



its defeat in the southern states, an effort that succeeded everywhere except in Tennessee, which was admitted on July 24, 1866. At the same time, he sought to build up a new party. The rival plans of Reconstruction thus became an issue in the midterm elections of 1866, during which four national conventions met, and Johnson on his "swing around the circle" actively campaigned for his program. His claims of having established peace in the South were weakened by serious riots in Memphis and New Orleans.

The elections resulted in a triumph for the Republican majority. Since the president was still unwilling to cooperate, Congress proceeded to shackle him by restricting his powers of removal (Tenure of Office Act) and of military control ("Command of the Army" Act). In addition, it passed a series of measures known as the Reconstruction Acts, which inaugurated the congressional or "radical" phase of Reconstruction.

The first two Reconstruction Acts divided the South (except for Tennessee) into five military districts, enfranchised blacks, and required southern states to draw up constitutions safeguarding black suffrage. The new legislatures were expected to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, and certain Confederate officeholders were for a time barred from voting and from officeholding.

The president refused to concede defeat. After his vetoes of the Reconstruction Acts were not sustained, he sought to lessen their effect as much as possible. His lenient interpretation of the law led to the more stringent third Reconstruction Act (July 19, 1867), which only spurred him to further resistance. On Aug. 12 he suspended Edwin M. Stanton, his radical secretary of war. After appointing Grant secretary ad interim, he also removed several radical major generals in the South. Democratic successes in the fall elections greatly encouraged him.

Johnson's intransigence resulted in a complete break with Congress. Because the radicals lacked a majority, their first attempt to impeach him failed, on Dec. 7, 1867. But when the Senate reinstated Stanton and the president dismissed him a second time, the House acted. Passing a resolution of impeachment on Feb. 24, 1868, it put Johnson on trial before the Senate. Because of moderate defections and the weakness of the case, he was acquitted by one vote, on May 16 and 26. His narrow escape once more encouraged southern conservatives, so that it was difficult for Grant, elected president in November 1868, to carry congressional Reconstruction to a successful conclusion.

During 1867 and 1868 radical Reconstruction had been gradually initiated. Despite conservative opposition—Congress had to pass a fourth Reconstruction Act easing requirements before the constitution of Alabama was accepted; the electorate ratified the new charters in all but three states—Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia. Accordingly, in the summer of 1868 the compliant states were readmitted and the Fourteenth Amendment declared in force. Because Georgia later excluded blacks from its legislature and because Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia, for various local reasons, did not ratify their constitutions on time, those four states were subjected to additional requirements. These included the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, prohibiting the denial of suffrage on account of race. After complying with the new demands, these states too were restored to their places in the Union in 1870, and the amendment was added to the Constitution.

Historians have long argued about the nature of the radical governments. According to William A. Dunning and his school, they were characterized by vindictiveness, corruption, inefficiency, and ruthless exploitation of southern whites. Northern carpetbaggers, local scalawags, and their alleged black tools supposedly trampled white civilization underfoot. Some scholars have questioned these assumptions. Pointing out that the radical governments succeeded in establishing systems of public education, eleemosynary institutions, and lasting constitutions, modern experts have discarded the concept of "black Reconstruction." Black legislators were in a majority only in South Carolina, and even there their white allies wielded considerable influence. Conceding the presence of corruption in the South, these historians have emphasized its nationwide scope. They have tended to show that the new governments deserved credit for making the first efforts to establish racial democracy in the South and that many radical officeholders, black and white alike, did not compare unfavorably with their conservative colleagues.

But the experiment could not last. The rapid disappearance, by death or retirement, of radical Republicans, the granting of amnesty to former Confederates, the conservatives' resort to terror, and a gradual loss of interest by the North would have made Reconstruction difficult in any case. These problems were complicated by the blacks' lack of economic power—Johnson had gone so far as to return to whites lands already occupied by freedmen. Factionalism within the dominant party increased with the rise of the Liberal Republicans in 1872, and the panic of 1873 eroded Republican majorities in the House. The Su-