

American Militias after the Civil War: From Black Codes to the Black Panthers and Beyond

The Civil War (1861-1865) was nothing less than a revolutionary reorganization of American government, society, and economics. It claimed almost as many lives as every other U.S. conflict combined and, by war's bloody logic, forged the nation which the Founding Fathers could not by settling once and for all lingering national questions about state sovereignty and slavery.

The postwar period, however, was one of arguably greater turmoil than the war itself. This is because many men in the South did not, in fact, lay down their arms at the end of the War. What's more, freedmen, former slaves that were now American citizens, had to take defensive measures against pro-Democratic Party partisans, the most famous of whom were the Ku Klux Klan.

America's militia has existed for a number of purposes and has exercised a surprising number of roles over the years. But at its core, it's a bulwark of the power of the country against the power of the state. In *Early American Militias: The Forgotten History of Freedmen Militias from 1776 until the Civil War*, we covered the historical roots of the militia. Below is the modern history of the militia following the Civil War, and how unforeseen changes which started during Reconstruction have set the stage for the contemporary movement of Constitutional citizens militias.

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