Presidential Reconstruction before the legal architecture of emancipation would be completed—by Lyndon B. Johnson, the 36\textsuperscript{th} president. The suppression of Black rights and political voices, as well as the pernicious cleaver of segregation, would not be undone until another moment of legal and electoral emancipation, on the centennial of the end of armed combat in the Civil War, when Lyndon Johnson drove through the Voting Rights Act in 1965. It completed the long-unfinished work of the 14\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} Amendments, legislating to remove all the forms of discriminatory voting conditions that had been used to underpin white supremacy and the disenfranchisement of Black Americans in the South. The first full fruit of that emancipation and its seismic impact on an ever-evolving Union came half a century later, with the two terms served by President Barack H. Obama, starting in 2009, the 44\textsuperscript{th} president of the United States—and its first Black one. That, in turn, it might be suggested, led to the latest salvoes in the continuing civil strife, a white backlash against nonwhite advancement (even if white privilege and domination incontestably remained), which underpinned the election of Donald J. Trump as Obama’s successor, in what has been labeled a Second Redemption.\textsuperscript{38} The deep truth was that even after a century and a half, not all Americans were reconciled.

This remains the position of the United States, two decades into the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. Frustration with this situation has fueled the sense of anger and injustice that drove opposition to Confederate monuments, in Charlottesville, Richmond, Atlanta, and many other Southern cities. The compromises of reconciliation, which were only partial, left emancipation unfinished and fermented unreconciliation. The situation also reignited the struggle, of which Charlottesville was a part, based on a failure to fully address the status of those who had been the very reason for the war. Collective emotion can take a long time to change—far longer than the intellectual process of acknowledging evidence and changing one’s mind, and far longer than the rational acceptance of physical loss. Hurt can last.


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