



Greetings Delegates,

Welcome to the 32nd Annual High School Conference at UCIMUN! My name is Ian Lee, and I will serve as the Director of Historical Crisis for President Grant's Cabinet. I am a second-year undergraduate student majoring in math, with an interest in history and foreign affairs. I have been involved in MUN since my freshman year of high school, and as one constant in my life that has bridged my high school and college years, MUN has seen me through periods of my personal growth, and even may have been the catalyst of a few! It's a great honor to serve as your director for this year's conference, and I hope I can help provide the fun and enriching experience of MUN.

Outside of MUN, I also serve in UCI's student government as an Academic Engagement Director, where I get to organize academic and networking events for UCI's undergraduate population. In my free time, I love to read and listen to music. Pretty basic, I know, but it has carried me through many a hardship, and keeps me motivated to plow ahead!

Now a few words about our committee: The issues faced by President Grant's administration, as is the case with many significant policy debates, are full of compelling and persuasive arguments from multiple viewpoints, touching upon topics of national security, strength of national unity, federalism, and protecting individual rights and liberties. I hope that through the committee, you will be able to dive deep into the intricacies of these arguments and come out with a better sense of the national principles that undergird our society and still haunt us in our current national conversations.

Some issues that we'll be addressing, namely Reconstruction and racial equality, are laden with moral gravitas. In debating these issues, I trust you to demonstrate mutual respect for one another in the committee and for those individuals who were subjected to the torments of slavery and post-abolition racial violence during this time period. There were politicians during President Grant's era who supported slavery and believed in the inferiority of people of color. Although a sad historical reality, we are not going to entertain these outdated views in our debates. Instead, let's keep our debates civil and productive.

Having said this, this also doesn't mean there needs to be a single unity of perspective. Indeed, during President Grant's times, there were many abolitionists and fervent supporters of the Black community, called "Liberal Republicans," who argued against implementing federal measures that would ostensibly help protect Black liberties for various philosophical reasons (this is explored in more depth in the topic synopsis). These were views informed by legitimate political reality, and not by a primitive hatred for a subset of people based on their color or ethnicity, and exploring these perspectives will illuminate the very moral nuance and dilemmas that are so



central to the complexity of this topic. I'm looking forward to seeing you articulate and engage with these diverse perspectives in the committee debates.

As you participate in your own research for your position papers, you will realize that some information you are looking for may be hard to come by. Some of the topics that this committee covers are indeed a bit niche, and you might have to do some digging around to find the relevant facts. If you are having a lot of trouble, I hope that this topic synopsis can be a resource that you can fall back on, since it contains most of the information you will need for the committee. You can also try getting online versions of research articles or books about President Grant, and using the keyword search to find relevant information. (Grant by Ron Chernow is a very reliable resource and should contain much of the information you need). Ultimately, don't be overly frustrated even if you find the process of research too difficult. You can still gain a lot by making an honest attempt, and we understand good sources can be hard to come by!

Have fun with the topics, and I'm looking forward to a fun conference with all of you!

Ian Lee
Director, Historical Crisis



Topic A: Mitigating Mass Violence in Former Confederate States

Introduction

When Ulysses S. Grant stepped into the White House on March 4, 1869— less than four years after the end of the Civil War— the celebrated general of the Union Army found himself at the helm of a country that was in an uncertain unity. This instability was an inevitable aftermath for a nation that had just emerged from the Civil War that had violently divided its populace between the Union and the Confederacy.

The Civil War had centered on the question of slavery, the North fighting for abolition and the South to keep its institution of slavery, and the conflict around race was again the usurper of the post-war instability. There was the obvious problem of former slave owners who found themselves, at least from the perspective of the law, on a radically more equal social footing as their former slaves compared to the times of the past, though the freed slaves still lacked many of the rights of white citizens. Further fueling this awkward reality was the ongoing debate around the ratification of the 15th Amendment which had been passed by Congress just two months prior but not yet ratified by state legislatures. Once fully ratified, it would guarantee a right to vote for all citizens, impartial to one's "race, color, or previous condition of servitude." To the former slave owners, this 15th Amendment providing legal security for one of the most fundamental rights for the black citizens foretold a future where their own political control would radically diminish. Unsurprisingly, when the Amendment was ratified ten months after President Grant's inauguration on February 3, 1870, becoming a fateful addition to the nation's supreme law, violence soon erupted in the former Confederates states in what became a campaign to keep the African Americans out of the ballot box.



The topic synopsis gives a brief history of the ascent of Ulysses S. Grant to the Presidency in this important historical moment for the nation; a brief sketch of the Civil War and its ending; the social context in the aftermath of the war and in Andrew Johnson's Presidency; introduction to President Grant's political positions especially in dealing with the formerly-Confederate Southern States; and an introduction to the major arguments in the contentious debate of what should be the Grant administration's rightful role in quenching violence against the freed-slaves. The synopsis cannot cover every important detail of the issue, and should serve as a starting point to your own research. As you read through the synopsis and engage in further research, focus on understanding the intricacies of this debate which is fraught with moral and political dilemmas that inform positions on both sides.

Description

The Ascent of Ulysses S. Grant

Ulysses S. Grant was born in Ohio, and had a relatively uneventful childhood growing up under a controlling father, with a reputation for being unusually quiet— a personality trait that he would carry through his lifetime (Waugh). With his father's prompting, Grant secured an entrance into West Point Military Academy, and earned his commission as an officer in the U.S. Army after graduating with a mediocre performance. Uninterested with life in the military, Grant initially decided to serve the required four years as an officer before quitting although he ended up serving for a longer period than this (Biography). The posts that he held after being commissioned as an officer turned out to be useful training for when he would later hold the top posts in the Union army, including his job as a quartermaster where he developed his skills in



logistics, and his experience in the Mexican-American War. Despite his quiet and reserved nature, Grant distinguished himself with his bravery and leadership during this war, and in recognition, he received two awards for his gallantry and one for his meritorious conduct (American Battlefield Trust). With the war's end, Grant was posted to what he found to be a mundane duty in the yet undeveloped California, and he resigned after widespread allegations of his drinking problem surfaced (Biography).

Indeed, Grant's drinking haunted his life as well as his reputation, as portraying Grant to be an out-of-control alcoholic was a convenient weapon for slandering his legacy. Although Grant did have a serious problem with alcohol, which he himself acknowledged, his drinking problem wasn't so much about the frequency of his drunkenness, or its interference with his responsibilities. Rather, Grant periodically relapsed into drinking during the times when he was free from his important duties during which he would succumb to lowly behaviors unbecoming of his position (Chernow 50). Acknowledging the problem, Grant strived to overcome his alcoholism by frequently having long periods of abstinence, but in resemblance to alcoholism that is medically diagnosed in the modern era, Grant always found a compulsive need to drink again, and always relapsed (Dorsett).

Following his resignation from the Army after such bouts of heavy drinking, Grant found himself in a difficult period where over several years, he had to take on a half-dozen unglamorous jobs to earn just enough to support his family, including a stint at his younger brother's leather shop (Waugh). Amidst these difficult stretches of his life, the Civil War, which started on April 12, 1861 when Grant was 39 years old, offered an opportunity for him to reclaim control of his fate. Volunteering to serve in the Union Army (the North) in the rank of a Colonel,



Grant quickly climbed the hierarchy as he distinguished himself in command through his victories, finally becoming the general-in-chief of the Union Army in 1864, three years after the war started (American Battlefield Trust). His rise to the very top was propelled by his distinguished service in the Western theater of the war, then later as the Commander of the Army of the Potomac (the Union army in the Eastern theater), commanding major battles such as the Siege of Vicksburg, Battle of Chattanooga, and the Overland campaign (PBS). At the end of the war, Grant met with his counterpart, General Lee of the Confederacy at Appomattox to negotiate and accept the Confederacy's terms of surrender on April 9, 1865, thereby ending the Civil War (Servis). From an unknown worker at his brother's store in a small Midwestern town, Grant had risen in the course of the Civil War to be one of the most revered individuals in the nation (Waugh).

Assassination of Lincoln & The Johnson Presidency

President Lincoln and General Grant enjoyed an amiable friendship. What initially captured President Lincoln's attention in General Grant was Grant's victory at the Siege of Vicksburg where he employed a strategy, first doubted by Lincoln, which ultimately proved successful (Simon et al.). Throughout the course of the war, Lincoln and Grant often shared strategic agreement, and Lincoln appreciated the drive and daring that was central to Grant's military style (Simon et al.). As the political and military leaders, the two often convened throughout the war, and Grant, who was sensitive to the political sphere, matched Lincoln's visions not just in matters pertaining to the military, but also in matters of politics by carrying out the policy aim of the administration, to Lincoln's great appreciation (Simon et al.). However,



such was Grant's stature that Lincoln, fearing Grant's political ambitions, sent informants to uncover Grant's desires to reach the Presidency, though Grant would unequivocally deny that he held such an idea (Simon et al.).

The fruitful partnership between Lincoln and Grant met its radical end when President Lincoln was assassinated in the Ford's Theater just a few days after the end of Civil War with General Lee's surrender at Appomattox, and when Vice President Andrew Johnson was sworn in as President as instructed by the Constitution. With the foremost political leader of the Union gone, Grant, who had shared in Lincoln's political objectives, thus became the central figure representing the vision of an equal America that Lincoln held.

Vice President Andrew Johnson, now elevated to the Presidency, was a Democrat with sympathies to the white Southerners, whom the Republican Lincoln had selected as his vice president for political reasons to appeal to a wider mass of voters. To be sure, Johnson was a Democrat whom moderate republicans could embrace, due to his opposition to the secession of the Confederate States who he viewed as traitors. Because of this opposition to the Confederacy, when Johnson became the President, most Republicans presumed that he would follow the same policy objectives as Lincoln, defined by a commitment to overseeing the incorporation of blacks as equal citizens, enjoying full privileges and protections afforded to whites (Miller Center). However, this turned out not to be so.

The big question following the surrender of the Confederate States was on what conditions those states, and the individual citizens that had participated in the rebellion, would be welcomed back to enjoy the full privileges they had earlier. Lincoln, on the very morning of his assassination, had presented a newly-updated policy outline which called to impose a strict set of



conditions that Confederate States would have to follow if they wished to get readmitted to the Union. These harsh terms were a turning point from a proposal made at an earlier time when Lincoln had advocated for easy and swift admission of the Confederate States as long as they swore an oath of loyalty and abolished slavery (Miller Center). The question of how the readmission would be carried out was now up for Johnson to decide.

Rather than following stricter sets of conditions that Lincoln had newly outlined, Johnson decided to follow a more lenient approach similar to one that Lincoln had proposed at an earlier time. Under Johnson's policies, for states to be readmitted, they would have to create a new state government with a new constitution, and the state legislature would have to outlaw slavery by ratifying the 13th Amendment (University of North Texas). For individuals who hadn't been a part of the Confederate elites to be granted pardon, swearing an oath of loyalty was all that was required (University of North Texas). On the other hand, the Confederates' military and political leaders, as well as those who had substantial wealth, would have to apply for pardon directly to the President, but Johnson approved these pardons liberally, and as a consequences of these easy pardons, the political leaders who had led the rebellion found their way back into state and national politics (University of North Texas).

A major issue in this debate on the appropriate conditions for readmission of the Confederates States, and one to which the radical Republicans lent their vocal support, was one concerning black suffrage, or guaranteeing the right to vote for the freedpeople. As much as this policy objective was about the moral duty to help black citizens realize a full political equality, there was an astute political concern here too; If enough Confederate leaders made their way back to the state and national politics through being elected to the legislatures, there was a very



real threat of the reemergence of Confederate politics, essentially nullifying the hard-won gains from the Civil War (Miller Center). To the great disappointment of the Republicans, Johnson did not require the Confederate States to codify voting rights for freedpeople into the law (Equal Justice Initiative).

In fact, Johnson failed miserably to implement an effective Reconstruction effort in the former Confederate States, which resulted in systematic restrictions of liberties of the freedpeople. Johnson, who according to his biographer Trefousse, was “a firm believer in the superiority of the white race,” not only contributed to this through his overly tolerant policies, but in some ways, actively encouraged resistance to the Reconstruction by vetoing Congressional bills and replacing military commanders who were ready to implement Reconstruction policies with those who were more passive in their approach (Aynes). Aided by the sympathetic President, some Southern states refused to ratify the 13th Amendment banning slavery, others elected Confederate elites who had not yet received Presidential pardons to the office, and some others passed what became known as “Black Codes.” These were laws which had ostensibly been created to protect the freedpeople, but which in reality had been specifically designed to impose severe restrictions on the economic, political, and social freedom of black citizens, nearly restoring slavery in effect (National Constitution Center).

In this setting of evident failure of Johnson’s Reconstruction, the 39th Congress, which convened in December of 1865, took the matters of Reconstruction efforts into their own hands (Miller Center). In 1866, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866, and when Johnson exercised his veto to stop the bill from passing, the Congress subsequently overruled his veto for the first time in the nation’s history. The Civil Rights Act listed the rights accorded to African



Americans, who were to be considered full citizens protected under due process of the law. The Congress also rejected the lenient conditions that Johnson established for readmission of Confederate States, and passed a new set of requirements the states would have to meet to be readmitted in the First Reconstruction Act in 1867, also overriding President Johnson's veto in the process (Equal Justice Initiative). The Act divided the ten Confederate States into five districts controlled and ruled by the federal military, and the states would have to meet a series of strict requirements including writing a new constitution guaranteeing the right to vote for all citizens, and ratifying the 14th Amendment, among other things (Equal Justice Initiative).

The 14th Amendment, amongst these series of legislations passed by the overworking Congress, marked the pinnacle of the Congress' work. Passed in June of 1866, and fully ratified two years later on July 9, 1868, the 14th Amendment granted equal civil and legal rights to Black citizens, and prevented any state from "depriv[ing] any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law" (14th Amendment). By extending the "due process of law" and "protection of the law" to the workings of state governments, the 14th Amendment effectively prevented the Confederate States from withholding the liberties guaranteed by the Constitution to the black citizens within their borders (National Archives). Now, under the First Reconstruction Act, ratifying the 14th Amendment had become a condition for restoration of the Confederate states into the nation.

Even despite these efforts by the Congress to redress Johnson's inadequacy in effecting Reconstruction through a series of such remarkable legislations, the racial tensions and sentiments of rebellion were far from being quelled. The years after the Civil War saw a flurry of physical violence against both the black citizens, as well as white Republicans and abolitionists



in the former Confederate States. One such instance was the Memphis Race Riot of 1866, which had casualties of 46 African-American and 2 White deaths, and 75 injured (Tennessee Encyclopedia). The massacre took place when white mobs attacked the freedmen's settlements, taking advantage of a period when there were no military guards protecting the area, reflecting the attitudes towards the former slaves held by the former Confederates. Just twelve weeks later, in Louisiana, 46 black citizens were killed in a riot at a political convention to disenfranchise former Confederates and enfranchise freedpeople, reflecting the explosivity of the issue of voting rights in these Southern States (University of North Texas).

The struggle between the Congress and President Johnson that continued through his Presidency came to its head when The House of Representatives brought charges of "high crimes and misdemeanor" against Johnson, and started an impeachment trial, for the first time in the United States' history in 1868. The final straw that led to this blowup was Johnson's firing of Secretary of War Stanton, who had been a loyal ally of the Congress (Waugh). Brought in a vindictive spirit to avenge the President who had continuously impeded the efforts of Reconstruction, the impeachment easily passed the House of Representatives, but failed to secure two-thirds majority required in the Senate by one vote, on the grounds that impeaching the President due to mere political differences could not be justified, and would set the wrong precedents for the future (Waugh). Although President Johnson had been saved to see another day in the office, the remainder of his Presidency until March of 1869 saw him stripped of any real power.

Grant's Political Positions on Black Citizens and the Confederacy



Throughout the course of the Civil War, as the Union's war aim changed from the initial effort to stop the South from their treasonous secession from the nation, to a more sweeping effort to abolish slavery and make improvements to the destitute conditions of the slaves, Grant's personal perspective evolved in parallel with this broader policy change (Kane). At first writing to his father-in-law in the early days of the Civil War that his objective in war was to "save the Union... not to either save or destroy Slavery," Grant would later write that "as anxious as I am to see peace being established.. [I am] unwilling to see any settlement until the question [of slavery] is forever settled." With the declaration of the Emancipation Proclamation three years into the four-year war in January 1, 1863, Grant proactively embraced this new Union war objective, personally overseeing the creation of black regiments in the Union Army despite vehement resistance even within the Union ranks, as well as creating self-sufficient plantation communities where freed-slaves could lease land from the government to build-up their livelihoods (Kane, Chernow). As such, Grant carried out extensive policies to support the emancipated blacks that would help them secure their liberties (Pushaw).

Thus, despite his personal ambivalence towards slavery in his early life, Grant's had become a staunch abolitionist by the war's end, and continued to be so after the war. Unsurprisingly, Grant was an eager supporter of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery, which was ratified shortly after Lincoln's assassination. Giving witness to Grant's ardent support of the African Americans, the leading abolitionist of the time, Frederick Douglass published a pamphlet in 1972 attesting Grant to be a "vigilant, firm, impartial, and wise protector of my race" who "is clothed with all the sublime triumphs of humanity" (Douglass).



As unrelenting as Grant was in championing the rights of black citizens, Grant also took a drastically conciliatory approach in dealing with the Confederates. In receiving the surrender of General Lee at Appomattox Court House to end the Civil War, Grant drew up an agreement that made Southern soldiers immune from prosecution for treason as long as they returned their firearms and abided by the law of their land (Chernow). This agreement became a point of contention between Grant and President Johnson when the Johnson administration nullified this amnesty given by Grant to Confederates soldiers, and required the Confederate military leaders to apply directly for pardon to the President. To uphold the agreement he had signed with Lee at Appomattox, Grant won pardons for Lee by threatening to resign from his position as a General in the army if Lee's pardon was not granted. Following this episode, in his spirit of conciliation and in his attempt to create harmony in the divided nation, Grant would play a major role in helping win pardons for many of the other prevalent Confederate generals as well (Chernow). The celebrated general who had given the Union its victory in the Civil War became the symbol of national unity and forgiveness.

The Grant Presidency

In August of 1867, in the midst of the Johnson administration, Grant became the War Secretary. Though now a part of Johnson's Cabinet, Grant almost immediately became aligned against Johnson's politics. When President Johnson attempted to remove the military generals carrying out Congress's orders to upkeep social harmony in Confederate states and replace them with those who would be ineffective wielders of this important power, Grant communicated his impassioned disagreement to Johnson (Chernow). Grant was a fervent supporter of



Reconstruction, and believed that Johnson was undoing what the Union had fought for in the war. As the rift between the two men grew, Johnson dismissed Grant from his position as War Secretary in January of 1868, and now with Grant's political affiliation evident, the Republicans nominated Grant to be the Presidential candidate in the 18th Presidential election. Running against the Democratic party who campaigned with the slogan "This is a white man's country, Let the white men rule" (Foner), Ulysses S. Grant won both the popular and the electoral votes, and became the 18th President of the United States on March 4, 1869 (Chernow).

In his inaugural address, Grant sent a strong message of support for black suffrage, calling for the ratification of the 15th Amendment. The 15th Amendment, which had passed the Congress just 8 days prior to Grant's inauguration, sought to add to the Constitution the right to vote, regardless of race, for all citizens of the United States (National Archives). As per the usual procedure for amending the Constitution, it was now left for two-thirds of the state legislatures to ratify the Amendment to fully put it into place. Grant, in his first speech as a president had lent his official support for the ratification, establishing the tone for a presidency which would aim to correct the setbacks to black liberties under the previous Johnson administration, in his new vision for Reconstruction.

The United States by the time Grant came into power was still not a stable union, as the fractious forces of the South still threatened the nascent unity that had formed after the Civil war. Thus, the question of Reconstruction, or more precisely, the question of how to best protect black liberties using the powers of the federal government while not overstepping their bounds as to upset and propel the Southern states into another domestic conflict, was the central issue of his presidency (this is explored in more detail in the next section). There were, of course, other



important domestic issues facing the administration, two of which were Native American and fiscal policies.

Concerning the Native Americans, Grant pledged in his inaugural address to view them as the “original occupants of the land,” and treat them accordingly through policies known as “Peace Policies” (Waugh). To this end, Grant hired a Seneca Indian as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, in what became the first nonwhite appointment to a major federal office, created a new Board of Indian Commissioners led by philanthropists rather than politicians, and attempted to help move Native Americans towards receiving US citizenships by settling them on reservations and helping them to become farmers (Waugh). Though carried out with good intentions, these policies failed to create lasting changes (Waugh).

When it came to fiscal policies, Grant was a conservative who believed that currency should be backed by gold. President Grant’s first major piece of legislation was paying out the massive accumulation of war debt to bondholders in gold, rather than greenbacks, a paper currency issued during the war (Chernow). But concerning gold, there arose a scandal that tarnished Grant’s reputation although the President himself was not personally responsible (Waugh). Two New York men, Corbin and Fisk, schemed with Grant’s brother-in-law to hoard wealth by buying up vast supplies of gold, then to drive the price of gold artificially high by manipulating Grant to withhold federal gold. They succeeded in convincing Grant, and when Grant later ordered government’s gold to be released to the market after seeing the inordinate rise in gold price, this caused a chaotic crash, which resulted in financial ruin of many and a lasting damage for months (Chernow).



This was not the first scandal of his administration; Indeed, given the number of scandals owing to Grant's naivety and his extreme trust in his friends and associates, some historians consider the eight year stretch of Grant's two terms as one of the most corrupt in history (Waugh). One of the most infamous of them all, the Whiskey Ring, was a scandal uncovered by a member of Grant's own cabinet, Secretary of Treasury Bristow, who discovered an extensive "Whiskey Ring" that bribed federal officials to avoid taxes on the distillation and distribution of Whiskey, with some of the profits generated making its way to the Republican party coffers. Some of the culprits involved Grant's own family, and his trusted secretary Babcock, and unable to fathom that Babcock could have been involved in this corruption, Grant, in an unprecedented move, testified in support of Babcock in court (President Profiles). Although Babcock was later dismissed from his position as secretary as evidence of his involvement piled up, Bristow, who had conducted the investigation was also fired, and the whole incident illustrates the naive trust that Grant placed on his close associates, which would lead to numerous scandals that would plague his administration (President Profiles).

Violence in the Confederate States & Grant's Reconstruction Policies

As evidenced by his inaugural speech, Grant considered securing voting rights for the black citizens through ratifying the 15th Amendment to be one of the most critical tasks, and viewed the ratification as the logical culmination of the Union war effort. The Fifteenth Amendment was finally ratified about a year after Grant took office, on February 3rd, 1870, and while celebrated by the Republicans and the black community as a great victory, it also sparked bitter resentment from the South leading to a surge of violence. While African Americans only



consisted about 13% of the total population, they represented a significant portion of the electorate in the South, and in states like South Carolina and Mississippi, were the majority (Chernow). The enfranchisement of this formerly silent population meant that the political hold of the white Democrats were in acute peril. One West Virginian Republican politician remarked of the tumultuous political atmosphere in his Democrat-majority state that “the spirit of the late rebellion is in the ascendant” (Foner).

To protect their political hold, Southern democrats employed various measures, both through legislation and violence. Georgia enacted laws requiring poll taxes and registration requirements for voting in an effort to strip away black voters (Chernow). Disgruntled individuals also contributed to the effort at peeling away black votes, such as white employers who would threaten their black employees with job losses if they partook in voting. Perhaps the most threatening development of all was the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, which one former Confederate general estimated had half a million members all across the South. Terrorizing black voters and white Republicans alike with their violence, the brutal regime of the KKK was so effective that in Louisiana, only a few thousand Republican votes were casted (Chernow). In Mississippi in 1870, burnings of black churches and homes by the KKK became widespread, and just in the first three months, sixty-three blacks were killed while not a single perpetrator was charged with the crimes (Chernow). Murders, burnings, lynchings, whippings, and other extraordinary arrays of violence overtook the South.

The Republican governors of some of these Southern states, recognizing the overwhelming threat posed by the KKK, appealed to the Grant administration for help. When Governor Scott of South Carolina described how “few Republicans dare sleep in their houses at



night,” and two congressmen from the state affirmed to Grant that the state government is “powerless to preserve law and order,” Grant ordered the federal military to take over and arrest KKK members, and the federal judges to try all the cases. Grant was aggressive in using federal powers to stop the KKK violence, and pressured the Congress to pass anti-Klan bills. Grant’s willingness to use the arms of the federal government to help resolve these violences within state borders caught the ire of Democrats and conservative Republicans, who passionately advocated for state’s rights, and framed such efforts as Grant’s coercive attempt to spread Republican rule in the South. Mired in these sentiments, one representative labeled Grant as “a despot; a dictator,” and a Chicago Times article denounced Grant as “the chief of a Ku Klux Klan more powerful than that of the South” (Chernow, Parsons).

Grant did not relent; In 1871, Grant signed into law the Ku Klux Klan Act, which gave him the powers to declare martial law, send in federal troops, and to suspend habeas corpus, a Constitutionally-guaranteed right for those arrested to legally challenge the reason for their arrests. Equipped with these powers, Grant passionately and aggressively countered Klan violence, and with the help of the newly created Justice Department, successfully arrested and convicted thousands of Klansmen. Yet, his efforts were often contested, not just by the enraged Southerners and Democrats, but also by the Northern public, members of the Republican party, and even his very own Cabinet. By the 1870’s, the earlier fervor for black liberties and equal rights had died down, and with a moral fatigue developing from continued political focus on Reconstruction, the Northerners’ support for Grant’s extreme anti-Klan measures dwindled. Combined with this dying enthusiasm, racist sentiments which remained prevalent even in the North also rallied citizens against what they viewed as Grant’s extreme use of the federal powers



(Chernow). In political circles, the arguments based on federalism— protecting state’s rights— continued unabated.

Although Grant’s unrelenting attacks against the KKK proved mostly successful as organized Klan activities decreased significantly, violence against blacks and white Republicans did not diminish. When, soon enough, offshoots of the KKK were created and ravaged the South with their violence once again, Grant found himself in a politically fragile position where he needed to be conscientious of the increasing political pressures on him to not intervene in Southern affairs. To this end, Grant refused to intervene in Texas and Arkansas to curb the violence, and pulled back federal troops from Louisiana, but when Louisiana soon fell into a chaos described by the governor as a “state of insurrection against the state authorities,” Grant decided to intervene (Chernow). Thus, Grant had to juggle the two competing goals of advancing and protecting the liberties of black communities in the South on one hand, and helping normalize the relations between the federal government and the Southern states to prevent a second Civil War, on the other, which Grant feared was coming.

Committee Goals

- ❖ Explore the social and political conditions of the Reconstruction era, and the policy debates surrounding protecting the rights and liberties of the Black community
- ❖ Explore the proper roles of federal government and the state government in the quenching racial violence, including whether it is more appropriate to use express authority of the federal government to protect the rights of minorities or give states the independence to make their own decisions in deference to the principle of federalism



- ❖ Explore the challenging moral dilemma between the role of government in upholding Civil Rights, and the role of government in maintaining a harmonious union between the states
- ❖ Explore the interconnected and the independence of the different branches of the government, and how the political interweavings between these lead to a certain policy outcome

Research Questions

1. Who were the Liberal Republicans and what political beliefs did they hold?
2. What were some effective government policies that succeeded in mitigating large, organized violence (racial or otherwise), and are there any lessons that could be applied to the case of mitigating violence during the Reconstruction Era?
3. How precarious was the national unity during the Grant administration; Could President Grant forcefully use the federal powers to mitigate violence without risking another civil war, or would his actions likely result in another war?



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Topic B: Ten Years' War in Cuba

Introduction

After Christopher Columbus first set down his foot in Cuba in 1492, Cuba remained a prized Spanish possession with its rich sugar plantations and its port serving as an important transition point for Spanish conquistadors (Cuba Unbound). By the late 1860s, however, with the Spanish Empire now a relic of its old glorious past, Cuba served not as a vibrant hub in the midst of an extensive web of Spanish colonies as it once had, but merely as a source of Spanish revenue while its citizens were neglected, fully devoid of political powers (Marquez). Even the Creoles, the Cuban born descendants of European colonists who were the landowning class that controlled many of the island's plantations, were still treated as second class citizens, not being able to run for public office, form political parties, or gather in groups unless under military supervision (Marquez). Cuban elites were also dissatisfied with a lack of freedom of the press, and they yearned for independence, self-autonomy, and self-government (Marquez).

In prior decades, as prosperity reigned in the island and the import of slaves to work the plantations flourished, periodic slave uprisings that occurred kept the landowner class loyal to the Spanish authorities who could effectively quell any disruptions and swiftly bring back the peaceful status quo (Robert). However, beginning in the 1840s and 1850s, a combination of factors such as changing cultural climate and shrinking economy led to the contraction of slave trades, and to fill the labor gap, a great number of Chinese laborers were imported, and plantation owners also explored hiring white Creole workers (Corwin). Thus, the shrinkage of slavery as a core social institution in Cuba also diminished the need for the plantation owners to cling to the Spanish colonial authorities. Adding to the growing social tension in the island due



to the political repression of this plantation owner class that had no longer a reason to stick to the colonial authorities was also a stagnant economy that led to two separate economic crises, as well as unwelcomed tax hikes on the planters (Marquez).

The decade-long struggle for independence which subsequently ensued, named Ten Years' War, was kicked off in 1868 by a plantation owner named Carlos Manuel de Cespedes, who freed all of his slaves to begin the rebellion, then led the violence against the Spanish colonial authorities. The uprising which had been started due to the woes of Cuba's elites in their desire to achieve political independence from what they viewed as a corrupt colonial power much like in the case of American Revolution, amazingly took another bent; It transformed into a revolutionary struggle for abolition (Sexton). The Creoles had realized that the only way to gain proper independence would require freeing the slaves and enlisting their support in their cause against Spain (Marquez). Thus, the Cuban insurgents came to embody a "revolutionary cross-racial alliance," as the plantation owners, former slaves, free blacks, and Chinese indentured servants formed a union to fight together (Sexton). As might be expected, there were some tensions and ambiguities in this union created in Cubans' drive towards two interconnected yet distinct goals of independence from Spain and full abolition of slavery, and at times, the white elites attempted to limit the scope of the rebellion so that they might preserve slavery even after gaining independence (Sexton). But despite this, the Ten Years' War marked a monumental change in Cuba's social systems as the conflict drew together different races to fight as one, and as the complete emancipation of slaves became one of the official goals of the rebels, despite some reservations that small pockets of elites might have had.



The insurgents enjoyed some initial success, and they declared a new government with Cespedes as the president (Marquez). Yet, although the insurgents worked to spread the scope of their rebellion, it didn't gain any significant ground as the element of surprise was removed and as they faced a strong Spanish military presence (Robert). Furthermore, strong regionalism and growing disagreements within the political circles meant that there wasn't much cohesion and organization in the new government, which contributed in weakening the success of the insurgents (Marquez). Perhaps realizing that the success of their rebellion depended on outside support, the insurgent leaders invested significant political capital in trying to get the United States to be involved on their behalf through lobbying American statesmen and attempting to shape American public opinion (Calhoun). When they failed to draw the United States into the conflict, however, and as the disunity amongst the leaders led to the removal of President Cespedes from his office, the insurgents lost their momentum, and the Ten Years' War ended without success. By the war's end, some excess of one hundred thousand had died (Sexton).

Description

Grant Administration's Response to Cuban Rebellion

The principle of American foreign policy underpinning much of the United States' actions on the global stage, and which President Grant subscribed to as did majority of Americans, was the Monroe Doctrine which advocated for the withdrawal of European colonial networks from the Western hemisphere which was deemed solely the United States' sphere of interest (Calhoun). First introduced by President James Monroe in 1823, the Doctrine had been used as recently as 1865, when the United States supported the Mexican government in their



fight against the French emperor Napoleon III, who tried to establish a French puppet state in Mexico (National Archive). John Rawlins, President Grant's Secretary of War and one of his most trusted advisors, was the biggest proponent of this Doctrine within the administration, and called to support the Cuban insurgents as they fought to free themselves from the Spanish colonial authorities (Calhoun).

If Monroe Doctrine provided one pillar of support for helping the Cubans, another came from abolitionists like Frederick Douglass and those who viewed the Cuban struggle in the light of the recent Civil War, as a struggle between a group of people banded around the fight for emancipation against their unjust oppressors (Leary). The support for the slaves fighting for their freedom in Cuba drew an easy parallel with the support for the freed slaves in the American South through the Reconstruction; The United States' struggle to bring about a society founded on true equality for all would reach its completion, it was thought, as it fulfilled its national mission of bringing the liberal progress of equality outside of its own borders (Leary). Thus, just as the Cuban insurgents had banded together to fight for two goals— independence from Spain and the abolishment of slavery—, the voices in the United States in support of the insurgents also drew on the arguments of both anti-imperialism and abolitionism. Besides these, the sheer brutality of the Spanish forces, who freely executed the captured rebels with machete, and Spain's unjust treatment of American citizens such as in the Virginius Affair, discussed later in this section, also helped create sympathy for the Cuban insurgents (Sexton).

Grant, the symbol of the Union cause and an advocate of liberal progress, appeared as one who might be most sympathetic to the Cuban cause; Sympathy he may have had, but as a commander-in-chief overseeing national security, Grant had to juggle his personal wants with the



interest of the nation. The question that lay before Grant was whether to give belligerent status to the insurgents and subsequently declare United States' neutrality (Calhoun). The implication was that by giving belligerent status and declaring neutrality, the United States would be formally recognizing the Cuban insurgents as a sovereign state in their fight against Spain, rather than seeing them as a small subset of Spanish subjects making violent attacks against their own government. Another strategic consideration was that by declaring neutrality, Spain would then obtain the right, by international law, to inspect any US ships sailing into Cuba to check for weapons, which they could not do under current conditions. This was problematic because some private ships were already delivering weapons to the Cuban insurgents, and if this were to continue after the US declared neutrality, the Spanish navy would then have a reason to seize these ships, and in these altercations, the United States might become embroiled in a war with Spain (Calhoun). For a nation that was recovering from the Civil War and laden with massive war debt, another war with Spain would be calamitous.

Rather than risk a war with Spain, the Grant administration decided to try resolving the conflict through a diplomatic negotiation. Using the US ambassador to Spain, Daniel Sickles, as the envoy, Grant proposed a term for a settlement between Cuba and Spain which called, amongst others, for Spain to declare abolition of slavery and pull out of Cuba in return for Cuba's eventual payment for the Spanish infrastructure built in Cuba (Calhoun). Although the Spanish government was initially open to mediation by the United States, the mediation effort eventually failed due to unresolvable disagreements on various terms between Spain and Cuba (Calhoun). Grant wanted to recognize the insurgents as belligerents when the Spanish failed to



respond to his mediation effort, but was held back by the adamant Fish who did not want to risk a war.

Sensing this disagreement between President Grant who were inclined towards the Cuban insurgents and Fish who argued against involvement, Democrats capitalized on the opportunity to drive the wedge further between the White House and the State Department. Notwithstanding the irony of supporting the Cuban insurgents who were fighting for emancipation while the Democrats were united against Reconstruction at home, the Democrats showed their support for the insurgents to force Grant to choose a position against Fish. Instead, Grant, despite some reservation against positioning himself strictly against the Cuban insurgents, affirmed that there was no conflict between him and Secretary Fish, and that Secretary Fish's positions were his own (Calhoun).

The fear of getting involved in a war against Spain was a huge deciding factor in itself, but there were other reasons why Grant ultimately chose not to recognize the belligerency and declare United States' neutrality. One was the wave of social change sweeping Spain, where monarchy had recently been overthrown to pave the way for a republican form of government. Going to war with Spain in this precarious moment would jeopardize this welcome development, and Grant advocated for recognizing the difference between the old imperial Spain that had ruled Cuba with an iron fist and the new democratic Spain (Sexton). Another reason was that Grant didn't regard the Cuban insurgents as having a proper and functioning form of government due to aforementioned instability within the Cuban political ranks, and thought that recognizing them as the belligerent government would be premature when they didn't yet seem to have the ability to rule themselves independently (Calhoun). Moreover, the Grant administration foresaw a future



where the United States' support of the insurgents would eventually lead to the annexation of Cuba down the road; Indeed, this wasn't a far-fetched possibility, as some Cuban insurgent leaders had actually called for Cuba to be annexed by the United States (Sexton). President Grant believed that the United States could not afford the expense required in governing Cuba especially since it would also mean losing out on \$32 million annually, or 18% of the total tariff revenue that the United States earned from tariffs on Cuban imports. In some political circles, there was also a fear of admitting a population so racially and culturally different from whites into being American citizens (Sexton).

Although Grant firmly stood his ground even as other Republicans and Democrats alike pressured the administration to come out in support of Cuban insurgents, the public opinion became an added pressure for Grant to reckon with when the Spanish authorities involved US citizens in the conflict. The public opinion became inflamed when the Spanish military executed two Americans captured on Cuban soil, and reached a critical point after what came to be known as the *Virginius* Affair. In November of 1873, the Spanish navy boarded and captured an American ship named *Virginius* which it accused of carrying arms and thereby providing aid to the insurgents. The accused crewmember and passengers, after being taken to Cuba, were denied civilian trial in violation of a treaty that the United States had signed with Spain almost eight decades earlier, and 53 of them were executed (Sexton). The press in the United States called for revenge and public opinion bordered on war hysteria, as even Secretary Fish, the most passionate arguer against provoking Spain, proclaimed that if "Spain cannot redress the outrages perpetrated... the United States will" (Sexton). Despite the united public sentiment, the Grant administration still treaded carefully to avoid confrontation with Spain, and rather than escalating



the situation further by fiery rhetoric, managed to settle an agreement with Spain who agreed to punish the officers responsible for the unjust executions and to pay reparations to the victims' families (Sexton).

In a typical fashion for the Grant administration, there were accusations of corruption within Grant's inner circles. Rawlins, the Secretary of War and the most impassioned supporter of Cuba, were later found to have received handsome amounts of bonds that would gain value with Cuban victory (Calhoun). Indeed, the Cuban representation that was sent to Washington to lobby the government members gave out these bonds liberally to government officials and journalists to enlist their support. Neither was Hamilton Fish, the Secretary of State and the staunchest voice against supporting the Cuban insurgents, free of accusations of corruption. His son-in-law, a lawyer, had been hired to do substantial legal work as a counsel for the Spanish government, which included gathering evidence against certain Cuban insurgents for violating the US neutrality laws, and Fish's critics called on him to resign from his position given this conflict of interest (Calhoun). Ultimately, both Rawlins and Fish didn't face any repercussions, and there is no way to be sure how much their side dealings influenced their viewpoints.

Committee Goal

- ❖ Explore the often-undiscussed struggle for abolition and independence in Cuba, which parallels the Civil War in the United States, and develop a historical understanding of the era where the United States wasn't the only nation engaged in the fights for liberties
- ❖ Explore the complexities of foreign policy, which has to balance domestic interests of self-security with a humanitarian goal of standing up for the morally right



- ❖ Explore what it means to pursue a foreign policy that serves the self-interest of the United States while also espousing the American virtues of democracy and liberty for all

Research Questions

1. What other foreign policy objectives was Grant administration pursuing concurrently at the time of Cuban Rebellion (especially in relation to England), and how does this intimately relate to and inform the administration's approach towards Cuba?
2. How realistic was the expectation / concern that Cuba might become an annexed territory of the United States, given Grant administration's position on Santo Domingo? What would be some social and political ramifications if the United States did annex Cuba?
3. How much risk was there of getting drawn into a war with Spain if the United States decided to support the Cuban insurgents? If a war did break out, what would have been some consequence for the United States?



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