

Book Review: Doyle, Don H. *The Age of Reconstruction: How Lincoln's New Birth of Freedom Remade the World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2024. ix + 369 pages. Hardcover, \$35.00.

Much has been written about the legacy of the Union's triumph in the American Civil War and the postwar efforts to rebuild the nation. However, there has been a void in the historiography concerning the international reach of the conflict and its aftermath. The international impact of the triumph of self-government and ensuing destruction of slavery within the United States is the subject of *The Age of Reconstruction: How Lincoln's New Birth of Freedom Remade the World*. This is the most recent publication from Don H. Doyle, professor emeritus at the University of South Carolina, whose research analyzes the impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction on the global community. Doyle's central argument posits that there were in fact two reconstructions, a domestic and an international, and that historians should consider when researching the end of the Civil War. Ultimately, *The Age of Reconstruction* successfully argues that the scope of the Union's victory and the ensuing death of slavery within the United States had a profound impact and significant influence on the subsequent global change in the arenas of republicanism and abolition.

Doyle takes a thematic approach in the structure and organization of *Age of Reconstruction*. The initial chapter analyzes the global community's reaction to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Doyle's multinational archival approach successfully asserts that there was a profound reaction of grief that was expressed within the global community amongst the peoples that were fighting for their own liberty. This was tangibly manifested by the overwhelming outpouring of sorrow that was expressed within the international community via public demonstrations, tributes, gifts, and petitions to the memory and mission of America's 'martyr' for republicanism and manumission. Ultimately, Doyle argues that Lincoln's death did

not initiate the global push for liberty but rather that his death had a profound impact on their reinvigoration.

The subsequent section, and strongest portion of Doyle's research, analyzes the United States' efforts to re-assert the Monroe Doctrine within the western hemisphere to rid the Americas of foreign rule and slavery. The thesis that in the aftermath of the Civil War the State Department under William H. Seward was able to masterfully maneuver to create 'buttresses' of republicanism around the United States is abundantly accomplished through Doyle's utilization of international archives, political cartoons, and ephemera. This section details America's role in the demise of Maximilian's rule in Mexico, Russia's motivations behind the sale of Alaska, and Great Britain's apathetic attitude towards retaining their Canadian provinces. Throughout, Doyle is able to successfully argue that the United States played a critical role, either directly or indirectly, in the establishment of an independent Mexico, removal of Russia from the Americas, and home rule for Canada. The efforts of Seward are lauded throughout this portion of Doyle's scholarship. More specifically, the State Department is praised for what Doyle terms 'quiet diplomacy,' a veiled threat of invocation of the Monroe Doctrine, while avoiding direct military confrontation to accomplish the nation's goals. A minor criticism would be the sometimes overly celebratory tone that Doyle uses when analyzing the actions of the State Department under Seward.

The final portion of Doyle's scholarship examines the rise of disparate groups of people across Europe to push for self-government and an end to monarchical rule. This section of the work sufficiently argues that in their efforts to overtly and covertly assist in the demise of the experiment of republican government in America the Old-World Powers laid the groundwork for their own downfall. Doyle's meticulous multinational archival research presents a clear picture

as to why some revolutionaries, namely the working class of Britain and members of the Italian Risorgimento, found themselves more successful than others, the Paris Commune and *sexenio democratico*, at the establishment of permanent representative governments. Throughout this part of his research Doyle is able to tie the American triumph of republican government and death of slavery to transatlantic efforts.

One of the more provocative arguments put forth by Doyle is his assertion that the State Department's efforts under the leadership of William H. Seward and Hamilton Fish were not fueled by imperialist intentions. Doyle's argument counters much of the previous historiography that both administrations aimed to free the Americas of slavery and tyranny in an effort to surround the United States with what Seward termed 'buttresses' of republicanism. In this sense, *The Age of Reconstruction* pushes back on the previous scholarship of Walter LaFeber (who Doyle refutes by name) and William A. Williams, who both asserted that American actions in the western hemisphere post-1865 were driven by imperialist and economic motives. While the assertions of LaFeber and Doyle have merit, it is the historian's task to see the more nuanced application of American diplomatic efforts within the western hemisphere in the aftermath of the Civil War.

The Age of Reconstruction is a valuable addition to the historiography of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and American diplomacy. Scholars that are interested in how the world interpreted and was influenced by the triumph of republican government and emancipation over the Slave Power in 1865 will find this work valuable in their own research. While this piece of scholarship is overtly pro-American, it does do a sufficient job of criticizing the white supremacy, American exceptionalism, and greed that led to the death of Lincoln's 'new birth of

freedom' that he expressed in the Gettysburg Address. Ultimately, *Age of Reconstruction* is a worthy contribution to the historiography of American diplomacy and international relations.

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