

The War After the War: A New History of Reconstruction

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REVIEW

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John Patrick Daly is associate professor of history at SUNY Brockport. He is the author of *When Slavery Was Called Freedom: Evangelicalism, Proslavery, and the Causes of the Civil War*. Daly's new book, *The War after the War: A New History of Reconstruction* highlights the need for a new popular understanding of the war from 1865 to 1877 and Reconstruction as a whole. The book is a lively military history and overview of Reconstruction that illuminates the war fought immediately after the American Civil War. What Daly calls the Southern Civil War was distinct from the American Civil War and fought between southerners for control of state governments. In the South, African Americans and white unionists formed a successful biracial coalition that elected state and local officials. White supremacist insurrectionaries battled with these coalitions and won the Southern Civil War, successfully overthrowing democratically elected governments. The repercussions of these political setbacks would be felt for decades to come.

With this book, Daly examines the political and racial battles for power after the Civil War, as white supremacist terror, guerrilla, and paramilitary groups attacked biracial coalitions in their local areas. The Ku Klux Klan was the most infamous of these groups, but ex-Confederate extremists fought democratic change in the region under many guises. The biracial coalition put up a brave fight against these insurrectionary forces, but the federal government offered the biracial forces little help. After dozens of battles and tens of thousands of casualties between 1865 and 1877, the Southern Civil War ended in the complete triumph of extremist insurrection and white supremacy. As the United States marks the 150th anniversary of the Southern Civil War, its lessons are more vital than ever.

Chapter One examines the terror phase, when ex-Confederates were left in power in the South because African Americans did not yet vote and consequently white unionists had little power. Ex-Confederate extremists avoided open warfare with federal forces, but attacked the nominally freed African Americans and their white southern political allies. The 1865 – 1867 terror phase was the briefest but bloodiest of the Southern Civil War. In this period, thousands of African Americans and their white allies were massacred.

Chapters Two and Three discuss the second phase of the war as the North lost the initiative in 1865 by failing to impose advantageous peace terms and a new political order on the South. Chapter Two lists brief biracial coalition triumphs over violent white supremacist insurgents, such as the Ku Klux Klan who inspired many localized imitators collectively dominated this phase of war between 1868 and 1872. The ex-Confederate South's powerful commitment to white supremacy defined the whole era but particularly so did this move to guerilla tactics especially in a few key states like Kentucky, Missouri, and Tennessee. The Governors of Arkansas and Texas cleared their states of KKK-style opponents by martial law and the state militia. President Grant sent in national forces and arrested many members of the KKK in South Carolina. But Grant suffered politically for this intervention and state governors in the South faced immediate backlash. The author examines the ex-Confederate extremist guerillas' insurgent triumphs against the state governments of Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, and Virginia. Other states—Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida—saw a further escalation of tactics.

Chapter Four discusses the insurgent guerilla victories in the war's last phase which emboldened ex-Confederate extremists and their white supporters in the states remaining in unionist hands after 1872. In these last states, ex-Confederate extremists openly took up arms in paramilitary armies that directly attacked state government forces. The threat of northern military intervention and ex-Confederate extremists' fear of such intervention had largely evaporated in this phase. The conventional battles of this last phase ushered in the complete triumph of ex-Confederate extremists in seizing power in the last former Confederate states with biracial coalition governments. Ultimately, ex-Confederate extremists' triumphs led to the Compromise of 1877 in which the North withdrew all forces from the South and acquiesced to the ex-Confederate extremists signaling their white supremacist victory. Chapter Four also explores how the violent paramilitary warfare of the final phase of the Southern Civil War could not be

turned off in 1877. Daly points out that one intention behind most of the massacres and lynching was the disruption of a complementary Southern Civil War tradition in African American communities due to the fact that lynching and organized attacks resulting in the slaughter of entire African American communities became commonplace in places like Tulsa, Oklahoma, Slocum, Texas, and New Orleans. The North avoided the bloody reprisals that commonly follow civil wars, but the South did not. Ex-Confederate extremist victors of the Southern Civil War perpetrated massacres into the twentieth century.

In the final chapter, Chapter Five, the author examines parallels between the Southern Civil War and later civil wars fought with unconventional warfare over protracted periods of times and over peace settlements and occupations. This chapter highlights how civil wars rarely end with clear peace settlements and usually have a protracted, on-again, off-again nature that can stretch over generations of political violence and guerilla warfare which is the precise pattern that played out in the American Civil War and the Southern Civil War.

Historians are finding more cases of violent engagement in the Southern Civil War between 1865 and 1877. The author states firmly that historians should reinterpret the whole Civil War era in light of recent study over the Jim Crow era that describes it as a new and worse phase of slavery. The author listed some of the historical facts as well as new significant research findings to support this theory that the classic histories that claim the American Civil War of 1861 to 1865 ended slavery and reunited the nation are unsustainable. The history of the Southern Civil War illuminates Reconstruction as a compelling martial story that better accounts for the continuing troubled legacy of the Civil War era. I am doubtful about this specific conclusion. One reason is that the governments at both federal and state levels made their efforts to recover the economy and continue to integrate the south into a whole national single market right after the American Civil War. In doing so, they needed to alleviate tension and unite the North and South on a common basis. The other reason is that all violent attacks mainly targeted certain groups of people after the American Civil War, especially African Americans. Such attacks were not compatible to those in other countries like Iraq, Vietnam, and Afghanistan.

Dr. Xiaoxiao Li is a faculty member in China Studies at the University of Central Oklahoma with a PhD in contemporary world history at Northeast Normal University of China. He has been teaching US History, History of US-China Trade, World History, History of East Asia at University of Central Oklahoma from 2017. Before he began his college teaching career, he

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