

THE FALL OF THE KU KLUX KLAN IN THE POSTBELLUM SOUTH

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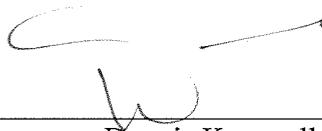
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The Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in the Postbellum South



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my wonderful wife Cerisa. Without her unconditional love and support, this accomplishment would not have been possible.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in the Postbellum South

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In the years following the Civil War, the United States found itself faced with a growing force that threatened to destabilize efforts to reconstruct the South, and to reunite the former Confederate States into the Union. This force was the Ku Klux Klan. Although initially benign in nature, this organization spread rapidly throughout the south and became increasingly violent over a short period of time. The Klan took drastic measures to prevent the influence of the Federal Government in the South, and the suffrage of recently freed slaves. As a result, the United States government branded the Ku Klux Klan a terrorist organization and created three Enforcement Acts to protect the Amendments to the constitution that guaranteed rights to all Americans.

As the United States and its allies fight the Global War on Terror (GWOT), it proves beneficial to remember history and study the lessons learned by the US as it engaged the Ku Klux Klan as a growing insurgency in the South, and as a terrorist organization. This thesis identifies the measures taken to ensure the fall of the first wave of the Ku Klux Klan in the postbellum south, as well as to illustrate how effective these measures were. This will enable the reader to recognize what measures are effective as well as those that are not. Applying these hard learned lessons will allow for conflicts in the future to be identified more quickly, and managed in a more efficient manner.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has pursued a Global War on Terror (GWOT), aiming to undermine and defeat those groups that threaten the United States and its allies. What many do not realize is that the United States' experience with terrorism goes back long before 2001. One of the oldest terrorist threats to the United States came from the Ku Klux Klan in the years following the Civil War. The Ku Klux Klan in the postbellum South was a paramilitary group that “for more than four years whipped, shot, hanged, robbed, raped and otherwise outraged Negroes and Republicans across the South in the name of preserving white civilization.”¹ The Ku Klux Klan we know today differs much from its original form. During reconstruction, the Klan prevented blacks and Republicans from voting by threatening them with physical harm and even death and waged war on the new economic and social order. In addition, the Klan sought to prevent blacks from exercising their rights guaranteed by the constitution.

The purpose of this thesis is to illustrate and analyze the actions of the United States that led to the fall of the Ku Klux Klan in the postbellum South. This will provide insight into what measures succeeded and which failed to bring an end to Ku Klux Klan violence. The questions that will guide this thesis will include:

1. Did the government react quickly enough to identify and engage the threat of the Ku Klux Klan?
2. Did the United States Government do enough to ensure the fall of the Ku Klux Klan?
3. What characteristics does the first wave of the Ku Klux Klan share with terrorist threats we face today?

Although one may argue that the Ku Klux Klan exists today and therefore never was defeated, it is important to recognize that there were three prominent waves of the Ku Klux Klan, each with different goals and methods from the other. The first wave existed between

¹ Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana UP, 1971), ix.

1865 and 1874. The second, between 1915 and 1944, and the third wave existed in the 1950s and 1960s. The Ku Klux Klan that exists today is not actually part of the third wave. The current organization cannot claim a similar level of membership to the other waves, and therefore is not considered as an actual 'wave'. The purpose of this thesis is to specifically focus on the first wave, which operated in the reconstruction years of the South.

This scholarship draws heavily from numerous primary source and secondary source documents. These sources were written over the past 150 years and cover subjects such as Reconstruction, and the Ku Klux Klan. I utilize primary source documents from different regions of the United States, which illuminate the different sides of the conflict. Furthermore, a congressional report was utilized, which was compiled immediately after the passage of the 1871 Ku Klux Klan Act. The report, titled the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, provides extensive insight into the atrocities perpetrated by the Ku Klux Klan. In its investigation, "the committee produced thirteen volumes of evidence covering every aspect of Southern Life. The reports remain one of the most fertile sources of information on the Reconstruction South."²

Chapter One of this thesis provides the background of the Ku Klux Klan from the birth of the organization to the major transformation that led to its rapid spread throughout the South. Chapter Two will illustrate the events occurring in the South in the years following the Civil War. Depicting this volatile environment allows for a better understanding of the people of the South, as well as the actions they were willing to take. Chapter Three provides actual case studies of experiences of those people or groups that were directly affected by the Klan. I will highlight the main actions the Government took as a response to the Ku Klux Klan violence in the South in Chapter Four. This chapter discusses the actions of the Federal Government as they reacted to the Klan, as well as the widespread prosecution of the Klan. In addition, I explain the fall of the Klan to include major failures of the organization as well as the decline in membership. Chapter Five discusses not only the lessons learned by the Federal Government's experience with the Ku Klux Klan, but also

² Lou Falkner Williams, *The Great South Carolina Ku Klux Klan Trials, 1871-1872* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1996), 43.

makes recommendations for effectively reacting to terrorist organizations and insurgencies in the future. It also provides a conclusion to this work.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND

This chapter provides the necessary background on the origins and transformation of the Ku Klux Klan. To understand the methods and actions of the organization, and to understand how the government combated the organization, it is important to first illustrate how the first wave of the Klan developed over time.

CREATION OF THE KLAN

The Ku Klux Klan was born in Pulaski, Tennessee, late in the year 1865. The six founding members of the Ku Klux Klan were well educated, former Confederate soldiers: Captain John C. Lester, Captain John B. Kennedy, Captain James R. Crowe, Frank O. McCord, Richard R. Reed and J. Calvin Jones.³ In fact, four of the six were studying to become lawyers.⁴ The location of their first meeting was held in the law office of Judge Thomas Jones. As a result of the secretive nature of the Klan, it was not initially known how the group came up with their name. With the rapid spread of the Klan, more became known to the public. “As it was later explained, the derivation of the name was comparatively simple. ‘Ku Klux’ was merely a corruption of the Greek word *kuklos*, meaning circle or band; ‘Klan’ was redundant but it added to the alliteration.”⁵

To better understand the motives of the group, it is important to illustrate the environment they returned to after being defeated in the Civil War. The creators of the Klan returned to Pulaski shortly after the end of the Civil War. They returned to lands and homes devastated by the war that had also stripped them of their most prized institution—slavery. But for the six founding members, and for other Southerners, admitting defeat in the Civil

³ Stanley F. Horn, *Invisible Empire: The Story of the Ku Klux Klan 1866-1871* (New York: Haskell House, 1968), 9.

⁴ Martin Gitlin, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Guide to an American Subculture* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2009), 3.

⁵ Trelease, 4.

War did not mean they would be forced to accept subjugation.⁶ In the postbellum South, slavery and the dominant belief system on race were very difficult concepts to abandon. Many Southerners still believed they had a right to enslave others despite their defeat in the Civil War. In some cases, slave-owners continued to practice slavery for some time, threatening their slaves with death should they stop working or attempt to flee. Their religious justification for practicing slavery is explained by the scholar Jerry L. West.

The system was seen by most as an institution that afforded a better life and possibly a way of salvation for the black man who fortuitously had been rescued from the dark jungles of Africa and introduced to the white man's civilization. The slave master argued slavery was supported by the Bible and an extension of God's law, and saw himself as a steward over a lesser people. Often ministers and laymen pointed to the account of Paul and Onesimus as sufficient justification for slavery. Yet, justification for this system was glaring when nearly all white nations had forsaken the institution.⁷

This is significant because it illustrates how and why many Southerners both before and after the war, felt about the institution of slavery, as well as why it was difficult for them to forsake. The creators of the Klan were further motivated by the way recently freed slaves tried to integrate themselves into society after the Civil War. John C. Lester, an original member of the Klan, explains:

The disturbing element was the Negroes. Their transition from slavery to citizenship was sudden. They were not fitted to the cares of self-control, and maintenance so suddenly thrust upon them, but many of them entered their new roles in life under the delusion that freedom meant license. They regarded themselves as Freedmen, not only from bondage to former master, but from the common and ordinary obligations of citizenship. Many of them looked upon obedience to the laws of the state—which had been framed by their former owners—as in some measure a compromise of the rights with which they have been invested.⁸

By and large, the initial acts perpetrated by the Klan consisted of relatively harmless pranks and verbal intimidation. Although this does not justify their actions, it is important to recognize that the Klan had no initial goals, and that the creators did not, at least in the

⁶ Jerry Lee West, *The Reconstruction Ku Klux Klan in York County, South Carolina, 1865-1877* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2002), 4.

⁷ West, 8.

⁸ Kwando Mbiassi Kinshasa, *Black Resistance to the Ku Klux Klan in the Wake of the Civil War* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2006), 14.

beginning, seek to practice violence on others. However, the Klan became bored with their outings and soon began focusing on recently freed slaves. “The plan was to terrorize the former slaves, many of whom were superstitious and wholly uneducated, by wearing their white robes and caps and convincing them that they were ghosts of dead confederate soldiers and citizens who were returning to seek revenge on the freedmen.”⁹ In one regularly retold story:

The leader of the Klansmen would tell the negro visited, in a hollow voice, that he was thirsty and wanted a drink. When the negro brought out the water bucket and drinking gourd, the thirsty Ku Klux would cast aside the inadequate gourd and, raising the bucket to his lips, to the pop-eyed astonishment of the negro, would drain it to the last drop--with the assistance of a funnel inside his mask connected by a rubber tube to an oilcloth bag under the flowing robe.¹⁰

Although the Klansmen enjoyed thinking they were tricking recently freed slaves into thinking they were ghosts, it seems clear that many were not fooled by the early antics of the Klan. Many victims had heard of similar pranks and even recognized the voices of neighbors and former slave owners.¹¹ Although initially the victims were not physically harmed, these types of acts would mark the beginning of a rapid move toward violent activities over the next several months.

It is also important to note that the Klan in its early phases actually saw itself as enforcers of the law. Although they may have liked to believe they represented the ruling body, they would later be recognized as the paramilitary group of the Democratic Party, which of course, consisted of ex-confederates. “Preposterous as it may seem, the Ku Klux considered themselves as something equivalent to an entire system of jurisprudence compressed into one body, combining the functions of prosecuting attorney, grand jury, trial judge and executioner.”¹²

While the Klan spread rapidly throughout Tennessee, the founding members and other leaders found it necessary to reorganize and reconsolidate the Klan. This would allow

⁹ Gitlin, 4.

¹⁰ Horn, 19.

¹¹ Gitlin, 4.

¹² Horn, 47.

leaders to demonstrate authority over the lower ranking members of the Klan, as well as to increase the effectiveness of Klan operations as a whole.

THE KLAN TRANSFORMS

In the early months of 1867, the Klan underwent a major reorganization. Considering the fact that the creators of the Ku Klux Klan were all confederate soldiers, it comes as no surprise that they implemented a leadership structure based on military doctrine. During this meeting, every *Klavern*, or individual unit of the Klan, in Tennessee sent representatives in the hope of unifying the Klan into a single Army. To achieve this, they developed a strict leadership hierarchy. Their first campaign would be to prevent blacks and Republicans from voting in the 1868 elections. By the end of the meeting, a Prescript was written and agreed upon, and a new leader was elected. In this Prescript, an extensive hierarchy was created.

an elaborate superstructure was created, which looked to a vast expansion of the order beyond the state. Still at the head of each local den was the Grand Cyclops, now assisted by two Night Hawks; above them were the Grand Giant of the Province (county) and his four Goblins; the Grand Titan of the Dominion (congressional district) and his six Furies; the Grand Dragon of the Realm (state) and his eight Hydras; and at the top the Grand Wizard of the Empire and his ten Genii. The Empire was presumably the South, but perhaps hostility to the Radicals would know no sectional bounds.¹³

The leader that was chosen was Nathan Bedford Forrest, a former confederate General who had become rich as a slave trader and plantation owner. Being a well known and revered figure in the South, Forrest would prove to be exactly what the Klan needed to increase its membership and popularity. While he was quite well off before the war, “the potential abolishment of slavery motivated Forrest to join the Confederate Army as a mere private on June 14, 1861.”¹⁴ During his time fighting in the Civil War, Forrest was accused of slaughtering an entire element of black Union Soldiers at Fort Pillow. Yet surprisingly, he was pardoned by President Andrew Johnson after the war.¹⁵ Being that Forrest was a celebrated war hero, the Klan enjoyed a dramatic increase in membership as a result of his election. In addition to this surge in membership, the Klan, whether a result of Forrest’s

¹³ Trelease, 15.

¹⁴ Gitlin, 66.

¹⁵ Gitlin, 66.

leadership or not, would begin to take more violent measures against its enemies. Although Forrest and other Democratic leaders would dispute claims of Klan violence, reports of Klan violence would continue to rise.

Although later chapters will illustrate this in greater detail, the goal of consolidating the Klan into a single army would ultimately fail. However, this did not mean the Klan as a organization would fail. It simply meant that the Klan would not operate as a centralized organization. In fact, the Klan as a decentralized organization proved more effective at pursuing its goals, and worse yet, would prove a more elusive and difficult enemy for the government to pursue and defeat. This stems from the fact that a decentralized organization can continue to operate regardless of what is happening to other elements that may be located in other areas. In addition, each individual den, or small group, did not require any type of support from other groups and could potentially operate indefinitely.

This is significant because it is an issue similar to what the United States and its allies face today in combating decentralized terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda. al-Qaeda is an organization consisting of cells that exist all over the world, and the United States cannot simply defeat its leadership to defeat the organization. Although killing or capturing the leader of al-Qaeda's Osama bin Laden would be a symbolic victory for the U.S. and its allies, it would not stop the organization from functioning. In fact, killing Osama bin Laden might actually make defeating al-Qaeda more difficult because he would become a martyr to his cause and membership and morale would likely swell, considerably lengthening an already seemingly indefinite conflict. This will be discussed more in Chapter Five.

The future of the postbellum South would be drastically altered with the creation of the Ku Klux Klan. The first wave of the Klan would assist in resisting Federal policies, and promoting a policy of white supremacy in its relatively short existence. The Federal Government would ultimately take the required action to defeat this organization, but not until Southerners ensured that white supremacy prevailed in the South.

CHAPTER 3

THE ENVIRONMENT

This chapter discusses what occurred in the years leading up to intervention by the Federal Government. This environment, as we will see, brought Reconstruction to a halt and threatened recently freed slaves and Republicans alike.

RECONSTRUCTION

Years before the end of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln laid out plans for the reunion with the Confederate states. The “Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction” was issued on December 8, 1863. The idea of reconstruction as a healing process would radically change with Lincoln’s assassination in 1865. In his book, *Splendid Failure*, Civil War scholar Michael Fitzgerald explains how the assassination of Lincoln had dramatic consequences for the program of reconstruction in the South, forcing a much more punitive approach:

There are few moments in American history where the effect of chance, of the influence of a single individual, makes a decisive difference. The assassination of Abraham Lincoln and his replacement with his vice president Andrew Johnson is perhaps the most important one. Historians generally view Johnson as the least flexible leader possible at the most sensitive moment in the nation’s peacetime history. President Johnson forced a showdown over the fate of the ex-slaves, and he encouraged the ex-Confederate South toward a policy of confrontation. He claimed to be following his predecessor’s policies toward the South, and in a technical sense he was, but the differences between the two men are dramatic.¹⁶

This passage is significant because it illustrates how important the period of Reconstruction was to the development of the United States following the Civil War. After defeating the Confederates in the Civil War, the Union had the opportunity to not only reunite the former states with the Union, but to create racial equality as well. In short, its leaders’ truly had the power to shape the future of the United States. By and large, the Union failed to take

¹⁶ Michael W. Fitzgerald, *Splendid Failure: Postwar Reconstruction in the American South* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2007), 22.

advantage of the incredible sacrifice it had made during the war. Although all confederate states would soon reunite with the Union, it was quickly realized that the South was not simply going to roll over and accept rule by the Federal Government; quite the contrary occurred. The South succeeded in openly resisting Federal policies for years after being defeated despite losing the war. Reconstruction scholar George C. Rable summarizes the situation in the years following the Civil War very well:

The victors were amazingly lenient and executed but one rebel, Henry Wirz, commandant of the infamous Andersonville prison. The leaders in the southern "rebellion" not only save their necks but after a brief period of "reconstruction" regained their dominant social, economic, and political positions. Yet more ironic, the losers in the conflict-the white southerners-committed numerous acts of violence against the winners. Individuals and groups, organized and unorganized, intimidated, whipped, hanged, and shot Union men, blacks, and Republicans of both races. By the time the federal government retreated from its reconstruction South, former Confederates had achieved through political terrorism what they had been unable to win with their armies-the freedom to order their own society and particularly race relations as they saw fit.¹⁷

In addition, the era of reconstruction would end without truly achieving its goals. Instead, the Compromise of 1877 marks the withdrawal of Federal troops and the end of Reconstruction. This compromise was a result of the controversial 1876 Presidential election in which the Republican Rutherford B. Hayes ran against Democrat Samuel J. Tilden. In an extremely close and contested election, Hayes ultimately wins the presidency, but only after Republican and Democratic leaders secretly create the compromise of 1877, which officially ends Reconstruction in the South.¹⁸

In addition to the Federal Government's mismanagement during the Reconstruction years, Southern Democrats actively campaigned against Federal policies. In addition, the acts of the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups ensured the failure of Reconstruction. "In the Spring of 1868, the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan burst upon

¹⁷ George C. Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1984), 1.

¹⁸ Robert McNamara, "Definition of Compromise of 1877," *19th Century History*, <http://history1800s.about.com/od/1800sglossary/g/compro1877def.htm> (accessed January 15 2011).

Radicals without warning. The violence not only disrupted the complacency of the Radicals, but eventually brought Reconstruction to a halt.”¹⁹

VIOLENCE SPREADS

The organization boasted substantial membership in Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Arkansas, and Florida by the time Washington took significant action against the Ku Klux Klan. Although Klan violence was minimal in the early period of its existence, the South would soon experience an explosion of violence that would dictate the political future of civil rights.

With the rapid spread of Klan dens throughout the South, the rapid spread of terrorism would also follow. Violence was first experienced in Tennessee, the state that the Klan originated in. “Murders were common, and floggings more so; one victim was left crippled after he received 900 lashes on a midnight raid.”²⁰ In addition, states like Alabama and Georgia and North Carolina would experience some of the worst atrocities. In a three-month period in Georgia, Klansmen killed thirty-one people, shot forty-three, stabbed five, and whipped at least fifty-five.²¹

In addition to targeting recently freed slaves, the Klan began to threaten schoolteachers of black schools as well. This served two purposes. It threatened the whites that supported Reconstruction policies, and also ensured that recently freed slaves and their families would not be afforded the opportunity to escape their former status in the South. By preventing, in one instance, in Kentucky:

A teacher who had a remarkably good school about ten miles from Bowling Green wrote: ‘The Ku-Klux Klan came one night and told me if I did not break up my school they would kill me.’ The teacher obeyed. He reported that the white people said that this action by the Ku-Klux was had because ‘the niggers there were getting too smart.’²²

¹⁹ West, 5.

²⁰ Michael Newton, *The Ku Klux Klan: History, Organization, Language, Influence and Activities of America's Most Notorious Secret Society* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2007), 8.

²¹ Newton, 8.

²² Harvey Wish, *Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1877: First-hand Accounts of the American Southland After the Civil War, by Northerners & Southerners* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), 178.

White teachers were not spared from intimidation and violence either. One such individual was John Dunlap who “had been whipped, and informed that if he didn’t leave town, he would be burned at the stake.”²³ In fact, the Klan as a whole began to target any place blacks were schooled beginning in 1867 and early 1868. “Mobs of the baser classes at intervals and in all parts of the South occasionally burned school buildings and churches used as schools, flogged teachers or drove them away, and in a number of instances murdered them.”²⁴

Although states took drastic measures to curb the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, it was extremely difficult to achieve any success for many reasons. As explained by Governor Powell Clayton of Arkansas:

There were no successful efforts made by civil authorities to arrest, much less prosecute, the perpetrators of the crimes referred to. This may be explained, first, by the fact that the Ku Klux terrorized the officers whose duty it was to execute the laws; second, by the ease with which one or more members of the Ku Klux organization could get themselves summoned to appear on juries; third, by the inactivity of officers who were either inefficient or who themselves belonged to the organization.²⁵

Clayton would later pass legislation that allowed him to declare martial law and to create state militias. As a result, the militia of Arkansas and the Ku Klux Klan would engage each other, throwing the state into a period of mass violence that continued for years. In addition to the reasons stated by Clayton, because the Klan had such extensive networks in each southern state, it made it relatively simple for members of one den to offer alibis for the members of another when charges were brought up against them.²⁶

Assassinations were a commonly used tactic by the Klan. The targets were commonly Radical Republicans holding office in the local or state level. In the years between 1866 and 1871 there were several political leaders assassinated, including Arkansas Congressman James M. Hinds, three members of the South Carolina legislature, and several men who

²³ Gitlin, 6.

²⁴ Wish, 173.

²⁵ Horn, 248.

²⁶ West, 41.

served in constitutional conventions.²⁷ The most prominent Republican targeted and assassinated by the Klan was Hinds, “who was shot from ambush in October on his way to deliver a speech.”²⁸ This specific targeting of political representatives denotes that Klan activity did not consist simply of random acts. The assassination of Hinds should be recognized as an operation that proves the Klan is a legitimate and worthy adversary of the state.

Although Klan violence was well known, leaders such as Nathan Bedford Forrest feigned ignorance, claiming that the Klan only acted in self-defense. Despite these claims, it seems obvious that by early 1868, Forrest was well aware of widespread Klan violence; however, he and other high ranking officials would eventually call on members of the Klan to cease all violent measures. Of course, this could have been a technique to preserve the image of the Klan, and to deter the White House from intervening.

At this time, it is important to note that without widespread support from Southern civilians, the Klan would not have found the success it experienced. Additionally, Southern Democrats as well as the powerful members of the media supported the Klan, whether overtly or covertly, as an organization that protected Southern values. By 1868, Nathan Bedford Forrest and the Klan were confident that, based on this support, as well as their close relationship with authority, they could get away with almost anything. By 1868:

The free hand his organization enjoyed prompted the overconfident Forrest to grant an interview with the Cincinnati Commercial in late 1868 that proved to be a tactical error. The KKK could literally get away with murder in Tennessee and the Deep South, greatly because of their sympathetic fellow citizens. But the newspaper article served to awaken the U.S. government to its revolutionary intent and widespread following. Forrest claimed the KKK to be a military organization that now numbered 40,000 in Tennessee alone and 550,000 throughout the South. He claimed the clan was growing not only in Tennessee, but in Alabama, and Mississippi as well.²⁹

This is significant because it marked not only a major shift within the organization of the Klan but also demanded the attention of the Federal Government. With growing reports of

²⁷ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 342.

²⁸ Rable, 73.

²⁹ Gitlin, 6.

Klan related violence, and the Klan's leader professing a military size of 550,000 throughout the South, it would become impossible for the government to ignore this threat any longer.

VIOLENCE BEGETS VIOLENCE

With the growing threat from the Klan, and virtually no protection offered by local authorities some groups, black and white, began to respond to the violence with violence. It seemed only a matter of time that victims of the Klan and other white supremacist groups took matters into their own hands. Regarding the growing tension between whites and blacks, Frederick Douglass was to have said that he wouldn't advocate "that blacks act as lambs while whites act as wolves!"³⁰ Given their options, it was certainly reasonable to assume that at some point, there would be violent, organized resistance to the Klan. Although this didn't necessarily contribute to peace, it certainly forced the State and Federal Governments to take notice, and may have contributed to getting the Federal Government involved more rapidly.

One group that violently resisted the Klan and its supporters was the Henry Berry Lowry Raiders: "an armed anti-Klan force of Lumbee Indians, whites and blacks under the leadership of Henry Berry Lowry that banded together to wage a guerrilla war in Robeson County, North Carolina, against the Ku Klux Klan and its supporters."³¹ Henry Lowry created the gang near the end of the Civil War, after becoming angry over the Home Guard's indiscriminate rule over the non-whites in North Carolina.³² In the years after the war, he continued to succeed in harassing the Klan. This would not have been possible without the support of the local populace. They had this support because "Lowry and his guerrilla fighters were viewed by blacks and Lumbees as upholders of justice during a period when extreme judicial and political violence appeared to rule the day."³³ Like the supporters of the Klan, those supporting the Lowry Raiders perceived them as a force for good against evil.

Despite documented Klan atrocities, the Federal Government failed to act to protect its citizens. Not surprisingly, the citizens began protecting themselves. Although this will be

³⁰ Kinshasa, 173.

³¹ Kinshasa, 156.

³² Jefferson Currie, "Henry Berry Lowry Lives Forever," *North Carolina Museum of History*, <http://ncmuseumofhistory.org/workshops/indian/lowry.htm> (accessed February 10, 2011).

³³ Kinshasa, 156.

discussed in further detail later, it is important to recognize that when the Government does too little, its people will act to protect themselves, which only leads to more bloodshed and instability.

FREEDMEN AND REPUBLICANS NOT WELCOME

After the Klan experienced its major reorganization in 1867, its first goal was to prevent blacks and Republicans from voting in the 1868 elections. By the election of 1868, blacks outnumbered whites by at least 90,000; however, through intimidation and violence, the Klan succeeded in reducing this advantage of blacks to a number that would make it more difficult for Radical Republicans to push reconstruction policies.

The Klan didn't waste any time in its efforts to influence would be Republican voters. Through intimidation and force, freed slaves either didn't vote or voted Democrat. Soon, Republicans would realize how capable the Ku Klux Klan was.

Early in the campaign, some Republican leaders had realized that conservative intimidation would result in a Democratic victory. By October, the situation seemed hopeless, at least in Georgia and Louisiana. Night riding had cowed Republican voters, and Democrats threatened to take control of the election machinery. Although there were no major disturbances on election day, radicals in Georgia and South Carolina complained that armed (and sometimes disguised) Klansmen prevented blacks from voting.³⁴

The Klan did not only intimidate voters, but also sympathizing whites and local authorities. As Rable observed, "Democratic election officials challenged Negro voters at the polls, and whites crowded around the ballot boxes to stop Republicans from depositing their tickets. The police in several towns and cities chased blacks from the polls and shot some voters."³⁵ Incidents like these were not uncommon. Though it may come as a surprise that police were chasing off and shooting at some voters, it is important to remember that Klan membership existed on many levels in the South. Furthermore, when the local authorities did not consist of actual members, it can only be assumed that they either supported and/or condoned the Klan's activities in suppressing the suffrage of freedmen.

³⁴ Rable, 79.

³⁵ Rable, 79.

As a result of this intimidation and violence, the Klan was able to ensure that those would be Republican voters were prevented from voting. Michael Newton found that “In every state where Klansmen rode, the terrorism had dramatic political impact. Tennessee Republicans saw their margin of victory slashed by 18,000 votes between 1867 and 1868. In Alabama, 2,000 ‘radical’ votes were wiped out in Greene County alone.³⁶ As a result, the Federal Government was forced to recognize the growing influence of the Klan. Shortly after these elections, Washington would take new measures to ensure voting rights were protected.

ORDER TO DISBAND

The violent measures being practiced by different Klan dens led to dramatic action by its leadership by mid 1868 and early 1869. While a few of the original members permitted, and even participated in these actions, some Klansmen were distancing themselves and even openly condemning the actions of the members that were practicing violent acts. One of the six creators of the Klan wrote an anonymous letter to the local media in April of 1868. In that letter, he stated:

It is to be lamented that the simple object of the original Ku-Kluxers should be so perverted as to become a political and pernicious in its demonstrations...If it is to become a regular organization, with guerilla and ‘lynch-law’ attributes, then better the Ku Klux had never been heard of, and the sooner such organization is dissolved and better for the country at large—especially for the South. All secret political orders, clubs, clans, or associations are pernicious in their tendencies, and every good man and sensible patriot should persistently express his disapprobation of them.³⁷

This explicit condemnation of the Klan by one of its original creators clearly signifies that the initial goals of the Klan were non-violent. Although the creators are wholly responsible for the organization they created, it is important to recognize that small, self-proclaimed non-violent organizations can quickly evolve and begin to practice violent tendencies—regardless of the creator’s intent.

As a result of Nathan Bedford Forrest’s interview with the Cincinnati Commercial, public awareness of Klan activities increased, and Federal authorities were forced to take notice. With this growing awareness and attention, Forrest as Grand Wizard was forced to

³⁶ Newton, 8.

³⁷ Trelease, 6.

call for the disbanding of the Ku Klux Klan. “So in late January 1869, he issued an order that called for the disbandment of the Klan and ordered that all masks and costumes be destroyed...However, the declaration merely served to disassociate Forrest and the KKK leaders from the actions of Ghouls (those operating at the local level) with sinister intent.³⁸ The Klan had spread so rapidly throughout the South, and it became so decentralized, that local dens began to operate without the guidance of high-level leadership. This decentralized system is a characteristic common to the significant terrorist organizations that we face today. This concept will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

Since the Ku Klux Klan continued to operate well past the order to disband, it was later believed that this may have been a ploy to confuse Radical Republicans. Stanley Horn noted: “Some students of Reconstruction history have advanced the view that Forrest by his so-called disbandment order was merely playing a trick on the Radicals, using this means to lead them to believe that the Klan was disbanded when really it was not.”³⁹ Regardless of Forrest’s intent, the Ku Klux Klan continued to terrorize the South.

³⁸ Gitlin, 7.

³⁹ Horn, 360.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDIES

This chapter utilizes documents that illustrate the experiences of the victims of the Ku Klux Klan. Furthermore, it explores case studies of those leaders of the Ku Klux Klan and how they condoned and or knew of widespread Klan violence.

A LETTER FROM JAMES H. BONE

The first case study that illustrates the environment that existed before the Federal Government took significant action against the Ku Klux Klan is that of James H. Bone, clerk of the circuit court for Madison County, Alabama. In a letter written to Congress, Bone provides information on recent Klan activity as well as his personal experience with local authorities on matters related to combating Klan activity. The letter was written by Bone on January 4, 1869. The letter is provided in full in order to realize the full extent of the issue, and to obtain a better understanding of the situation facing the South.

Dear Sir: As representative in Congress of the United States, I would most respectfully urge upon you the importance of your honorable body taking some immediate action for the protection of the Union citizens of this portion of the State of Alabama against the organization of armed men called the Ku-Klux Klan. I will give you a brief and plain statement of facts as they exist at this time, and as you are personally acquainted with me and know that I am no enthusiast, I trust that you will not make any allowance for my statements, but consider them really worse than I represent them to be. I will give you a statement of a few facts that occurred within the past two days.

Saturday last the organization known as the Ku-Klux Klan called on Mr. Biglow, a man who has never taken any part in politics, broke open the doors of his dwelling-house, knocked his wife down for pleading for the life of her husband, dragged him from his house and carried him several miles from the city to a grove, tied a rope around his neck and swung him to a branch of a tree; when life was about extinct, cut him down and said to him "You voted for General Grant, did you; this is the way we intend to treat all Grant men." After giving him a few swings, each time repeating the same as above, they turned him loose, warning him to leave the State, or the next time they would not spare his life; then turned him loose to find his way back to the city the best way he could.

Mr. Sibley returned home from Montgomery, Saturday morning, and stopped at the hotel. At night he had every reason to believe that the Ku-Klux Klan intended

to call on him with the intention of killing him. So he did not remain in his room, but sought protection by fleeing to the mountains. At night, as he expected, about 50 men, armed and disguised, called at his hotel, demanded that Sibley be delivered up to them; forced an entrance to his room by breaking down his door, and I honestly believe that his life was saved by him being absent from the hotel.

I called on the civil authorities this morning and asked if they would make any effort to protect their citizens against these outrages. They plainly and positively informed me that they could not command force sufficient to give any one protection. I asked them if in case I was called for by the Ku-Klux Klan and made an effort to protect myself, if I could depend on any assistance from the civil authorities if I gave the alarm. They said that they could not give me any assistance; that if they were determined to kill me I would have to submit.

I entered the United States Army in early 1861, remained till the close of the war; was wounded seriously three different times; located in this State in 1865; invested my all, about \$10,000, with the impression that the United States government would protect me in my honest pursuits of a living and life.

The question is now, must I pick up with my wife and babes and leave my all to the mercy of the party I at one time thought we had subdued?

Hundreds of our citizens would make the same statements to you, but they are afraid that their letters would never reach you and they would sacrifice their lives in writing.

Yours, truly,

James H. Bone⁴⁰

This letter is significant as it illustrates several important facts about the environment in the postbellum South. First, Bone states that he wishes to convey “facts that have occurred in the past two days.” Considering the events that Bone presents, it is clear that Klan violence is an all too common and well-known problem. In addition to this, in the end of his letter, Bone states that, “hundreds of our citizens would make the same statements to you,” which illustrates widespread knowledge of Klan outrages.

Klan members attack a man named Mr. Biglow for giving his vote to Grant in the most recent election. In addition to the horrific acts that Klan members practice on Mr. Biglow, it is important to note that they allowed him to live. This is significant in that allowing him to live served a strategic purpose: having been harassed and set free, Biglow would return home and tell his story to many. By setting him free, the reputation of the Klan

⁴⁰ James H. Bone, “Outrages by Ku-Klux Klan”. *U.S. Serial Set 1385 no. 23* (Washington: G.P.O., 1868-9).

would spread and those supporting Federal policies would feel vulnerable to intimidation and violence.

This letter clearly illustrates how the Klan operates. Though Bone doesn't mention it, Mr. Sibley is actually a senator visiting from another state. With this in mind, it becomes obvious that the Klan does not target individuals indiscriminately, but chose them with care. This is important to understand if we are to understand the true nature of the Ku Klux Klan.

One of the most important facts this letter highlights is the complete disregard and neglect of civil authorities in Madison County, Alabama. Having informed the authorities of these acts, they blatantly tell Bone that they "cannot command force sufficient to give anyone protection." In addition, when Bone asked if he could rely on them for help should he come under attack, they state, "if they were determined to kill me I would have to submit." One would like to believe the authorities in other areas of Klan violence would have responded differently but, by and large, they did not. The neglect exhibited by these authorities was a widespread occurrence throughout the South. Furthermore, as stated in earlier chapters, it was known that many law enforcement officials throughout the South were members of the Klan themselves or, they were afraid to act against Klan activities for fear of reprisals.

WILLIAM COLEMAN: A VICTIM'S ACCOUNT

In this next case study, a black man named William Coleman recounts his recent experience with the Ku Klux Klan. The selected passages are only a small portion of a single testimony. This testimony, along with hundreds of others, was part of an investigation called the "Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States." This was a report that was conducted and compiled immediately after the passage of the 1871 Ku Klux Klan Act. The report's findings would directly influence the action the Government took in the South over the next few years. Coleman begins his testimony by explaining that he was run out of Winston County by the Ku Klux Klan.⁴¹ That is how he ended up in Macon, Mississippi. Coleman explains his ordeal to the

⁴¹ United States Cong., "William Coleman," *Reports of the Committee for the House of Representatives for Affairs in the Insurrectionary States*, 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, 1871-1872, I, 482-3. Making of America, University of Michigan, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=moa;cc=moa;idno=aca4911.0001.001;q1=combinations;view=image;seq=484;size=100;page=root> (accessed March 23, 2011).

investigator in detail, stating that the Klan came to his house and demanded to be let in. The investigator asked,

Question. What did you see?

Answer. I saw men out there standing with horns and faces on all of them, and they all had great, long, white cow-tails way down the breast. I said it was a cow-tail; it was hair, and it was right white. They told me they rode from Shiloh in two hours, and came to kill me. They shot right smart in that house before they got in, but how many times I don't know, they shot so fast outside; but when they come in, they didn't have but three loads to shoot. I know by the way they tangled about in the house they would have put it in me if they had it. They only shot three times in the house. The men behind me had busted in through the door; both doors were busted open. By the time the fellows at the back door got in the door, these fellows at the front door busted in, and they all met in the middle of the floor, and I didn't have a thing to fight with, only a piece of ax-handle; and when I started from the first door to the second, pieces of the door flew and met me. I jumped for a piece of ax-handle and fought them squandering about, and they were knocking about me with guns, and firing balls that cut several holes in my head. The notches is in my head now. I dashed about among them, but they knocked me down several times. Every time I would get up, they would, they would knock me down again. I saw they were going to kill me, and I turned in and laid there after they knocked me down so many times. The last time they knocked me down I laid there a good while before I moved, and when I had strength I jumped to split through a man's legs that was standing over me, and, as I jumped, they struck at me jumping between his legs, and they struck him and he hollered, "Don't hit me, God damn you," but they done knocked him down then, but they hadn't knocked him so he couldn't talk. I jumped through and got past him. They didn't hit him a fair lick, because he was going toward them, and it struck past his head on his shoulder. If it had struck his head, it would have busted open. I didn't catch that lick. I got up then; they had shot out the loads. I grabbed my ax-handle, and commenced fighting, and they just took and cut me with knives. They surrounded me in the floor and tore my shirt off. They got me out on the floor; some had me by the legs and some by the arms and the neck and everywhere, just like dogs string out a coon, and they took me out to the big road before my gate and whipped me until I couldn't move or holler or do nothing, but just lay there like a dog, and every lick they hit me I grunted just like a mule when he is stalled fast and whipped; that was all. They left me there for dead, and what it was done for was because I was a radical, and I didn't deny my profession anywhere and I never will. I never will vote that conservative ticket if I die."

Question. Did they tell you they whipped you because you were a radical?

Answer. They told me, "God damn you, when you meet a white man in the road lift your hat; I'll learn you, God damn you, that you are a nigger, and not to be

going about like you thought yourself a white man; you calls yourself like a white man, God damn you.⁴²

This testimony provides a personal account of Klan violence. This account provides the Klan's so-called justification for beating, threatening, whipping and shooting at a man in the name of white supremacy, and the preservation of "Southern values" in addition to highlighting the atrocities perpetrated by the Klan. It also shows that Klan victims like Coleman were forced to move out of an area as a result of Klan violence, as well as the complete failure of local and state authorities to offer protection to him.

It is important to note that despite widespread knowledge of Klan atrocities, many of these accounts were discredited. When the investigation was completed and the report was given to Congress, many disputed the claims of those interviewed. Opponents of the findings routinely claimed that the testimony of illiterates was illegitimate and could not be relied upon. Despite this fact, the strong majority of those interviewed and the strong majority of documents utilized illustrated that Klan violence and civil unrest did exist on a widespread level in the South. It was generally agreed that despite the controversy surrounding the report, the findings were accurate.

FEIGNING IGNORANCE

In order to provide examples from both sides of the conflict, this next case study draws from an interview with General John B. Gordon, Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia.⁴³ The following testimony was also taken as part of the Congressional investigation on the state of affairs in the late insurrectionary states. In this particular passage, while testifying, Gordon denies having any allegiance and even feigns ignorance of the organization's existence, a tactic common to many high ranking Klan members:

Question. What do you know of any combinations in Georgia, known as Ku-Klux, or by any other name, who have been violating the law?

Answer. I do not know anything about any Ku-Klux organization, as the papers talk about it. I have never heard anything of that sort except in the papers and by general report; but I do know that an organization did exist in Georgia at one time. I know that in 1868—I think that was the time—I was approached and asked to

⁴² United States Cong., "William Coleman," 482-3.

⁴³ William Peirce Randel, *The Ku Klux Klan: A Century of Infamy* (Philadelphia: Chilton, 1965), 107.

attach myself to a secret organization in Georgia at one time. I was approached by some of the very best citizens of the State—some of the most peaceable, law-abiding men, men of large property, who had large interests in the State. The object of this organization was explained to me at the time by these parties; and I want to say that I approved of it most heartily. I would approve again of similar organization, under the same state of circumstances.

Question. Tell us about what that organization was.

Answer. The organization was simply this—nothing more and nothing less: it was an organization, a brotherhood of the property holders, the peaceable, law-abiding citizens of the State, for self-protection. The instinct of self protection prompted that organization; the sense of insecurity and danger, particularly in those neighborhoods where the negro population largely predominated...

Question. Did it have any antagonism toward either the State or Federal Government?

Answer. None on earth—not a particle. On the contrary, it was purely a peace police organization, and I do know of some instances where it did prevent bloodshed on a large scale. I know of one case in Albany, Georgia, where, but for the instrumentality of this organization, there would have been, beyond all doubt, a conflict, growing out of a personal difficulty between a black man and a white man. The two races gathered on each side, but this organization quelled the trouble easily and restored peace, without any violence to anybody, and without a particle of difficulty with either the black race or the white. They stopped one just as much as they did the other. This society was purely a police organization to keep the peace, to prevent disturbances in our State. That was the motive that actuated me in going into it, and that was the whole object of the organization, as explained to me by these persons who approached me. I approved of the object.⁴⁴

The interview continues, ending with Gordon stating that “we never called it Ku Klux, and therefore I do not know anything about Ku-Klux.”⁴⁵ As seen in earlier chapters, high-level leaders, like Nathan Bedford Forrest, would commonly claim to know nothing of Klan violence. In addition, many claimed the organization was created to enforce the law. However, evidence suggests that, despite this, widespread Klan violence was well known throughout the South, especially by 1871 (the year this testimony took place). Nathan Bedford Forrest also testified and his transcripts follow a pattern very similar to Gordon’s.

⁴⁴ United States Cong., “General Gordon,” *Reports of the Committee for the House of Representatives for Affairs in the Insurrectionary States*, 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, 1871-1872, I, 452. Making of America, University of Michigan, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=moa;cc=moa;q1=combinations;rgn=full%20text;idno=ACA4911.0001.001;didno=ACA4911.0001.001;view=image;seq=00000454> (accessed March 23, 2011).

⁴⁵ United States Cong., “General Gordon,” 452.

Shortly after Forrest testified, he was reported to have admitted to friends “that he had lied like a gentlemen while testifying under oath.”⁴⁶ Gordon would later serve as a two-term U.S. Senator and as the Governor of Georgia, his Klan involvement seemingly more a political asset than a liability.

Regardless of Gordon’s understanding of the Ku Klux Klan as ‘peace police,’ it is important to recognize that, despite the intent of the original creators and later leaders, Gordon and others were well aware of Klan violence when they served as leaders of the organization. Furthermore, we cannot forgive or ignore the actions of the Klan just because the early members claim they were originally a peaceful organization. This fact holds true for other violent organizations as well. If we are to hold these organizations accountable, we must recognize the organization for its current actions regardless of its original intent.

⁴⁶ Newton, 9.

CHAPTER 5

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REACTS AND THE KLAN FALLS

In this chapter, the measures taken by the Federal Government to curb and perpetuate the fall of the Ku Klux Klan are discussed. This includes the passage of the Enforcement Acts, military intervention on the order of the President, and the suspension of habeas corpus. This chapter also covers the actual prosecution of many Klansmen as well as the fall of the Ku Klux Klan. One observer notes that these actions were long overdue:

They eventually did what they had to do in 1870 and 1871, but only after hundreds of Southern Republicans had lost their lives and thousands had suffered lacerated backs and broken bodies or had been driven from their homes and property. The bloody shirt had to be waved for three years before congress moved itself to significant activity in behalf of elementary law and order.⁴⁷

BACKGROUND

Before illustrating and discussing the measures taken by the Federal Government, it is important to recognize that by the time the government actually got involved in combating the Ku Klux Klan, several states in the South had already passed anti-Klan laws. In fact, some of the measures and laws taken by Washington were directly modeled after anti-Klan laws that already existed in North Carolina and other states. The primary difference, however, was that the Federal Government could and would enforce the legislation it was passing. Of the states that had passed anti-Klan laws, several failed to enforce them because Klan intimidation and terror prevented state and local authorities from acting.

This is important to recognize to understand why, after these Southern states had passed similar laws, it was still necessary for the Federal Government to not only pass more encompassing laws against the Klan, but to enforce these laws by suspending habeas corpus and by using the United States Army. As will be seen, relying on local and state court

⁴⁷ Trelease, 383.

systems to try Klan members was unreliable, and so the Army was utilized to pursue and prosecute the Klan.

In addition to this, it is also imperative that we revisit Nathan Bedford Forrest's order to disband the Ku Klux Klan. Considering the fact that the order to disband came in 1869, one would have to ask why it was necessary for the government to pass anti-Klan laws in 1870 and 1871. It was clear that Klan violence continued well past the order to disband. This was the case for a few reasons. First, with the Klan spreading rapidly throughout the South, Forrest and other leaders found themselves losing control and authority over the Klan as a whole. Second, Klan members were becoming increasingly violent and Klan leaders, whether complicit or not, were publicly distancing themselves from the more violent members. In the end, the order to disband could be seen merely as an attempt by Klan leaders to disassociate themselves from their more violent counterparts. The fact was that members of the Klan, being a decentralized force, continued to operate on a widespread level throughout the South. This left the United States Government no choice but to take drastic action to address the issue, despite state attempts to rectify Klan activities.

THE ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 1870

After years of Klan violence, the Federal Government responded with the Enforcement Act of 1870. While the actual act makes no direct mention of the Klan, it is specifically designed to respond to the threat of the Klan and to protect black voters. Furthermore, this Act was designed to protect and enforce the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, which ensured citizenship for recently freed slaves, and ensured suffrage for all citizens. This act gave the government the power it needed to pursue and curb Klan activity, however; this power would not be used for at least another year. The Act begins as follows:

An Act to enforce the Right of Citizens of the United States to vote in the several States of this Union, and for other Purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all citizens of the United States who are or shall be otherwise qualified by law to vote at any election by the people in any State, Territory, district, county, city, parish, township, school district, municipality, or other territorial subdivision, shall be entitled and allowed to vote at all such elections, without distinction of race, color, or previous condition of

servitude; any constitution, law, custom, usage, or regulation of any State or Territory, or by or under its authority, to the contrary notwithstanding.⁴⁸

Section 6 of the Act would be used as a mechanism to target Klan activities. It mentions the techniques that the Klan utilizes and made those techniques a felony that were punishable by the Federal Government:

And be it further enacted, That if two or more persons shall band or conspire together, or go in disguise upon the public highway, or upon the premises of another, with intent to violate any provision of this act, or to injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate any citizen with intent to prevent or hinder his free exercise and enjoyment of any right or privilege granted or secured to him by the Constitution or laws of the United States, or because of his having exercised the same, such persons shall be held guilty of felony, and, on conviction thereof, shall be fined or imprisoned, or both, at the discretion of the court,—the fine not to exceed five thousand dollars, and the imprisonment not to exceed ten years,—and shall, moreover, be thereafter ineligible to, and disabled from holding, any office or place of honor, profit, or trust created by the Constitution or laws of the United States.⁴⁹

Unfortunately, the Government would fail in carrying out this new law, not because it was unwilling to take action but because it was relying on the hope that the mere existence of a new law would be enough to deter the Klan from continuing to practice terrorism.⁵⁰ The Government also feared that further intervention into the affairs of the states in the South may lead to general unrest. The result of this was a widespread failure to prosecute Klan crimes and Klansmen continued to intimidate voters and sway elections in states like Alabama and Georgia.

Considering the way the Klan operated up this point, it comes as no surprise that the Klan continued to thrive in the South after the passage of the First Enforcement Act. After all, the Klan had operated despite anti-Klan laws created by individual states and, since the Federal Government had not actually taken action against them since passing the Act, Klansmen saw no reason to stop what they were doing. In South Carolina, for example,

⁴⁸ United States Cong., “Enforcement Act of 1870—Full Text,” *Sovereignthink*, Sovereign Critical School of Thought, <http://sovereignthink.wordpress.com/2010/08/17/enforcement-act-of-1870/> (accessed March 27, 2011).

⁴⁹ United States Cong., “Enforcement Act of 1870—Full Text.”

⁵⁰ Trelease, 385.

Klansmen were totally unimpressed with the new law. Violence actually increased after the passage of the 1870 Act.⁵¹

Towards the end of 1870, Southern leaders and the Federal Government realized that violence had not abated. More would have to be done to ensure the protection of voters in the South. President Ulysses S. Grant even publicly commented on the worsening condition of the South despite the passage of the first Enforcement Act. In his annual Congressional address, Grant stated, “It is to be regretted, however, that a free exercise of the elective franchise has by violence and intimidation been denied to citizens in exceptional cases in several of the States lately in rebellion, and the verdict of the people has thereby been reversed.”⁵² With that, the President and Congress would be called on to do more and the passage of two additional Enforcement Acts would follow.

THE ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 1871

With continued reports of violence coming out of the South, the Federal Government passed a second Enforcement Act on February 28, 1871. Even during the passing of this Act, the people of the North believed a third act was already being created. This second Act was more of an amendment to the first act and, just as before, had very little effect on Klansmen; however, it did create stricter restrictions on election practices. In short, this Act was designed to establish Federal supervision over elections and it also made interfering with elections a Federal offense. More specifically this Enforcement Act:

passed following the disheartening mid-term elections of 1870, extended further the federal control of the voting process. Supervisors of election, to be stationed in cities where election irregularities were considered likely, were to stand guard over and scrutinize voter registration and voting procedures and to certify returns.⁵³

Soon, the President and Congress would be forced to pass an additional act called the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871.

⁵¹ Williams, 42.

⁵² Ulysses S. Grant, “Second Annual Message (December 5, 1870),” *Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia*, <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3741> (accessed February 24, 2011).

⁵³ Everette Swinney, “Enforcing the Fifteenth Amendment, 1870-1877,” *The Journal of Southern History* 28 no. 2 (1962), JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/pss/2205188> (accessed March 23, 2011).

THE THIRD ENFORCEMENT ACT: THE KU KLUX KLAN ACT OF 1871

The Third Enforcement Act is more commonly known as the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871, or, the Civil Rights Act of 1871. Though the laws outlined in the first and second Enforcement Acts gave the Government enough power to confront the Ku Klux Klan, it had thus far been unwilling to utilize these new powers. Thus the victims of the South began pushing for harsher methods than the government would actually commit to. Although Congress made attempts at passing a similar bill sooner, early attempts were defeated before leaving the House of Representatives. With claims continuing to pour in from Southern leaders, President Grant went to Congress to formulate a solution. As Allen Trelease summarized,

Finally Grant went to the Capitol himself on March 23 to confer with party leaders. He told them that he had been importuned for weeks to ask Congress for a law increasing his powers to combat Southern terrorism; but he hesitated to do so for fear of being called a military despot. The Congressional leaders replied that no such law could be passed under present circumstances unless he came out openly and asked for it; better ask now, said one, than have to use the power illegally when disorders mounted before the 1872 election. On that, Grant called for a pen and paper and wrote out the desired message on the spot. Without going into detail, he called for whatever additional power Congress judged necessary to “secure life, liberty, and property and the enforcement of the law” throughout the country.⁵⁴

This event is significant because it shows that Grant was hesitant to utilize his full power as he feared looking like a military despot. Given his career in the Army, this wasn't an irrational fear. However, considering what was at stake, it seems he should have acted sooner in this regard. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Five.

By April 20, 1871, Congress passes the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871. This Act was specifically designed to enforce the provisions of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. With this Act, it was now a Federal crime to:

Conspire together, or go in disguise upon the public highway or upon the premises of another for the purpose, either directly or indirectly, of depriving any person or any class of persons the equal protection of the laws, or of equal privileges or immunities under the laws, or for the purpose of preventing or

⁵⁴ Trelease, 388.

hindering the constituted authorities of any State from giving or securing to all persons within such State the equal protection of the law.⁵⁵

Now, any citizen could sue another person or persons for preventing or depriving him of their rights guaranteed by the Constitution. It also gave the President expanded powers. The president could declare martial law thereby utilizing military forces to quell domestic violence, as well as to suspend *habeas corpus*.

Ultimately, these extremely powerful Enforcement Acts would provide Federal authorities legal justification for intervening into state affairs.⁵⁶ Soon, the Federal Government, utilizing the military, would aggressively pursue those who had prevented, or were preventing American citizens from exercising their rights. Within just a few years, the United States Government would effectively curb significant Ku Klux Klan activity and prevent the Klan from operating in the South for nearly forty years.

REPORT OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE

Shortly after the passage of the Ku Klux Klan Act, the United States Congress launched an investigation into Klan activities in the South called the Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States. Scholars such as Allen Trelease and Lou Williams believe that although it was clear the investigation was necessary, it may have been launched to confirm the necessity of enforcing the Ku Klux Klan Act.⁵⁷ The committee consisted of a total of twenty-one members—thirteen Republicans and eight Democrats. In the end, the investigation would serve to justify the government's extensive action against the Klan. By the time the report was presented to Congress, the committee interviewed hundreds and compiled thirteen volumes of information on the conditions in the South. The report, however, had problems from the onset. Southern historian Stanley F. Horn explains that a divide occurred before the investigation even started.

⁵⁵ United States Cong., "Enforcement Act of 1871: The American Nation: Primary Sources [2008]," *Online Library of Liberty*, ed. Bruce Frohnen, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2282/216282> (accessed March 4, 2001).

⁵⁶ Williams, 41.

⁵⁷ Williams, 41.

The Republican members diligently sought to establish from the witnesses that the Ku Klux Klan was a political organization, composed exclusively of Democrats, and designed primarily for the persecution of Republicans, black and white, and especially for the intimidation of the negro voters. The Democrats, on the other hand, worked just as hard to sustain the theory that the Ku Klux had no political purpose whatever, they did not concern themselves with the politics of their victims, but were organized and operated entirely as a widespread vigilance committee for the preservation of law and order.⁵⁸

Based on the findings of the report, it became clear that the Ku Klux Klan's activities warranted the passage of the Enforcement Act of 1871. The organization was in fact politically motivated and, its victims were in fact recently freed Blacks and Republicans. Despite the inherent political challenges the committee experienced, the report contributed to increasing public awareness of Klan activities in the South and enabled the President and Congress to take significant action against the Ku Klux Klan. Soon, the Federal Government would exercise its new rights and commit to defeating the Ku Klux Klan.

PROSECUTION OF THE KLAN

Well before the Enforcement Acts were passed, local and state authorities had strived but largely failed to prosecute the Ku Klux Klan. There were three major reasons. First, extensive Klan membership made it difficult for authorities to find witnesses willing to testify because many feared reprisals from Klan members. This also made it nearly impossible to develop a jury that was not sympathetic to the Klan. Second, because the Klan existed in several towns within a state, a Klansmen suspected of a particular crime could rely on alibis produced by other dens which made it difficult to press charges.⁵⁹ Third, given the nature of justice systems in the South, it was nearly impossible to find success in combating the Klan threat on a local or state level. Local authorities would either consist of Klan members, or those unwilling to prosecute against Klan crimes. Federal inspector Joseph Gelray arrived in Tennessee to investigate Klan activity and, "he saw no evidence of civil authorities or fellow citizens taking steps to prevent such violence or arrest perpetrators."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Horn, 299.

⁵⁹ West, 41.

⁶⁰ Gitlin, 6.

Similarly, the occupying military forces that were present also found prosecuting Klansmen difficult. This made it frustrating for the Army because its leadership despised the Klan, “but seldom was their outrage so great as to brave the storm of abuse they received from Conservatives, or to run the risk of ruining their careers by ordering military trials.”⁶¹ This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five, but it is important to recognize that this contributed to failing to implement a sound counter-insurgency strategy. It wasn’t until the passage of the Enforcement Acts that the military would be utilized against the Klan in a significant manner.

Thankfully, the government’s Enforcement Acts would ensure that the Klan’s reign of terror would end. Shortly after the passage of the Ku Klux Klan Act, President Grant took action in states like South Carolina as a way to set an example for other southern states. Lou Williams explains that,

Powerless to protect the citizens of the state, carpetbag Governor Robert K. Scott turned to President Ulysses S. Grant for assistance. Grant’s action—unprecedented in the United States peacetime—facilitated mass arrests of Klan terrorists and enabled the federal government to bring many of them to justice.⁶²

Before passage of the Ku Klux Klan Act, President Grant ordered Major Lewis Merrill to York County in South Carolina as a result of pleas from Governor Scott. After arriving, Merrill learned that about two-thirds of one particular county was affiliated with the Klan.⁶³ Upon further investigation, Merrill compiled enough evidence against the Klan to assist in passing the Ku Klux Klan Act. Once the act passed, Grant cited Merrill’s report in suspending the court system throughout the entire state and placing the U.S. Army above local authority.⁶⁴ Such was the case in other counties and states as well. Now, Washington could utilize its new power and begin to pursue and prosecute members of the Klan.

Shortly after the Act was passed, President Grant, with the help of Attorney General Amos T. Akerman, began a large-scale operation to take action against the Klan. Jerry West explains:

⁶¹ Trelease, 384.

⁶² Williams, 2.

⁶³ Gitlin, 8.

⁶⁴ Gitlin, 8.

A region-wide manhunt followed the enactment. In Alabama alone, several hundred Klansmen were indicted. That fall the administration made an example of western Southern Carolina, suspending habeas corpus in nine counties. Attorney General Amos Ackerman oversaw hundreds of detentions to prevent escapes or the murder of witnesses. Southern white opinion combined high-voltage outrage at Grant's tyranny with a practical awareness that it was time to stand down. Numbers fled, and the Klan ceased to function almost everywhere in time for the 1872 elections. Black leaders were gleeful; it was as if someone had pulled a plug on terrorism.⁶⁵

As this passage illustrates, the government had finally begun a dedicated campaign to defeat the Klan. Until this time, the Army had a significant presence in the South, but it never actively prosecuted members of the Klan. In fact, President Grant had sent troops to places before, but they would not be fully utilized until after the passage of the Enforcement Acts beginning in 1870. Although many Southerners were outraged with the legislation and the subsequent intervention, it is hard to sympathize when the strong majority permitted and even condoned the violent actions of the Klan for years. It is also significant as Grant's exercising of his power to suspend *habeas corpus* in nine counties in South Carolina illustrates his resolve and commitment in addressing Klan violence.

Before trials against Klansmen began, Federal authorities arrested hundreds of Klansmen throughout the South. One major challenge facing the authorities was the construction of juries. Because the Klan had enjoyed high membership rates in states like South Carolina, finding a viable jury was nearly impossible. Although many were called on to serve as jury members, most were slow to respond. This was because "the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 required all jurors on Enforcement Act cases to swear an oath that they had never participated in the Klan. Perjuring themselves in federal court was a risk that few were willing to take."⁶⁶ As a result, juries in South Carolina often consisted of a majority of black Republicans, which only further enraged southern Democrats. Despite this, the trials and prosecution of Klansmen throughout South Carolina continued.

By the time the program had ended, "1,849 terrorists were indicted in South Carolina, 1,180 in North Carolina, 930 in Mississippi, and lesser numbers in four other states."⁶⁷ With

⁶⁵ West, 136.

⁶⁶ Williams, 57.

⁶⁷ Newton, 8.

this widespread prosecution of Klansmen in many southern states, the court system was overwhelmed with Enforcement cases because the Federal Government had committed to prosecuting all suspected Klan crimes. By 1873, the enforcement policy against the Klan had collapsed.⁶⁸ This did not mean, however, that Klan activity continued. In fact, by year's end, 1871, the Klan was crushed in many states. Even after prosecution of Klan crimes ended, laws against the Klan ensured its demise.

THE KLAN, EXTINGUISHED

Although there is no actual date that marked the fall of the Ku Klux Klan, it is better understood to have melted away after the passage of the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871. Following the Act, Klan activity was virtually extinguished over the next several months as fear of prosecution led many Klansmen to forsake their affiliation with the organization. Unfortunately, by the time the Klan faded away, it had already succeeded in achieving some of its goals. Worse yet, legitimate governments of the South would continue to resist Reconstruction policies until the Compromise of 1877, which officially ended Reconstruction in the South. Before this occurred, however, hundreds of Klansmen would be placed on trial and the remaining lower level leaders fled to avoid prosecution. By 1873, funding for Enforcement Act related trials was pulled and many former Klansmen were not prosecuted. Northerners and Congress were growing tired of their continued efforts to control the South's political path. According to Trelease, "By 1874 it wanted peace and return to normalcy more than it wanted to preserve equal rights for Negroes or majority rule in the South."⁶⁹ Thankfully, the Klan had already become obsolete as a result of the laws passed against them.

VIOLENCE AND RESISTANCE CONTINUES

Although the Klan was virtually wiped out by the beginning of 1873, this did not deter other groups from continuing to practice violence in the South. Although some of these

⁶⁸ Gitlin, 8.

⁶⁹ Trelease, 420.

groups may have consisted of former Klansmen, they certainly no longer operated under the banner of the Ku Klux Klan. According to Michael Newton,

April 1874 saw the formation of a new, unmasked White League in Louisiana, followed by a massacre of sixty Republicans at Coushatta in August and a coup d'état that toppled the state government in September, leaving twenty-seven dead and 105 wounded in New Orleans. The same bloody season witnessed a mass lynching of sixteen Tennessee blacks on 26 August 1874.⁷⁰

Despite passing and finally enforcing policies against the Klan that led to their demise, the people of the South continued to violently resist Federal influence. This illustrates that regardless of the fate of the Klan, the people of the South as a whole continued to resist. This also illustrates how and why the Klan was effective for so long. Unfortunately, this violence would continue over the next thirty years. As Newton summarized, “At least 3,236 blacks were lynched by white mobs between 1883 and 1915, without a single indictment returned against the killers who often posed for photographs beside the mutilated bodies of their victims.”⁷¹

This is significant because it illustrates that when the government finally took action, its goal was not necessarily to end violence and intimidation in the South but, to ensure the fall of the Klan. This would prove to be a symbolic victory for the Federal Government, but Southern resistance would continue without the existence of the Klan. In the end, the Klan merely served as a vehicle to preserve the Southern way of life. Southerners would continue to resist the government under different banners until the Compromise of 1877, which marked the end of Reconstruction.

THE SECOND WAVE OF THE KLAN

Thankfully, the enforcement policies effectively neutralized the first wave of the Ku Klux Klan. Although the Klan would experience another wave beginning in 1915, this particular wave was completely different from the first. The second wave was re-formed by William J. Simmons, who had been inspired by Thomas Dixon's book, “The Klansmen” written in 1905 and the movie, “The Birth of a Nation” by D.W. Griffith which motivated

⁷⁰ Newton, 8.

⁷¹ Newton, 8.

him to recreate the Ku Klux Klan.⁷² Although it was reformed roughly forty years after the first wave fell, its methods and purpose were different from the first wave. This new organization would be viewed completely differently from the first, and would enjoy a much higher level of membership as well. Trelease explains,

During the First World War the new Klan won attention as a super-patriotic organization. In the early 1920's it mushroomed to national proportions, far exceeding the membership and geographical extent of the Reconstruction Klan. The new order shared the Negrophobia of the old, but its list of hates and fears reached also to Catholics, Jews, immigrants, radicals, organized labor, and other groups who posed an imagined threat to individuals in every part of the country.⁷³

This organization would not prove to be as volatile and violent as its predecessor. The creation of this wave was similar to the first in that it came about during a time of fear. Unlike the first wave, the second wave fell without the government acting against it. Instead, by 1930 its membership would seriously decline as a result of internal issues within the Klan. The fall of the second wave, however, would be short lived. It would form once again during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s.

⁷² Encyclopedia Britannica, "William J. Simmons (American Colonel and Preacher)," *Encyclopedia Britannica – Online*, Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/545158/William-J-Simmons> (accessed March 23, 2011).

⁷³ Trelease, 422.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS AND LESSONS LEARNED

This chapter provides an analysis of State and Federal reaction to the threat of the Ku Klux Klan and also provides the lessons learned from its experience with them. This chapter also provides a conclusion to this thesis.

THE KLAN: A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION

Although the Ku Klux Klan was practicing violence against freedmen and Republicans for years, the United States wouldn't label them a terrorist organization until 1869. Today, while there is no internationally agreed upon definition, the United States defines the term terrorism as: "means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents."⁷⁴ Although Klan activities up until 1869 had been referred to as terrorist activity by the people of the North and by the victims in the South, it is important to note that the government did not openly recognize them as a terrorist organization until 1869. Should the Government have recognized the Klan earlier as a terrorist threat, the United States could have defeated the organization before it spread rapidly throughout the South. Although the Klan may have seemed incapable of any significant activity early on, it is clear that the Government was well aware of Klan activity before 1869. The United States may have avoided openly recognizing the threat for a few reasons. First, recognizing the Klan as a terrorist organization would have compelled action on its part. Having recently finished the Civil War, it probably hoped the issue would go away on its own. Second, President Johnson was pursuing his policy of Reconstruction with the South and it is likely that taking significant action against the Klan could have proved detrimental to North-South relations.

⁷⁴ United States Office of the Law Revision Counsel, "United States Code: Title 22, 2656f. Annual Country Reports on Terrorism," *Legal Information Institute at Cornell Law School*, Cornell University, http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/22/usc_sec_22_00002656---f000-.html (accessed March 27, 2011).

If the US and its allies are to effectively manage and combat terrorist threats in the future, it is imperative that they are recognized for what they are quickly. The Government must commit to combating those organizations that wish to do harm to us and our allies. Had the threat coming from al-Qaeda been recognized and committed to, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, may have been prevented. Bin Laden and other leaders of al-Qaeda had singled the United States out for attack repeatedly since the early 1990s. In 1992, bin Laden called for *jihād* against the Western occupation of Islamic lands.⁷⁵ And in 1998, bin Laden issued a *fatwa*, which declared war on the United States. “Claiming that America had declared war against God and his messenger, they called for the murder of any American, anywhere on earth, as the individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it.”⁷⁶

If al-Qaeda’s open declaration of war on the United States wasn’t enough, the attack on the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, the embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, the attack on the World Trade Center in 1993 and the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole on October 12, 2000, certainly should have been. Unfortunately for the United States, the actual wake-up call wouldn’t come until 9/11, years after the al-Qaeda threat was recognized as legitimate. Not until this date did al-Qaeda become known to the general public, and the United States and its allies would finally take action against it.

A DECENTRALIZED THREAT

Under Nathan Bedford Forrest, the Ku Klux Klan was a centralized organization. As discussed in Chapter Two, it underwent a major reorganization in 1867 that sought to establish several Klan dens throughout Tennessee into a single entity. The measures taken during this reorganization succeeded within the state of Tennessee. Had the Klan continued to operate as a centralized organization, it would have been much easier for the United States to defeat it; however, soon after the reorganization, the Klan became a victim of its own success. The popularity and spread of the Klan throughout the South was so rapid, central authority over Klansmen waned and, the Klan transformed into a decentralized organization.

⁷⁵ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 59.

⁷⁶ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 9.

This is important to recognize because for the United States to be effective in defeating the Ku Klux Klan, it would have had to recognize how the group was organized. If the Government would have responded sooner, or understood the group better, it would have been better prepared knowing that it was facing a decentralized threat.

This is relevant to our situation because many of the terrorist organizations that exist today, like the Ku Klux Klan was, are decentralized organizations. In the book, *Starfish and the Spider*, the authors explain decentralization as: “what happens when no one is in charge. It’s about what happens when there’s no hierarchy. You’d think there would be disorder, even chaos. But in many arenas, a lack of traditional leadership is giving rise to powerful groups that are turning industry and society upside down.”⁷⁷

In addition, they recognize the strengths al-Qaeda has as a decentralized group. “Al-Qaeda headquarters doesn’t conceive each attack; rather, members adopt the ideology and copy what has worked in the past. Many unaffiliated groups simply take the brand and use it.”⁷⁸ This is important to us because this is exactly how the first wave of the Ku Klux Klan operated.

In order to defeat the terrorist organizations we face today, we cannot simply rely on defeating or negotiating with a single representative of that organization. This makes the organization very dangerous because it has the potential to operate on little funding, and on little contact with leaders over a prolonged amount of time. Furthermore, even if the United States and its allies succeeded in killing Osama bin Laden, it is likely that the organization would not only survive but it could actually experience a surge in membership as a result of his death. It is because of this that it is imperative to recognize the true nature of the organization we are dealing with.

COMMITMENT

This thesis has also illustrated the importance of Federal commitment. As we have seen through our experience, we cannot simply rely on the presence of laws to deter violent organizations. We must be willing to commit to enforcing and prosecuting in addition to

⁷⁷ Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations* (New York: Portfolio, 2006), 5.

⁷⁸ Brafman, 140.

simply creating laws. Furthermore, after the Civil War, we saw a blatant lack of protection offered for freedmen. Although the Federal Government was pursuing peace and reunion with the southern states after the end of the Civil War, this does not mean they were free from protecting freedmen and their voting rights as citizens. In the end, if we are to go to address a problem, we must be willing to commit to enforcing the measures we have implemented, as well as accepting the consequences of our commitment.

IN THE ABSENCE OF AUTHORITY

Considering the fact that local and state authorities were incapable of protecting their people from Klan violence, it should come as no surprise that some took matters into their own hands and openly resisted Klan violence. In addition to these authorities not protecting their people, the Federal Government was also slow to respond to the threat coming from the Klan. Unfortunately, by taking matters into their own hands, groups were only further destabilizing the situation. When groups like the Lowry Raiders began attacking Klansmen, violence increased, and it only made the situation worse. However, submitting to violent groups and taking no action is not the solution either. What authorities should have done then, and what should be done now is to commit to enforcing the law, and protecting the people against terrorist and insurgent groups.

In Iraq for example, the United States and its allies quickly and efficiently overthrew Saddam's regime. Where the Coalition failed was protecting the people from insurgent and terrorist forces immediately after liberating the country. This occurred because the United States and its allies were focused on the most immediate task of defeating Saddam Hussein and were not equipped to manage the country immediately after liberation. Additionally, it is generally agreed that the United States attempted to use as few troops as possible in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This contributed to the United States incapability of offering sufficient protection to the Iraqi population after major combat operations had ended. As a result, many Iraqis utilized their own means to protect themselves, and this led to further bloodshed. When it was finally realized how many troops were actually needed to provide security in Iraq, the United States dramatically increased troop levels. As a result, "violence in Iraq decreased dramatically in the second half of 2007. The number of enemy attacks in Iraq fell to levels that last existed in mid-2005, and stabilized at that low level from October

2007 to March 2008. Attack trends dropped by 60 percent throughout Baghdad in 2007.”⁷⁹ In order to find success in dealing with terrorist groups and insurgencies in the future, the Government must be willing to commit to its promises. If not, the people will take matters into their own hands, thereby perpetuating violence and death.

RECOGNIZING AN INSURGENCY

In the years after the Civil War, the South was experiencing an insurgency. Had the Government recognized what was occurring as an insurgency, it would have been better equipped to respond to it. Without support of the general population, the Klan would have not experienced the success found in the South. It is because of this that makes recognizing an insurgency so important. Unfortunately, that lesson would not be learned for some time.

In the Vietnam War for instance, the United States failed to recognize the conflict as an insurgency for many years. This is important as it illustrates that the United States was fighting the war the way it wanted—a conventional war. By the time the United States recognized it as an insurgency, and altered its tactics, public support for the war had disappeared, and the United States pulled out of Vietnam. If it would have accepted the situation as an insurgency sooner, it may have been able to succeed in winning the war.

In a more contemporary example, the United States and its allies found themselves fighting insurgencies in both Iraq and Afghanistan. After recognizing the conflict as an insurgency, it was able to more effectively wage war against its enemies by adopting a population-centric strategy, as opposed to an enemy-centric policy; in Iraq, this strategy has succeeded.

As was seen in Chapter Four, military leadership was fearful of action against insurgent activity because they feared risking their careers, as well as receiving abuse from Conservatives. This meant that before the Enforcement Acts passed, the military would fail to effectively implement a counter-insurgency strategy. In order to avoid this, the military must be willing to recognize an insurgency and take action against it. It wasn't until the passage of the Enforcement Acts that the military would be utilized to take significant action against the Klan. This is significant because it serves as a lesson for the future. In order to

⁷⁹ Kimberly Kagan, *The Surge: A Military History* (New York: Encounter, 2009), 196.

effectively fight one's enemies, it is imperative that the type of war being fought be recognized, and the methods and strategies be adjusted accordingly.

CONCLUSION

The preceding chapters have illustrated that the American experience with the first wave of the Ku Klux Klan has direct relevance to the situation we face today with terrorist organizations and insurgencies. Although the Obama administration has chosen to no longer use the phrase "Global War on Terror," it is safe to assume that based on current trends, finding ultimate success in defeating terrorist organizations is not going to occur anytime soon. Given this, scholars and warriors alike must learn from the action or inaction of history in dealing with similar problems.

Although the early research of this work suggested that the fall of the Ku Klux Klan was a result of direct Government action, this was not entirely true. By the time the Federal Government took strong action against the Klan, its influence was waning and it had already succeeded in achieving some of its goals. Therefore, the reason for its fall was not entirely because of Federal policies, but rather a combination of these policies and the fact that the Klan as a terrorist group had run its course. Regardless of this, the opportunity still exists to learn much from the American experience with the Ku Klux Klan.

As a result, much was learned from the US experience with the first wave of the Ku Klux Klan, including the following:

4. Violent groups like the Klan must be quickly recognized as terrorist groups. Against such groups action must be taken swiftly. Ignoring these groups or not responding quickly will only make the situation worse.
5. In order to effectively react and respond to terrorist organizations it must be recognized how the group operates. Specifically, we must recognize whether it is a decentralized enemy, or a centralized enemy. Combating a decentralized organization as a centralized organization will only prolong and worsen the situation.
6. If the authority fails to protect its people, the people will begin to protect themselves. Knowing this, it is imperative that a government succeed in projecting authority over its borders and commit to protecting its people. If it does not, the people will take action themselves.
7. Based on experience with the first wave of the Ku Klux Klan, it is clear that recognizing a conflict as an insurgency is essential if a government is to effectively respond. Recognizing a conflict as an insurgency will allow a government to alter its tactics that will include implementing a population-centric strategy.

A common criticism for the United States is that it routinely fails to learn from past mistakes. If success is to be found in defeating terrorist organizations that wish to do harm to America or its allies, it is imperative that insight be gained from mistakes to aid in avoiding making these same mistakes in the future. By applying the lessons learned based on our experience with the Ku Klux Klan, one may take more proactive steps to resolving future conflicts more efficiently. If the lessons are ignored, it can only be assumed that the same experience would result by repeatedly making the same mistakes and failing to adapt by looking to the past for guidance.

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