

Abraham Lincoln and the Border States

Author(s): William E. Gienapp

Source: *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Vol. 13 (1992), pp. 13-46

Published by: [University of Illinois Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20148882>

Accessed: 12/12/2010 16:42

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=illinois>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of Illinois Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*.

Abraham Lincoln and the Border States

WILLIAM E. GIENAPP

"I hope to have God on my side," Abraham Lincoln is reported to have said early in the war, "but I must have Kentucky." Unlike most of his contemporaries, Lincoln hesitated to invoke divine sanction of human causes, but his wry comment unerringly acknowledged the critical importance of the border states to the Union cause. Following the attack on Fort Sumter and Lincoln's call for troops in April 1861, public opinion in Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri was sharply divided and these states' ultimate allegiance uncertain. The residents of the border were torn between their close cultural ties with the South, on the one hand, and their long tradition of Unionism and political moderation on the other. At the same time, the expansion of the railroad network in the 1850s had disrupted these states' traditional trade patterns with the South by directing a growing amount of commerce, including farmstuffs, northward, so economically they looked in both directions. With popular emotions running high, there was a very real possibility that they would follow the Upper South out of the Union and join the Confederacy.

Together Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri had a white population of almost 2,600,000, nearly half that of the population of the eleven states of the Confederacy.¹ In none of the border states did slavery approach the importance it had in the Deep South, but only in Delaware, with fewer than 2,000 slaves out of a total population of about 112,000, was it insignificant (Table 1). Delaware stood alone among the border states in not containing a serious movement for secession.²

I wish to thank Mark E. Neely, Jr., who commented on an earlier version of this article, for a number of helpful suggestions.

1. In addition, approximately a half million whites lived in the Unionist regions of western Virginia and eastern Tennessee. See James A. Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 11-12.

2. For this reason Delaware has been excluded from most of the discussion that follows. Even had Delaware's commitment to the Union been more qualified, it never could have functioned as a Confederate state as long as Maryland, which surrounded it, remained in the Union.

Table 1. Number of Slaves and Total Population in 1860

Region	Slave	Population	Proportion (%)
Border States ¹			
Delaware	1,798	112,212	1.6
Maryland	87,189	687,049	12.7
Kentucky	225,483	1,155,651	19.5
Missouri	114,931	1,181,912	9.7
Upper South ²	1,208,758	4,168,723	29.0
Deep South ³	2,312,352	4,868,449	47.5

Source: James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965), Appendix A.

1. In addition, the District of Columbia contained 3,185 slaves out of a total population of 75,079.

2. Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas.

3. South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.

Smaller and less heavily populated than either Kentucky or Missouri, Maryland nevertheless occupied a key strategic position, for it bordered the District of Columbia on three sides. In addition, Washington's telegraph and rail links to the north and west traversed its territory. Loss of Maryland would force the federal government to abandon Washington, a humiliating development that would entail a potentially fatal loss of prestige and possibly lead to diplomatic recognition by Europe of the Confederacy.

Kentucky was much more heavily populated, had richer mineral resources, and was a major grain and livestock producing state. Yet Kentucky's primary importance was strategic. Bordered by the Ohio River to the north and the Mississippi River to the west, it stood as a buffer between the states of the Old Northwest and Confederate Tennessee and provided the main line of defense for the states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Kentucky also controlled access to several major river systems, including the Tennessee and the Cumberland that pointed south toward the heart of the Confederacy.

Missouri was also a major agricultural state producing vast quantities of grains and livestock. It also contained the major city of St. Louis, an important commercial center, and was the most populous of the border states. Strategically, Missouri protected the Union's western flank and guarded the western shore of the Mississippi River beyond the Confederacy's northern border. If allied with the Confederacy, it would threaten Iowa, Kansas, and especially Illinois, but

more crucially, it would make Union control of both Kentucky and the Mississippi River much more difficult.

Rich in mineral and agricultural resources, containing a large white population, and controlling key transportation and communication networks, the border states were of vital importance. Had the border states seceded, the Union's resources would have been significantly reduced and the Confederacy's strategic advantages correspondingly increased. Lincoln himself questioned whether the Confederacy could be subdued militarily if the border states left the Union. "I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game," he commented in justifying his cautious policy in that state. "Kentucky gone, we can not hold Missouri, nor, as I think, Maryland. These all against us, and the job on our hands is too large for us. We would as well consent to separation at once, including the surrender of this capitol."³

With such momentous consequences hanging in the balance, historians understandably have pointed to Lincoln's skillful handling of the border states as a notable example of his presidential leadership. "It was fortunate for the United States in the critical year 1861," Edward Smith wrote in praising his statesmanship, "that Abraham Lincoln understood perfectly the people of the Borderland. . . . [This knowledge] enabled him to frame surely the policies upon which the fate of the country depended."⁴ Likewise, James Rawley began his book *Turning Points of the Civil War* with an analysis of the decision of the border states to remain in the Union. Speculating that the secession of the border states might well have changed the course of the war, Rawley carried his discussion only to the end of 1861, for by then, he argued, any possibility that the border states would join the Confederacy had ended.

This interpretation, however, does not analyze fully Lincoln's policies with respect to the border states. In examining the problem of the border states, historians generally have lost interest once these states unequivocally cast their lot with the Union. They have concentrated on the opening months of the struggle, from the call for troops to Lincoln's first annual message in December, and except

3. Abraham Lincoln to Orville H. Browning, September 22, 1861, in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler, Marion Dolores Pratt and Lloyd A. Dunlap, asst. eds., 9 vols. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 4: 532.

4. Edward C. Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War* (New York: Macmillan, 1927), 141, 389-90; Allan Nevins, *The War for the Union*, 4 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959-71), 1: 119, 147.

for his efforts to get them to adopt a program of gradual emancipation have given only limited attention to Lincoln's policies concerning the border states during the remainder of the war.⁵ Lincoln's policy goals, however, extended beyond preventing these states from seceding, and his purposes had not been completely achieved by the end of 1861.

I

Lincoln's border state policy blended several objectives. The first was to preserve or establish loyal governments in each of these states. In summarizing the administration's policy in Maryland in the early weeks of the war, General Nathaniel P. Banks, who was stationed in Annapolis in 1861, declared, "The secession leaders—the enemies of the people—were replaced and loyal men assigned to . . . their duties. This made Maryland a loyal State."⁶ In devising his border state policy, as would be true later with his Reconstruction program, Lincoln always gave first priority to placing loyal men in control of the state government.

Lincoln's second objective was that each of these Union state governments take the lead in fostering loyalty among its citizens, control the civilian population, and marshal the resources of the state behind the war effort. Lincoln did not shirk from his responsibility—as he saw it—to suppress disloyal activities among the civilian population, but he preferred to avoid such acts because they were controversial and politically embarrassing.⁷ From his perspective, if suppression was necessary it was preferable for the state governments to take the lead in such activities.

Lincoln's third objective, closely related to the second, was to minimize the military occupation of these states so as to free troops for use at more critical points. A large occupying force diverted army units from the fighting and by increasing friction between the army and the civilian population inevitably produced resentment. This

5. A recent example of this approach is James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

6. Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 29.

7. Neely, *Fate of Liberty*, 27–29, emphasizes the political liabilities of arbitrary arrests and military regulation of the press, courts, and elections. Smith likewise concluded: "It is doubtful if these measures were beneficial to the government." *Borderland*, 394.

was especially true in the western theater, where the fighting moved steadily away from Kentucky and Missouri.

Lincoln's final goal, which crystallized only after the first year of the war, was to end slavery in these states by voluntary state action. Anticipating a postwar Union without slavery, he wanted the border states to take the lead by adopting some form of gradual emancipation funded by the federal government. Foot dragging by the border states was an important backdrop to his decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, but even after taking this momentous step, Lincoln continued to appeal to the border states (which were exempt from the terms of the Proclamation) to end slavery.

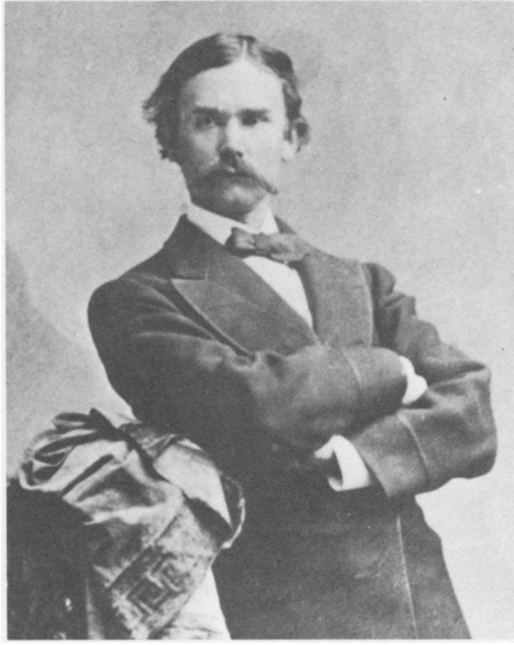
It is against these goals, and not just the question of secession, that Lincoln's border state policies need to be evaluated. When these more ambitious policy objectives are considered, his record of leadership is less impressive. With respect to the border states, he was more successful in achieving some goals than others, and his program was more successful in some states than others. In broad terms, Lincoln's policies were fairly successful in Maryland, produced a mixed record in Kentucky, and were largely a failure in Missouri.

II

Following the outbreak of war, public sentiment in Maryland loosely followed the state's regional divisions. Western Maryland, an area of small farms with a diversified economy, was Unionist, while the major slaveholding regions of the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland, where the tobacco economy was concentrated, were pro-secession. Politically divided but with a vocal and militant secessionist minority, Baltimore, which contained a third of the state's population, held the balance of power.⁸

Lincoln's policies in Maryland resembled the proverbial iron fist in a velvet glove. The danger in the state to the Union cause, and the threat to the national capital, were immediately apparent. On April 19, a pro-secessionist mob in Baltimore attacked the Massachusetts Sixth Regiment as it marched across the city to change trains on its way to Washington. In the ensuing melee, several soldiers and a number of civilians were killed. Worse still, the police commissioner ordered the railroad bridges outside the city destroyed and

8. William J. Evitts, *A Matter of Allegiances: Maryland from 1850 to 1861* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 1-7; Jean H. Baker, *The Politics of Continuity: Maryland Political Parties from 1858 to 1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 8-11.



John Hay, President Lincoln's private secretary

the telegraph lines cut, and Unionist Governor Thomas Hicks, who had earlier refused to call the legislature into session, wavered and implored the Lincoln administration not to send any more troops across the state. Hicks's request threatened to isolate Washington and leave the capital unprotected.

Recognizing the delicate balance of opinion in the state, Lincoln resisted the impulse to force the right of transit and agreed temporarily not to send any more troops through Baltimore. Troops were still needed in Washington, however, and military authorities quickly devised a less direct route by sea and rail through Annapolis.⁹ John Hay, Lincoln's private secretary, recorded the president's belief that "if quiet was kept in Baltimore a little longer, Maryland might be considered the first of the redeemed."¹⁰

9. Nevins, *War for the Union*, 1: 82-83; Lincoln to Thomas H. Hicks and George W. Brown, April 20, 1861, Lincoln to Reverdy Johnson, July 26, 1862, *Collected Works*, 4: 340, 5: 343.

10. Tyler Dennett, ed., *Lincoln and the Civil War in the Diaries and Letters of John Hay* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1939), 16.

Although Lincoln hoped to nurture pro-Union sentiment in the state, he took no chances. He authorized the military to suspend the writ of habeas corpus along any military line in the state. It was thus in Maryland that Lincoln, feeling his way in dealing with this unprecedented crisis, first suspended the writ and authorized arrests without trial.¹¹ Once Washington was secure, the army engaged in a massive display of force designed to overawe the civilian population by occupying Federal Hill in Baltimore. Before long, although the state government continued to function, Maryland was essentially under military occupation. Encouraged by this strong military presence, public opinion, initially inchoate and undeveloped, quickly swung to the Union side.¹² Once the emotions that erupted following the attack on Fort Sumter subsided, there was no possibility that Maryland would secede, but had it attempted to do so during these early weeks of the war, Lincoln unquestionably would have used force to keep the state in the Union.¹³

When the state legislature assembled in May, it called for the recognition of the Confederacy but, under the watchful surveillance of the military, it took no steps toward disunion. In the special congressional election in June, Unionist candidates polled 72 percent of the vote and triumphed in all six races. The fall election of 1861 was conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation as federal troops arrested prominent secessionist members of the legislature, guarded the polls in a few areas on election day, and seized disloyal citizens who tried to vote. Even so, critics overstated the extent of military intervention. John A. Dix, the commanding general of the Middle District, refused official requests to apply a loyalty oath and generally restrained the army's activities in order to avoid negative publicity.¹⁴ Aided by Union soldiers who were given furloughs so they could vote, Unionist candidates were victorious, headed by Augustus W.

11. *Collected Works*, 3: 347.

12. Dennett, *Diaries of Hay*, 18; John Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, 10 vols. (New York: Century Press, 1886–90), 4: 170; Nevins, *War for the Union*, 1: 137–38.

13. While forbidding the army to arrest the secessionist members of the state legislature prior to its assembling, Lincoln authorized Winfield Scott, the commanding general, to use force if they took any action hostile to the United States. Lincoln to Scott, April 29, 1861, *Collected Works*, 3: 344. Also see the account of Lincoln's interview on May 4, 1861 with a delegation from Maryland, in Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, 4: 172.

14. Morgan Dix, comp., *Memoirs of John Adams Dix*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1883), 2: 339–40; Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 71–75, minimizes the extent of federal interference in the November election.

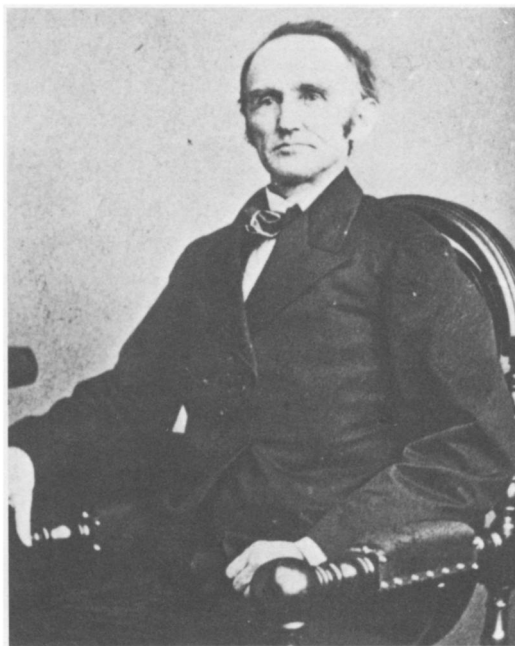
Bradford, who was elected governor by a better than two-to-one margin. No doubt Bradford would have prevailed in any event, but federal actions helped swell his margin of victory.¹⁵ Bradford's election removed any doubt that Maryland would remain in the Union. Throughout the war, the state was heavily garrisoned because of the need to protect the capital, but it posed no military threat to the Union. When Lee invaded the state in 1862, few Maryland residents welcomed him.

During the remainder of the war, relations between the federal government and the state revolved around two questions: arbitrary arrests and federal interference with free elections, and problems related to the institution of slavery. In addition, the Lincoln administration was drawn into the factional struggle for control of the burgeoning state Republican party.

Complaints of federal interference in elections in Maryland were endemic during the war. A good example was the dispute between Governor Bradford and commanding general Robert C. Schenck over the latter's order imposing a test oath for voting in the 1863 election. Federal officials were irritated at the state's failure to enact an oath for voters, so Schenck announced that the army would enforce one he promulgated at the polls. Schenck, who had been elected to Congress from Ohio, claimed that his purpose was to prevent disloyal elements from voting, but he was equally interested in assisting the antislavery forces in the state. Bradford immediately protested to Lincoln about military interference with the election. After conferring with the general, the president modified Schenck's proclamation, designated General Orders No. 53, concerning the arrest of disloyal individuals, but let the oath stand. In his reply to the governor, Lincoln chided the state for failing to enact a loyalty oath and noted that under Schenck's order disloyal citizens could regain the right to vote by taking the oath. "I think that is cheap enough," he observed.¹⁶ Lincoln's handling of this problem evidenced great political skill. He managed simultaneously to offer concessions to the governor, avoid undermining the military authority in the state, and publicly affirm his policy that "all loyal qualified voters in Maryland

15. Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 62–75.

16. Bradford to Lincoln, October 31, 1863, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Lincoln to Bradford, November 2, 1863, *Collected Works*, 6: 556–57. Schenck's action is criticized in Charles Lewis Wagandt, *The Mighty Revolution: Negro Emancipation in Maryland, 1862–1864* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964), 159–63; and defended in Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, 8: 460–61.



Montgomery Blair, Lincoln's postmaster general

and elsewhere" should be allowed to vote without disturbance.¹⁷ What interference occurred on election day resulted more from the zealotry and political ambitions of local officers than presidential policy.¹⁸ Yet relations between the state and federal government remained reasonably harmonious, and the issue of arbitrary arrests and interference gradually subsided. Indeed, for the 1864 election state officials stipulated a stricter loyalty test than Schenck had imposed in 1863, and the election passed with little federal disturbance.

The dispute over Schenck's loyalty oath was part of a larger struggle between radical Congressman Henry Winter Davis and Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, a conservative, for control of the Unionist party in Maryland. Wishing to retain the support of both men, Lincoln tried as much as possible to keep out of this fight,

17. Thomas Swann to Lincoln, October 26, 1863, Lincoln Papers; Lincoln to Swann, October 27, 1863, *Collected Works*, 6: 542.

18. For a judicious weighing of the evidence that minimizes the importance of military interference, see Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 87–91. For a contrary view, see Wagandt, *Mighty Revolution*, 164–84.

which he viewed as largely personal.¹⁹ Again, he steered a middle course, taking a more radical stand on emancipation than Blair, whom he removed from the Cabinet in 1864, yet unwilling to go as far as Davis and the radicals on this and related questions. While unable to stop the bitter factional struggle within the emerging Republican party in Maryland, Lincoln's temperate actions also bore fruit. Unionist sentiment remained paramount in the state, and in 1864 Lincoln and the Republican party gained a clear victory. The Republicans won control of the statehouse and the legislature and elected a majority of the state's congressmen. Most striking was Lincoln's victory. In 1860, he had received only 2,294 votes in the state; in 1864, he polled more than 40,000 votes and secured 55.1 percent of the popular vote (Table 2). Lincoln's personal triumph was testimony to his adroit management of affairs in Maryland.

III

When the war began Kentucky, like Maryland, found itself torn between its loyalty to the Union and its cultural ties to the South.²⁰ Secession sentiment was stronger in Kentucky, however, and it was not possible to occupy the state militarily as was done in Maryland. Complicating the situation was the fact that the governor, Beriah Magoffin, favored secession. When Lincoln called for troops after the firing on Fort Sumter, Magoffin indignantly refused to supply any, and the state house of representatives officially adopted a policy of "strict neutrality." Union leaders such as John J. Crittenden endorsed the policy of neutrality as a temporary holding action; Kentucky's neutrality quickly became part of a game of maneuver between Unionists and pro-Confederates in the state for political supremacy.²¹

19. Wagandt, *Mighty Revolution*, 190.

20. A dated and less than satisfactory account is E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926). Brief but more balanced is Ross A. Webb, "Kentucky: 'Pariah Among the Elect,'" in Richard O. Curry, ed., *Radicalism, Racism, and Party Realignment: The Border States during Reconstruction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 105-45. Rawley, *Turning Points*, 9-45, presents a good discussion of developments in the state in 1861.

21. Crittenden to Winfield Scott, May 17, 1861, in Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, 4: 233; Coulter, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 46. Another Unionist leader, Garrett Davis, assured George McClellan, "We will remain in the Union by voting if we can, by fighting if we must, and if we cannot hold our own, we will call on the General Government to aid us." Quoted in Nevins, *War for the Union*, 1: 134.

Table 2. Presidential Vote, 1860 and 1864

State	1860		1864	
	Lincoln	Other	Lincoln	McClellan
Maryland	2,294	89,848	40,153	32,739
Kentucky	1,364	143,703	27,786	64,301
Missouri	17,028	148,490	72,750	31,678
Delaware	3,815	12,224	8,155	8,767

Confronted with Kentucky's neutral stance and pleas for restraint from Unionist leaders, Lincoln moved cautiously so as not to provoke public opinion in the state while waiting for the population's latent Unionism to assert itself. Varying his policy according to the situation, he realized that he could not force the issue the way he had in Maryland. A less restrained approach in the early months of the war might well have driven the state into the Confederacy.

In this difficult period, Lincoln avoided issuing any threats and used conciliatory language. He resisted the demands of Republican governors and editors to adopt a vigorous coercive policy against the state, and also the pleas of military commanders to seize the initiative and invade Kentucky.²² Recognizing that the state's neutrality could not last long, Lincoln initially did not challenge it. He forbade the army to recruit volunteers in the state, declined to prohibit trade with the Confederacy, and promised Garrett Davis, a prominent Unionist, that he would not use force against the state if it did not resist the laws and authority of the United States. He repeated this pledge in another meeting with state leaders in July but was careful not to commit himself as to future action.²³ At the same time, he commenced shipping arms to Kentucky Unionists, and by early summer he authorized recruiting Union troops in the state. Time would demonstrate the wisdom of what James Russell Lowell, who demanded a militant approach, sarcastically termed Lincoln's "Little Bo Peep policy."²⁴

While antislavery spokesmen such as Lowell fumed, Lincoln's pragmatic policy bore immediate dividends. In a special congressional election in June, Union candidates won nine of ten seats. Among those elected was Crittenden, the symbol of border state

22. Nevins, *War for the Union*, 1: 133, 135-36, 139; Smith, *Borderland*, 280.

23. Lincoln to Simon B. Buckner, July 10, 1861, *Collected Works*, 4: 444; Nevins, *War for the Union*, 1: 133.

24. Quoted in Nevins, *War for the Union*, 1: 136.

Unionism. Throughout the summer, both sides stepped up recruiting efforts in the state, but Lincoln continued to ignore Confederate activities in the state. In another special election in August to elect a new legislature, Unionists scored a resounding triumph, winning seventy-six of a hundred seats in the house and with holdovers twenty-seven of thirty-eight in the senate.²⁵ With Unionists in firm control of the legislature and the congressional delegation, it was only a matter of time until Kentucky's policy of neutrality was discarded.

A crisis suddenly developed, however, when John C. Frémont, the military commander in Missouri, issued on his own authority a proclamation freeing the slaves of all disloyal persons in Missouri. Kentucky Unionists immediately warned Lincoln of the potentially disastrous impact of Frémont's proclamation on public opinion in the state. Lincoln had already taken steps to revoke parts of Frémont's proclamation, but he subsequently emphasized its consequences for the struggle over Kentucky. "The Kentucky Legislature would not budge till that proclamation was modified," he explained, "and Gen. [Robert] Anderson telegraphed me that on the news of Gen. Fremont having actually issued deeds of manumission, a whole company of our Volunteers threw down their arms and disbanded. I was so assured, as to think it probable, that the arms we had furnished Kentucky would be turned against us."²⁶

The decisive event that drove Kentucky out of its neutrality was not Frémont's rash act but the Confederate army's invasion of the state in September 1861. In quick order, U.S. forces under Ulysses S. Grant occupied Paducah, Kentucky, the legislature demanded the withdrawal of the Confederate forces, and when the Confederacy refused, it requested federal aid to expel them. Lincoln promptly responded by sending additional troops to occupy the state, and Confederate forces were soon driven from Kentucky. Despite the establishment of a shadowy Confederate government and General Braxton Bragg's subsequent invasion in 1862, Union control of the state was never undermined. In his first annual message, Lincoln observed: "Kentucky . . . for some time in doubt, is now decidedly, and, I think, unchangeably, ranged on the side of the Union."²⁷ His

25. Coulter, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 97–98, unsuccessfully attempts to minimize the importance of the Unionist victory in August.

26. Lincoln to Orville H. Browning, September 22, 1861, *Collected Works*, 4: 532; James Speed to Lincoln, September 3, 1861, Lincoln Papers; Coulter, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 111–12.

27. *Collected Works*, 5: 50. See James Speed to Lincoln, December 22, 1861, Lincoln Papers.

tactful handling of the state in these early months of the war contrasted sharply with Confederate leaders' imperious approach. As E. Merton Coulter concluded, "The South, too impatient to be tolerant and too impetuous to be tactful, lost the greatest prize of the West—Kentucky."²⁸

This result left Governor Magoffin in a difficult position. Unionists distrusted him, and hence the legislature systematically hamstrung him and, as much as possible, simply ignored him. Eventually in 1862 he resigned after the legislature designated an acceptable successor. In 1863, Thomas Bramlette, the Unionist candidate, was elected governor by a commanding majority.

The outcome of the political struggle in Kentucky in 1861, however, did not end Lincoln's problems with the state. One point of irritation was trade. To prevent shipment of contraband to the Confederacy, the Treasury Department required permits for most goods and passengers. Applicants had to take an oath of allegiance and meet a stringent test of past loyalty. Complaints mounted that the permit system was used to punish anyone suspected of disloyalty or who ran athwart military officers. These protests reached a peak during the tenure of General E. A. Paine, who was finally removed for abusing his powers.²⁹

More serious was the growing resentment over arbitrary arrests and military interference in elections. Lincoln's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus gave wide discretionary powers to military commanders, and he found it difficult to regulate their activities, especially on a day-to-day basis. The various raids of John Hunt Morgan, the flight of many guerrillas from Missouri to the state, and the continuing activities of bands of Home Guards, initially created to prevent secession in 1861, all contributed to the increase in violence and irregular fighting in 1864. In July 1864 Lincoln imposed martial law on the state, and it remained under this edict for the duration of the war.³⁰ The state suffered more disorder than Maryland, especially in 1864, and thus military intervention and suppression were more frequent.

The effect of these actions was to alienate Kentucky's Unionists from the administration. Governor Bramlette was particularly outspoken in his criticism. The army's intrusion was especially marked

28. Coulter, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 80.

29. Lowell Harrison, *The Civil War and Kentucky* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1975), 98–100.

30. *Collected Works*, 7: 426.

in the 1863 election, and matters worsened again in the 1864 presidential campaign when several prominent Unionists, including the lieutenant governor, were arrested by military authorities. The situation required tact and forbearance, but the commanding general, Stephen G. Burbridge, who appealed to the small radical element in the state, was devoid of both. Early in 1865 Lincoln finally removed Burbridge and replaced him with General John A. Palmer, a much more capable administrator, but only the end of the war eliminated the problems that had produced such friction. As one Lincoln paper in the state commented, the president either had to change commanders "or give the whole of his time to the management of Kentucky affairs."³¹

It was Lincoln's policy on emancipation and black troops, however, more than arbitrary arrests or military interference with elections, that accounted for his unpopularity in the state. The army's refusal to return runaway slaves produced inevitable friction with Kentucky slaveowners, and Lincoln justified his initial reluctance to accept black soldiers on the grounds that it would turn Kentucky and the border states against the Union.³² When he reversed this policy in 1863, it produced such an angry protest in Kentucky that Lincoln agreed not to enlist blacks in the state if it met its draft quotas through volunteering. In early 1864, with enlistments lagging, army officials in Kentucky began enrolling free blacks and slaves, and military authorities arrested several prominent state leaders for resisting recruitment of black soldiers. Black enlistments further alienated public opinion from the administration.³³

Lincoln's policies were only partly successful in Kentucky. More Kentuckians fought for the Union than the Confederacy, and when the rebel army invaded the state on several different occasions, it did not receive a friendly reception. In other respects, however, Lincoln's policies failed. Although Kentucky remained loyal to the Union, its congressional delegation strongly opposed the president. Lincoln never enjoyed much popularity in the state, especially after he adopted emancipation as a war aim, and Kentucky voted for George McClellan in 1864 by a decisive margin; indeed, Lincoln's

31. Frankfort *Commonwealth*, February 24, 1865, quoted in Coulter, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 213. Ulysses S. Grant concluded that "any officer of rank (not a Kentuckian) would be better than Burbridge, who has politics in his head." *Ibid.*, 211.

32. *Collected Works*, 5: 356-57.

33. Lincoln to Edwin Stanton, March 28, 1864, *Collected Works*, 7: 272; Howard K. Beale, ed., *The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1933), 352.

proportion of the popular vote (30.2 percent) was the lowest he received in any of the 25 states that participated in the 1864 election (Table 2). The Republican party remained weak in the state, primarily because large numbers of Unionists supported the Democratic party over the slavery issue. Emancipation, black troops, military arrests, and suppression had all combined to unite Unionists and conservatives in the Democratic organization. Governor Bramlette, who supported Lincoln longer than most Kentuckians before breaking with him in 1864, warned the president that the extreme measures of his military commanders "have aroused the determined opposition to your reelection of at least three fourths of the people of Kentucky."³⁴ The Republican party was confined to the most uncompromising Unionists and the most radical antislavery elements in the state.

IV

It was in Missouri, however, that Lincoln's policies achieved the least success.³⁵ More than any other border state, Missouri suffered from internal warfare, bitter political factionalism, and chaos and disorder during the war. The disappearance of many of the arrest records for Missouri precludes a precise tabulation, but it is clear that a staggering number of civilians were arrested for disloyal activity, and that the number of arbitrary arrests far exceeded that in any other loyal state.³⁶

As in Kentucky, the onset of war in Missouri found a secessionist, Claiborne F. Jackson, in the governor's chair and a legislature that was more secessionist than the population as a whole. Jackson refused Lincoln's call for troops in April, but the secessionists were not strong enough to stampede the state out of the Union.³⁷ William S. Harney, commander of the U.S. forces in the state, reported that Unionists outnumbered secessionists in the interior of the state two to one and were a majority in St. Louis, gaining strength daily.³⁸

34. Quoted in Coulter, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 186.

35. See William E. Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership: Missouri and the Union, 1861-1865* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1963).

36. Neely, *Fate of Liberty*, 44-46, 128-29.

37. In the February election to select delegates to a state convention, Unionists of various stripes won 110,000 votes compared to 30,000 for secessionist candidates. When the convention met in March, it rejected secession by a decisive margin. Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 9-14.

38. Nevins, *War for the Union*, 128.

What was required to hold the state was a policy of tact and patience similar to that Lincoln followed in Kentucky.

The arrival of Captain Nathaniel Lyon, a stern antislavery New Englander, with a small contingent of U.S. troops from Kansas seriously weakened the prospects for a peaceful resolution. Even prior to his transfer, Lyon, who had aided the antislavery forces during the turmoil in Kansas, had concluded that "it is no longer useful to appeal to reason but to the sword, and trifle no longer in senseless wrangling."³⁹ Placed in the sensitive position of defending the St. Louis arsenal, the impatient Lyon began recruiting large numbers of volunteers while keeping a close watch on the secessionists. He soon formed a close alliance with former Congressman Frank Blair, the brother of Postmaster General Montgomery Blair and head of the Republican party in Missouri. On April 21 Lincoln, influenced by Frank Blair, recalled General William S. Harney, commander of the Department of the West, for consultations and put Lyon temporarily in charge of the troops in St. Louis.

The rash and impulsive Lyon lost little time in upsetting the delicate balance and throwing the situation into chaos by surrounding Camp Jackson, which posed no military threat, and capturing the state militia encamped there. Lyon's action was a major blunder: it achieved no crucial military end, provoked a serious riot in St. Louis by Confederate sympathizers, and, worst of all, drove many conditional Unionists over to the Confederacy. Quickly returning from Washington, Harney, who believed that precipitate application of force would make matters worse, worked to defuse the situation and allow Union sentiment to develop. To this end, he negotiated an understanding with Sterling Price, commander of the state militia, to maintain the peace. Harney bluntly informed the government that aggressive military force "could not secure the results the Government seeks, viz: The Maintenance of the loyalty now fully aroused in the State, and her firm security in the Union."⁴⁰

Unconditional Unionists were dismayed at the Harney-Price agreement, while conservatives endorsed Harney's action. In the Cabinet, Bates defended Harney and condemned Lyon, while Montgomery Blair took the side of Lyon and his brother. In the end, under heavy pressure from the Blairs, Lincoln once again removed Harney.⁴¹

39. Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 16. See Christopher Phillips, *Damned Yankee: The Life of General Nathaniel Lyon* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990).

40. Harney to Lorenzo Thomas, May 29, 1861, quoted in Smith, *Borderland*, 250.

41. Lincoln to Francis P. Blair, Jr., May 18, 1861, *Collected Works*, 4: 372; Hans

Placed in command of the department, Lyon, who was devoid of common sense, promptly stirred up additional trouble. In a contentious four-hour meeting with the governor, he made clear his intention to use force against those he deemed disloyal. Jackson hastened back to the capital and issued a proclamation of war against the United States. Two days later, Lyon marched on the capital and put Jackson and other secessionist state officials to flight; skirmishing soon broke out between Lyon's forces and secessionists, who eventually organized a phantom Confederate state government with Jackson as governor. In less than two months, the reckless Lyon had plunged the state into a civil war that would never be completely suppressed during the next four years.

With the regular state government deposed, the state convention, which had been originally elected to consider secession, reconvened shorn of its secessionist members. It proceeded to declare the state offices vacant, dissolve the legislature, and establish a provisional state government with Hamilton R. Gamble, a conservative Whig, as governor. Gamble was the brother-in-law of Edward Bates, Lincoln's attorney general. The provisional government was to serve only until November, when new elections would be held, but the election was postponed several times and the provisional government remained in power until January 1865, when it was replaced by regularly elected officers.

Lincoln meanwhile had appointed John C. Frémont, the famous western explorer and the Republican party's first presidential candidate, commander of the western department. Frémont proved woefully incompetent as an administrator, military leader, and politician. He arrived the darling of the Blair clan, but their ardor began to cool when he failed to reinforce Lyon, who lost his life at the Battle of Wilson's Creek. At the same time, friction steadily mounted between Gamble and the aloof and imperious Frémont, who considered the governor a nuisance and refused to consult him.

Harried by guerrillas operating behind his lines and unable to drive Confederate forces out of the state, Frémont in desperation issued a proclamation on August 30 establishing martial law throughout the state and freeing the slaves of all disloyal masters in Missouri. Aware of the potentially disastrous impact this step would have on opinion in the border states, and unwilling to abdicate

his responsibility as commander-in-chief to determine policy, Lincoln instructed Frémont to retract his proclamation. When the dim-witted but stubborn general refused, Lincoln publicly revoked it.⁴² Frémont's fate was sealed: he had managed to alienate all but the most radical antislavery people in the state, and with virtually all factions clamoring for his head, Lincoln removed him a hundred days after he had assumed command.

The Confederate military threat to Missouri finally ended with the Union victory at the Battle of Pea Ridge in March 1862. Yet the removal of this threat did not bring peace and order to the state. Instead, Missouri remained under martial law, the legacy of Lyon's and Frémont's tenure, and guerrilla warfare raged across the state as partisans sought to even old scores or avenge new ones. Federal officials, reluctant to divert regular troops from the fighting, wanted the state government to handle the problem. The provisional government created a special force, the Enrolled Missouri Militia, to maintain order and put down the guerrillas, but it proved ineffective. Eventually in exasperation the army adopted the draconian solution of evacuating civilians from four western counties, a process that produced twenty thousand refugees. No policy pursued by the federal government, however, was able to end the fighting or eliminate the irregular bands of Confederate partisans.⁴³

Following Frémont's removal relations between the military and Gamble and the provisional government temporarily improved, only to soon deteriorate again. Disputes arose over control of the state militia and its relationship to federal troops in the state. As in the other border states, there was constant trouble over the army and slavery.⁴⁴ Solution of these problems at the local level, intensified as they were by personal hatreds and rival ambitions, was impossible. Lincoln's secretaries noted with regard to the state that "as a rule, serious local quarrels in any part of the country, whether of personal politics or civil or military administration, very soon made their way

42. Lincoln to Browning, September 22, 1861, *Collected Works*, 4: 532; Joshua F. Speed to Lincoln, September 3, 1861, *Lincoln Papers*. For Lincoln's modification of the proclamation, see Lincoln to Frémont, September 11, 1861, *Collected Works*, 4: 517–18.

43. For the complicated history of the Enrolled Militia, see James A. Hamilton, "The Enrolled Missouri Militia: Its Creation and Controversial History," *Missouri Historical Review* 69 (July 1975): 413–32.

44. Michael Fellman, "Emancipation in Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 83 (October 1988): 36–56; John W. Blassingame, "The Recruitment of Negro Troops in Missouri During the Civil War," *Missouri Historical Review* 58 (April 1964): 326–38.

to President Lincoln for settlement." Yet sorting through the "tangle of conflicting sentiment and irreconcilable factions" in the state from Washington was well nigh impossible.⁴⁵ Missouri affairs became a perpetual headache for the president.

Both Gamble and his opponents looked to the federal military commander for support and assistance in their struggle for state power. In a position that required tact, tolerance, and a delicate balancing of political interests, Lincoln's commanders were unequal to the task. Frémont failed miserably, and the new commander, Samuel R. Curtis, a former Iowa congressman, sided with the radical antislavery forces in the state against Gamble. Lincoln's tireless efforts to heal the breach and get the two men to work together were unsuccessful, so he finally removed Curtis in order to break up the quarrel. The new commander, John Schofield, threw the power of his command behind Gamble and the conservatives, which produced a Radical outcry against him and eventually led to his replacement by William S. Rosecrans. Lincoln threw up his hands in frustration at the failure of his commanders to stay out of the state's politics.⁴⁶

The Republican party in Missouri was rent by bitter factionalism as Radicals demanding the end of slavery battled against conservatives who gave priority to the Union issue. Charges and countercharges were hurled back and forth, and one delegation after another regularly trooped to the capital to win support in its battle for state supremacy. Caught between these rival groups, Lincoln and his military commander inevitably were unable to satisfy either side and became a target for both. In temper and spirit he was closer to Gamble and the conservatives, while on questions of policy, especially emancipation, he was closer to the Radicals. Lincoln's unwillingness to take sides in the state's factional disputes led Gamble, in an outburst to Bates, to dismiss the president as "a mere intriguing, pettifogging, piddling politician."⁴⁷

45. Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, 6: 380, 370. Even from the vantage point of several decades later, Lincoln's secretaries continued to be bewildered by affairs in Missouri during the war. "There is in the local history of Missouri such a confusion and contradiction of assertion and accusation concerning the motives and acts of both individuals and parties, such a blending of war and politics, of public service and private revenge, as frequently make it impossible to arrive at established facts or reach intelligent conclusions" (p. 377).

46. Lincoln to Schofield, May 27, 1863, *Collected Works*, 6: 234; Dennett, *Diaries of Hay*, 95.

47. Gamble to Bates, August 10, 1863, quoted in Parrish, *Turbulent Partnership*, 160.



General Samuel R. Curtis

Gamble's death in 1864 left the conservatives disorganized and without a leader and enabled the Radicals to assume dominance. At the 1864 Republican convention, Missouri was the only state to oppose Lincoln's renomination, and even though the state supported him in the election that fall (Table 2) and adopted emancipation in 1865, affairs in the state remained a persistent and insoluble problem for the president. The vicious irregular fighting in the state, the endemic political factionalism, and the large number of arbitrary arrests were all testimony to the failure of Lincoln's policies in Missouri.

V

The most sensitive problem Lincoln confronted in dealing with the border states was slavery. As has already been noted, he revoked Frémont's emancipation edict in 1861 with an eye to public opinion in the border states. In 1862, he negated another order freeing the slaves by one of his generals, David Hunter, in South Carolina. During this period, as the president carefully considered the problem

of slavery and the Union war effort, he prodded the border states to abolish the institution by state action.

The first step he took in this direction was his message to Congress in December 1861, in which he recommended compensated emancipation in the border states.⁴⁸ He drafted a bill providing for compensated emancipation in Delaware, which had fewer than two thousand slaves, to serve as a pilot project for ending slavery in all the other border states. Lincoln's proposed bill was very conservative: it provided federal compensation to slave owners, authorized an apprenticeship system for minors, and ended slavery gradually over a thirty-year period. Nevertheless, hostility in the Delaware legislature was so strong the bill's supporters declined to even introduce it.⁴⁹ Delaware's response did not auger well for Lincoln's hopes that the border states would adopt emancipation.

When Congress took no notice of the proposal in his annual message, the president sent a special message on March 6, 1862 proposing federal funding for a program of compensated emancipation in the loyal slave states. He calculated that at the rate of \$400 per slave, the expense to free all the slaves in the border states was less than the cost of the war for eighty-seven days.⁵⁰

Four days later, he summoned the representatives of the border states in Congress to the White House, where he urged them to adopt a program of gradual compensated emancipation, noting that the controversies among the Union's supporters over slavery and its associated problems were "numerous, loud and deep." He repeated his argument that such a program would shorten the war.⁵¹ The border state leaders present were generally skeptical, and when Congress subsequently approved a joint resolution agreeing to fund such a program, they remained opposed.⁵²

Undaunted, Lincoln held a second meeting with border state leaders on July 12, 1862. Earlier, in annulling Hunter's proclamation, he

48. *Collected Works*, 5: 48–49.

49. *Ibid.*, 29–31; Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, 5: 206–8.

50. *Collected Works*, 5: 144–46. Also see Lincoln to Henry J. Raymond, March 9, 1862, Lincoln to James A. McDougall, March 14, 1862, *ibid.*, 153, 160.

51. The contemporaneous account of Congressman John W. Crisfield of Maryland, who attended the meeting, is in Edward B. McPherson, *The Political History of the United States of America during the Great Rebellion* (Washington: Philip and Solomons, 1865), 210–11.

52. A bill to provide compensation to any of the border states that adopted emancipation died in the House in 1862 when none of these states came forward with a plan, and because their delegations in Congress opposed it.

had told the border state men, "You cannot . . . be blind to the signs of the times." Returning to this theme, he was earnest and forthright. He emphasized the great dissatisfaction his action had produced. "The incidents of the war cannot be avoided," he warned. "If the war continue long, as it must, if the object be not sooner attained, the institution in your states will be extinguished by mere friction and abrasion—by the mere incidents of war. It will be gone, and you will have nothing valuable in lieu of it."⁵³

Despite Lincoln's plea, the border state leaders remained obdurate. A minority announced that they would urge the people of their states to consider Lincoln's plan, but the majority, including Crittenden and Garrett Davis of Kentucky, signed a report reiterating all their previous objections to emancipation. These objections were summarized by a Maryland Unionist who characterized emancipation as the beginning "of a great social revolution of labor and representation, in the midst of a political revolution."⁵⁴

In the wake of the border state leaders' rejection of his second appeal, Lincoln decided to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. Yet even after he released the preliminary proclamation in September 1862, he continued to cling to the hope that the border states would adopt his program of gradual compensated emancipation. "Mr. Lincoln's whole soul is absorbed in his plan of remunerative emancipation," his old associate David Davis of Illinois reported after visiting Washington in November. "He believes that if Congress will pass a law authorizing the issuance of bonds for the payment of emancipated negroes in the border States that Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Mo. will accept the terms."⁵⁵ He again recommended his plan in his annual message in December 1862. By this time, however, the initiative had to come from the border states themselves.

Public opinion in Maryland was generally hostile to the Emancipation Proclamation. Governor Bradford refused to sign an address of the Union governors approving Lincoln's action, and Congressman John W. Crisfield, one of the largest slaveholders in the state, publicly broke with the president over this question. The state's congressional delegation opposed the 1862 bill abolishing slavery in

53. *Collected Works*, 5: 223, 317–19.

54. Wagandt, *Mighty Revolution*, 70. The border state objections are summarized in Nevins, *War for the Union*, 2: 114, 148. The names of those signing the various reports are given in Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, 6: 111–12.

55. Davis to Leonard Swett, November 26, 1862, quoted in Nevins, *War for the Union*, 2: 235.

the District of Columbia, which the state had originally ceded to the federal government, and the Maryland House of Delegates denounced the law as a threat to the state and a violation of its rights.⁵⁶ Even so, opinion in the state slowly began to shift in response to the war's developments. The state's Union coalition, which united former Whigs, Know Nothings, and War Democrats, increasingly divided on the issue, and in 1863 the party split in two over the questions of emancipation and a new state constitution.

The 1863 election was a test of strength between the radical wing of the party, who called themselves the Unconditional Unionists, and their opponents. Led by Henry Winter Davis, the Unconditional Unionists favored immediate and uncompensated emancipation, black enlistments in the Union army, and a strict loyalty test in order to weaken the Democratic party. The conservatives and moderates, led by Montgomery Blair, favored emancipation along the lines Lincoln had proposed, opposed black soldiers, and sought to win Democratic support. Capitalizing on popular frustration with the war and discontent over the policies on which it was being waged, the Unconditionals won a decisive victory in the fall election, carrying the one statewide office with 69 percent of the vote, winning four of the state's five congressional seats, and gaining control of the legislature.

Following the election, Lincoln counseled harmony in the Union ranks. Asserting that "I am very anxious for emancipation to be effected in Maryland in some substantial form," he indicated that while he preferred a gradual program, believing it would produce less confusion and destitution, he was not opposed to immediate emancipation. "My wish is that all who are for emancipation *in any form*, shall cooperate, all treating all respectfully, and all adopting and acting upon the major opinion, when fairly ascertained. What I have dreaded," he continued, "is the danger that by jealousies, rivalries, and consequent ill-blood . . . the friends of emancipation themselves may divide, and lose the measure altogether."⁵⁷ Divisions in the Unionist constituency, which extended beyond ideology to personal rivalries, were too deep to be healed by appeals to goodwill and common purpose.

Capitalizing on their new power, the Radicals now moved to end

56. Wagandt, *Mighty Revolution*, 63–64. In an interview with Crisfield, Lincoln told the Maryland congressman that while he objected to the timing of the bill and some of its terms, he intended to sign it because a veto would cause greater political trouble.

57. *Collected Works*, 7: 226.

slavery in the state. The voters approved holding a constitutional convention, and a majority of the delegates elected were emancipationists. The proposed new constitution abolished slavery in the state, subject to popular ratification. In an important move, the convention authorized soldiers in the field to vote on the proposed constitution. Referring to the upcoming vote on the antislavery constitution, Secretary of War Edwin Stanton told Lew Wallace, the new commanding general in the state, that "the President has set his heart on the abolition by that way; and mark, he don't want it to be said by anybody that the bayonet had anything to do with the election."⁵⁸ When antislavery forces requested his aid, Lincoln threw his influence behind the drive to ratify the constitution. In a public letter to a meeting in Baltimore, he endorsed the extinction of slavery in the state: "I wish success to this provision. I desire it on every consideration. I wish all men to be free."⁵⁹ In a close vote, the new constitution was approved, with the soldier vote providing the margin of victory for it and emancipation.⁶⁰ Although disappointed that the state had not taken this step two years earlier when he had urged it to do so, Lincoln was nevertheless pleased. In his final annual message, he hailed the "complete success" of emancipation in the state. "Maryland," he declared, "is secure to Liberty and Union for all the future."⁶¹

The emancipation forces prevailed in Missouri as well. Much as in Maryland, the conservative Unionists dragged their feet and failed to keep up with the advance of public opinion. The emancipationists won control of the legislature in the 1862 elections and steadily gained strength in 1863 and 1864. Emancipation became the most important issue in the state's politics. The Radicals, known as the Charcoals, many of whom had been Republicans before the war, called for immediate emancipation. The reactionaries, or Snowflakes, opposed any interference with the institution, while the conservatives and moderates, led by Gamble and referred to as the Claybanks (because their stance was allegedly colorless), called for gradual emancipation. Still in power, the popular convention in 1863 approved a plan to end slavery in 1870 with terms of apprenticeship

58. Lew Wallace, *Lew Wallace: An Autobiography*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1906), 2: 672.

59. *Collected Works*, 8: 41–42.

60. The regular vote was 27,541 in favor and 29,536 against the constitution. Among soldiers, the tally stood 2,633 in favor and only 263 opposed. Baker, *Politics of Continuity*, 109n.

61. *Collected Works*, 8: 52, 148.

after that date. Lincoln criticized this plan, not because emancipation was gradual, but because it postponed the start for seven years. He told Schofield that he preferred a short period of emancipation and safeguards against slaves being sold in the meantime. "I have very earnestly urged the slave-states to adopt emancipation; and it ought to be, and is an object with me not to overthrow, or thwart what any of them may in good faith do, to that end."⁶²

Dissatisfied with this program, the Radicals kept up the agitation on emancipation, and in 1864 succeeded in getting a convention called to draft a new state constitution. In the fall election, the Radicals won a majority of the delegates. The convention assembled in January 1865 and drafted a constitution that decreed immediate and unconditional emancipation. In the subsequent vote on ratification, soldier ballots again tipped the scales in favor of the new constitution and emancipation.⁶³

With more slaves than any other border state, Kentucky stubbornly clung to the dying institution to the bitter end. Precisely because slavery was stronger in Kentucky, Lincoln was convinced that if the state had responded favorably in 1862 to his original emancipation scheme, the war would have been brought to a close earlier. Instead, the state's congressional delegation opposed the president's plan for federally funded gradual emancipation, the legislature passed resolutions condemning the Emancipation Proclamation, and political leaders in the state denounced any move toward emancipation. Amendment of the Kentucky constitution was a particularly cumbersome process, but the state's failure to act was ideological rather than institutional. Kentucky Unionists remained bitter at what they perceived as Lincoln's betrayal of the original purpose of the war, and a majority refused to make any concessions or adjust to the changing world about them. After the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, a newspaper reporter declared that opinion was "universal" in the state that the president "has proved false to his platform, his pledges, and to his once ardent supporters and coadjutors in the Border Slave States."⁶⁴ The situation did not improve over time. Indeed, defiant to the end, the legislature refused to ratify

62. Lincoln to Schofield, June 22, 1863, Lincoln to Stephen A. Hurlbut, July 31, 1863, *Collected Works*, 6: 291, 358.

63. The constitution was approved by a margin of only 1,835 votes of 85,769 votes cast. Whereas civilians opposed the constitution by a vote of 40,640 to 39,675, Union soldiers from the state voted in its favor, 3,995 to 1,168.

64. *Cincinnati Gazette*, January 10, 1863, quoted in Coutler, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 161–62.

the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865. Lincoln's greatest disappointment concerning his policies in Kentucky was his inability to get his native state to budge on the question of slavery.

VI

How, then, do we account for the varying success of Lincoln's policies in these three states? Why was he reasonably successful in Maryland and Kentucky but not Missouri? The problem is more perplexing because enlistment records suggest that Unionism was stronger in Missouri than either of the other states (Table 3). Certainly there seems to have been less chance of the state seceding in 1861 than either Maryland or Kentucky.

In explaining Lincoln's difficulties in Missouri, James G. Randall provided a pat answer: the existence in the state of a powerful group of Radicals was the source of all of Lincoln's problems.⁶⁵ The Radicals were considerably stronger in Missouri than in Maryland, and they barely existed in Kentucky. But the division between Lincoln and the Radicals was not as sharp as Randall contended. Indeed, Lincoln recognized that on questions of policy, he was closer to them than to their opponents. Shortly after meeting with a group of Missouri Radicals, Lincoln remarked to his secretary, John Hay, "They are nearer to me than the other side, in thought and sentiment, though bitterly hostile to me personally. They are utterly lawless—the unhandiest devils in the world to deal with—but after all their faces are set Zionwards."⁶⁶ As Lincoln's comment suggests, more fundamental factors shaped the outcome of Lincoln's policies.

Perhaps the most obvious point to make, and the place to begin in analyzing this problem, is the importance of proximity. Maryland was closest to Washington, whereas Missouri was farthest away and Kentucky lay in between. Transportation and communication facilities were significantly better in the war than they were in, say, Andrew Jackson's time, yet the fact remained that the federal government in general best managed problems that were close at hand. Easy consultation with state political leaders, a surer grasp of public opinion, and a clearer sense of the problems were all consequences

65. James G. Randall, *Lincoln the President*, 4 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1945–55), 2: 15–16, 3: 48–49.

66. Dennett, *Diaries of Hay*, 108. For a general discussion of this point, see David Donald, "Devils Facing Zionwards," in *Grant, Lee, Lincoln, and the Radicals: Essays on the Civil War*, ed. Grady McWhiney (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 72–91.

Table 3. Estimated Enlistments from the Border States

State	Union		
	Whites	Blacks	Confederate
Maryland	34,000	9,000	20,000
Kentucky	50,000	24,000	35,000
Missouri	80,000	8,000	30,000*
Delaware	10,000	1,000	1,000

Sources: James McPherson, *Ordeal by Fire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 152–54, 158; Jean H. Baker, *The Politics of Continuity: Maryland Political Parties from 1858 to 1870* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 91.

*Another 3,000 fought as southern guerrillas.

of shorter distances. Baltimore was “only a pleasant morning jaunt by rail from . . . Washington,” Robert C. Schenck explained concerning his experiences as commander in Maryland, and thus no sooner did military officials take an action than “a delegation of influential Unionists at once hurried to the President. . . .”⁶⁷ The consequence was to keep Lincoln better informed about matters in the state and also to put the military under tighter executive control. No such close scrutiny was possible in Kentucky or Missouri, and as a result Washington displayed what Allan Nevins termed “a censurable myopia concerning the West.”⁶⁸

Lincoln’s frustration with the situation in Missouri in 1861 is a case in point. He sent Postmaster General Montgomery Blair to St. Louis to advise Frémont. Frémont soon broke politically with the Blairs, and a crescendo of accusations between Frank Blair and Frémont descended upon the president. Uncertain of the true situation, Lincoln dispatched Secretary of War Simon Cameron and Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas on a fact-finding trip. Rather than reserving the final decision to himself, as became his practice once he grew into his job, Lincoln authorized Cameron to remove Frémont if he thought it necessary.⁶⁹ This delegation of presidential responsibility betrayed his fundamental uncertainty about affairs in the state.

Exacerbating the situation in Missouri were the blunders of Union leaders in the initial weeks of the conflict. In this period, Lincoln relied primarily on Frank Blair, the leading Republican in the state,

67. Wallace, *Autobiography*, 2: 674–75.

68. Nevins, *War for the Union*, 1: 309.

69. Simon Cameron to Abraham Lincoln, October 12, 14, 1861, Lincoln Papers; Lincoln to Samuel R. Curtis, October 7, 1861, *Collected Works*, 4: 549.



General Robert C. Schenck

for advice. The hard-drinking Blair was not a good choice. Ambitious, outspoken, and passionate, he was often reckless and impulsive and offered highly colored advice. Hay, who was initially impressed with the Blairs, ultimately concluded that they “were not the safest guides about Missouri matters.” He complained that despite his and other individual’s warnings, Lincoln continued to get “the greater part of his information from the Blairs & the Bates people who do not seem to me entirely impartial.” While appreciative of the Blairs’ early support for the president, Hay nonetheless believed that Lincoln placed too much reliance on them.⁷⁰

Denouncing General William S. Harney’s policy of moderation, Blair kept up a constant pressure to have the veteran soldier removed from command. Uncertain what to do, Lincoln initially wavered and then made a serious error in judgment by delegating the decision

70. Dennett, *Diaries of Hay*, 94–95. With time and experience, Lincoln became more cautious in relying on Frank Blair and his family. For his later shrewd assessment of the Blairs, see Hay’s entry for December 9, 1863 (p. 133).



General John C. Frémont

to Blair.⁷¹ Armed with this presidential authorization to remove the general if in his opinion it was urgently necessary, Blair removed Harney from command and joined forces with Captain (soon Brigadier General) Nathaniel Lyon, with the disastrous consequences already noted. By the time Lyon was killed, serious damage had already been done to the Union cause. Frémont's utter incompetence merely magnified these problems. Lincoln's secretaries, John Nicolay and John Hay, who defended his vacillating policy, recognized the long-term consequences of this rupture in the Unionist ranks in Missouri. "The local embitterment in St. Louis beginning then ran on for several years," they noted, "and in its varying and shifting phases gave the President no end of trouble in his endeavor from first to last to be just to each faction."⁷²

Lincoln's inexperience and lack of knowledge was especially apparent in his handling of the Missouri situation in these early months. He made notoriously poor appointments and, lacking any real

71. Lincoln to Francis P. Blair, Jr., May 18, 1861, *Collected Works*, 4: 372.

72. Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, 4: 216.

knowledge of the state or its politics, he relied on unsuitable advisers. Moreover, because Missouri was distant from Washington and removed from the major military theaters, Lincoln devoted less attention to the state. Without guidance from Washington about how to deal with a disloyal civilian population, Frémont acted on his own, instituting martial law and freeing the slaves of rebel masters. Historians have traditionally cited Lincoln's revocation of Frémont's edict as an example of his leadership concerning the border states, but it was probably the most unpopular act he committed during the first year of the war and left him badly damaged politically.⁷³

As he gained experience, Lincoln took a stronger hand in supervising matters in Missouri, but he never fully comprehended the situation there. Particularly indicative of this failure was his well-meaning but futile proposal in 1865 to end the irregular violence in the state by appealing to the people to return home and agree to leave one another alone. Detailing the flaws in Lincoln's plan, the new governor privately indicated that he had an "utter want of confidence in its success" and asked the president to withhold it. From St. Louis an astonished General Grenville M. Dodge was more blunt: "Allow me to assure you that the course you propose would be protested against by the State authorities, the legislature, the convention and by nearly every undoubtedly loyal man in North Missouri," he telegraphed the president, "while it would receive the sanction of nearly every disloyal, semi-loyal, and non-committed person there, all such could, under that course live and should want to stay in that country, while every loyal man would have to leave these counties. . . ."⁷⁴ Lincoln persisted in this plan, with no good result.

The irregular nature of the loyal state government in Missouri presented yet another handicap. In Maryland, the state government was controlled by the Unionists from the beginning, and their supremacy was established beyond challenge by the fall elections of 1861. Like Missouri, Kentucky had a pro-Confederate governor when the war began, but even after Unionists secured control of the legislature, they declined to oust him. Instead, they tied his hands so he could not aid the Confederacy and eventually induced him to

73. Nevins, *War for the Union*, 1: 334–35, 340.

74. Lincoln to Grenville M. Dodge, January 15, 1865, Lincoln to Thomas Fletcher, February 27, 1865, *Collected Works*, 8: 217, 319; Dodge to Lincoln, January 16, 1865, Lincoln Papers; Fletcher to Lincoln, February 27 (telegram and letter), quoted in *Collected Works*, 319–20.

resign. As a result, the state government retained its legitimacy throughout the war, and in 1863 an unequivocal Unionist was elected governor.

In Missouri, however, Lyon's belligerence caused Governor Claiborne Jackson to ally openly with the Confederacy. Missouri Unionists in the state convention declared the governorship vacant, but rather than holding a popular election to select Jackson's successor, the convention, with only tenuous legal authority, selected Hamilton Gamble as governor. Initially, Gamble was to serve only until a regular election could be held, but the Unionist majority in the convention postponed the election several times because of the unceasing disorder in the state, and Gamble continued to hold the post until his death in 1864. As a conservative, Gamble confronted a severe challenge situation under the best of circumstances, but his position was rendered infinitely more difficult by the fact that he had never been elected by the voters. Such an undemocratic procedure ran counter to the American political tradition; his moral authority undermined, Gamble could neither control the Union party in the state nor the civilian population. Missouri had no constitutionally legitimate government until the last few months of the war.⁷⁵

If Gamble's irregular election weakened the authority of government in Missouri, the state's geographic location diminished the role of the U.S. Army, a potential prop for the state government. The inability of the Confederacy to mount any sustained threat west of the Mississippi after the Battle of Pea Ridge left the federal government anxious to devote as little military attention to the state as possible. A massive military occupation of the state, such as occurred in Maryland in 1861, and to a lesser extent in Kentucky, was not feasible in Missouri. Instead, Lincoln constantly complained about the number of troops he had to divert from more important objectives in order to control the state's civilian population. In refusing to disband the state's militia, which the state authorities created to preserve order, Lincoln explained, "I confess to a sympathy for whatever relieves our general force in Missouri, and allows it to serve elsewhere."⁷⁶

Compounding these difficulties was the tradition of frontier violence in the state. Much more recently settled than Maryland or Kentucky, Missouri was much closer to the frontier stage of settle-

75. Lincoln acknowledged this problem in a soothing letter to Gamble, October 19, 1863, *Collected Works*, 6: 526-27.

76. Lincoln to Charles Drake and others, *ibid.*, 503.

ment, with its vigilante tradition and greater tolerance of personal violence. While also a problem in the pro-Confederate southern portion of the state, guerrilla warfare was especially pronounced in the turbulent, brawling western counties along the Missouri River. These counties had been in the forefront of the struggle to make Kansas a slave state in the 1850s. Relatively recently settled, they had become the major slaveholding area of the state by the 1850s, a factor that inflamed popular fears in the region. These fears, and the resulting bitterness stemming from the Kansas struggle, carried over into the war years and intensified. With an irregular state government and an ineffective military presence, these emotions soon erupted into personal violence. Once started, the strategy of retaliation and counterretaliation was impossible to stop. Moreover, it quickly spread across the border into Kansas, provoking retaliatory military raids from that state. Kansas troops invaded Missouri on several occasions and, remembering the long history of violence in their state, routinely plundered the civilian population, thereby increasing the animosity between the two states.⁷⁷

Another difference that contributed to the Lincoln administration's difficulties in Missouri compared to the other border states was the state's past political history. Unlike Maryland and Kentucky, which had been Whig strongholds until the party's collapse in the 1850s, Missouri had been a Democratic state. Whiggery strengthened moderate Unionism in Maryland and Kentucky. In Missouri, in contrast, bitter factionalism erupted between former Whigs and Democrats in the Union ranks; this factionalism soon became more complicated, as the issue of emancipation broke the Union ranks further into Radicals and conservatives.⁷⁸

Aware that he needed the support and cooperation of all loyal Union men, Lincoln tried to steer a middle course. He told John Schofield when the latter assumed his new post as military commander in the state, "If both factions, or neither, shall abuse you, you will probably be about right."⁷⁹ Lincoln's moderation satisfied neither side. Confessing that he had been tormented with the state's factional quarrels beyond endurance, he complained, "Neither side

77. For descriptions of this partisan warfare, see Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Albert Castel, *A Frontier State at War: Kansas, 1861-1865* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958).

78. For Lincoln's analysis of the situation, see his letter to Charles Drake and others, October 5, 1863, *Collected Works*, 6: 500.

79. Lincoln to Schofield, May 27, 1863, *ibid.*, 234.

pays the least respect to my appeals to your reason."⁸⁰ One consequence of growing Radical strength was the abolition of slavery in Missouri, but it also produced a particularly virulent party factionalism that inflamed popular passions, crippled the state Republican party, and strengthened their opponents. In Maryland, the Radicals, while important, never commanded the support they gained in Missouri. And in Kentucky, the larger number of slaves, the stronger sentiment against emancipation, and the Radicals' failure to attract any prominent leader kept them impotent.

A final reason that contributed to the different experiences of these states was the existence of a Republican party in Missouri before the war. This fact heightened Republican factionalism, drew the Lincoln administration into squabbles for state power, and made it easier for a Radical faction to develop. In Maryland, and especially Kentucky, the party was more circumspect, being relatively weaker. As a result, the Lincoln administration worked closely with Unionists of other parties, which helped promote greater consensus.

Clearly the problems Lincoln confronted in these states were not all of his own making. Still, as president he made some serious mistakes in his border state policy. Perhaps Lincoln's biggest blunder was his early appointments in Missouri. Together, Blair, Lyon, and Frémont created a host of problems and controversies that continued long after Lyon's death and Frémont's removal. Lincoln's inexperience was woefully apparent. His handling of Kentucky, in contrast, was much more successful, and he was greatly aided by capable Unionists such as John J. Crittenden, Garrett Davis, James Speed, Leslie Combs, James Guthrie, and Robert J. Breckinridge.

Lincoln's effectiveness in dealing with subordinates is well illustrated in the cases of Generals Robert Schenck in Maryland and Samuel Curtis and John Schofield in Missouri. But being further removed from the scene and less certain of the situation, he gave Curtis and Schofield considerable leeway in policy matters, although he ultimately became frustrated that neither heeded his admonition that it was not "in the province of a military commander to interfere with the local politics or to influence elections actively in one way or another."⁸¹ In Maryland, Schenck used his power to undermine the institution of slavery and in the process sometimes ran athwart of presidential directives. Aware of the situation, Lincoln, who on one occasion observed that Schenck was "wider across the head in

80. Lincoln to Henry T. Blow and others, May 15, 1863, *ibid.*, 218.

81. Dennett, *Diaries of Hay*, 95.

the region of the ears," routinely summoned him to Washington, rewrote his orders, gave him much more explicit instructions, and kept him on a much tighter leash.⁸²

Lincoln's problems in dealing with his generals highlighted one of the major causes for his difficulties: the hostile attitude of army officers, especially those from the North, toward the residents of the border states. The political ambitions of officers native to the state, such as Stephen Burbridge in Kentucky, were a further complication. In all three states, the army played a major role in destroying slavery, sometimes in accord with presidential policy or federal law, other times not. Viewing the people of the border states as at least quasi-disloyal, Union generals erred on the side of overzealousness in making arrests and confiscating private property. With a few exceptions, the generals in command in Kentucky and Missouri lacked tact and common sense and often acted in an arbitrary and high-handed manner. Kentucky's early neutrality and persistent opposition to emancipation particularly discredited the state with the military. Governor Bramlette put his finger on the central problem in this regard when he bitterly complained: "We are dealt with as though Kentucky was a rebellious and conquered province, instead of being as they [*sic*] are, a brave and loyal people."⁸³

Lincoln's record in dealing with the border states contained both successes and failures. Certainly keeping these states in the Union was Lincoln's greatest achievement during the first year of his presidency. Yet on other issues—emancipation, arbitrary arrests, the preservation of public order, and relations between civil and military authorities—his policies provoked greater resistance. He was especially plagued by the intractable situation in Missouri. To a much greater extent than either Maryland or Kentucky, that state proved impervious to Lincoln's presidential leadership. It left a dark blot on his otherwise generally positive record of accomplishments in the border states.

82. *Ibid.*, 105; Wagandt, *Mighty Revolution*, 123, 189; Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, 8: 459–60.

83. Quoted in Harrison, *Civil War in Kentucky*, 86–87; *Collected Works*, 5: 426–27n. In *The Fate of Liberty*, Neely explains that one reason the Lincoln administration's record of arbitrary arrests did not generate a great popular outcry in the North was because most of those arrested were residents of the border states. Recalling the Baltimore riot, Kentucky's neutrality in the early months of the war, and Missouri's unsteady course, Northern public opinion simply did not care much about the fate of these states or its citizens beyond keeping them in the Union.