## Establishing the New Nation Lesson 1 The Articles of Confederation



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#### **Learning Objectives**

- Explain how the states' new constitutions reflected republican ideals.
- Describe the structure and powers of the national government under the Articles of Confederation.
- Summarize the Congress's plan for the settlement and governance of western lands.
- Understand why tensions with foreign countries revealed the weakness of the U.S. government.
- List the main weaknesses of the Articles.

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#### **Key Terms**

- republics
- unicameral legislature
- bicameral legislature
- Articles of Confederation
- John Dickinson
- federal
- Northwest Territory
- Land Ordinance of 1785
- Northwest Ordinance of 1787
- Shays' Rebellion

- After the Revolutionary War, the Patriots feared the creation of another tyrannical or abusive government
- They refused to entrust the new Union with much power
- most authority remained with the states
- powerful states and weak national government faced severe problems.

#### • A Preference for Democracy

- Seeking greater rights for the people, state leaders preferred a <u>unicameral legislature</u>, or one with a single house, whose members were elected by the people.
- ✓ Examples-Pennsylvania and Georgia

#### • Maintaining Colonial Traditions

- ✓ A <u>bicameral legislature</u> is a lawmaking body with two houses, such as a Senate and a House of Representatives and a strong governor
- ✓ These constitutions counterbalanced the power of the common voters in the House with the power of wealthy, well-educated gentlemen in the Senate.

- Accountability to the People
- ✓ Voters chose the members of both houses of the new legislatures, rather than just the members of the lower house.
- ✓ Democratic Patriots wanted equal political rights for almost all free men, even those who had little or no property.
- John Adams warned that allowing poor men to vote would "confound and destroy all distinctions, and prostrate all ranks to the common level."
- ✓ These ideas excluded **slaves** and **women** from voting.
- Religious Liberty
- Because the American Revolution promoted greater religious liberty, most states also guaranteed freedom of religion in their constitutions

#### State of Maffachufetts-Bay. In CONVENTION, June 16, 1780. WHEREAS, upon des Exemination of the Returns made by the forentTowns With the to be a paper the Extension of the paper the mode of the Twendhick of the Johnbarns therea, who have used on the later have expected their Approduction of the Form of Growmeni speech upon by this Contention, and the before them for their Confidentiation, in Contenting to a Reddered the and Computing at the Second Day of the Contention of the Contention of the THE Second Day of the Contention of the THE Second Day of the Second Day of the THE Second Day of th CONSTITUTION OF GOVERNMENT chahidred by and for the Inhobitants of the State of Maffachs; etts-Bay: And as the fold Ishabitants have authorited and empowered this Convention to opted upon a Turne, when the factor fhall take Plate : In Onlor that the good People of this Busie may have she Benefit thereof as foon as conveniently may be, It is Restord. Thus the field Camblesion or Frame of Government shall take Place on the hall Woolcoffary in Gibber energ, and out before, for any Furgele, free only for that of making Elections approaches to this Rechailston. And the first General Court noder the fame that he holden on the first hill. Wed-body an Olliver, in this base-Hoad in fibra, or Yero Clock in the Formson-And in Order dimense, there first his a Menting of the Fohila such of each Town and Plan-teness in the forest Courter within this stars, built warrant and held, on the first Mendary his possive event, or the forest such as a first star of the first stars and the forest Courter within the stars, built warrant and held, on the first Mendary his possive event, or the forest stars defined to be a Menting of the John-ment, and the Dary at the left before the half we be at Mentary for the first stars, and the Dary is the left before the half we be at Mentary Court. And the best fore the star of the forest Representations to the star defined of the star Mental, for the Purpose of integration of the second Elections, and for the conflictuating the Sull General Court 1 faving only the Difference of Times. Zel ir it 'werley Reided, That SAMPEL BARRETY, Dig (Secretary to this Convention) do, on se before the Fifteenth Day of Jusy sett, cashs printed Copies of this Registeres to be Set to the Seletimen of the fermini Tourn, and the Affiliari of the te-Relatives in the feer some sections of the terms of the relation of the Animari's fee feet were Plantiness of reliad ; who are refectively to perform the Danes required by the Releasing, and to make relatively and regular Research it, the Perfore defeator to the fa-weal Offices Intrain resolutions, into the Secretary's Office of this face, agreeably an the Rules contained in the Form of Government shows referred to. In the Name, and particult to a Refidution of the Convention;" JAMES BOWDOIN, Prefidents Accest SAMUEL BARRETT, See'y. (N. U. The Scholmen and Adidices, in the formal Towns and Plantations to wheni he above Copies that he dirofted, are unfired to definer One to each of their Defigutor in the late Convention ]

In 1780, Massachusetts ratified its state constitution following a constitutional convention. Today, that constitution is among the oldest still in use anywhere in the world.

#### **Bicameral Versus Unicameral Legislatures**

BICAMERAL	UNICAMERAL	
Features two chambers/houses	Features one chamber/house	
Typical in large countries with federal systems of government (e.g., United States, Germany, Brazil)	Typical in small countries with unitary systems of government (e.g., Denmark, Finland, New Zealand)	
Legislation is usually passed more slowly because both houses have to agree; may prevent impulsive legislation	Legislation is usually passed quickly because there is only one house to decide on a bill; may lead to impulsive legislation	
Power is spread more evenly, but system is more costly to maintain	Power more concentrated, but system is cheaper to maintain	
All but three colonies had bicameral systems in 1776; today, all states but one have bicameral legislatures	Three colonies had unicameral systems in 1776; today, Nebraska is only state with a unicameral legislature	

Sources: Encyclopædia Britannica; Kentlaw.itt.edu

Analyze Information What main advantages does a bicameral legislature offer? What advantages does a unicameral legislature offer?

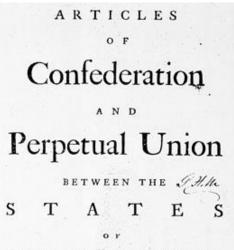
- A **confederation** is a league or alliance of states that agree to work together.
- John Dickinson of Pennsylvania and Congress designed a loose confederation of 13 states, rather than a strong and centralized nation.
- The **Articles** reflected the principles of the Declaration of Independence and rejected the centralized power of the British Empire as a threat to liberty.

#### • A Federal Government

- <u>federal</u>, or national, government comprised a congress of delegates, chosen by state legislatures rather than by voters.
- states could choose to send as many as seven delegates, each state—no matter how large or small—had a single vote.
- ✓ Example-Enormous Virginia had no more power than tiny Rhode Island.
- ✓ Powers to make, implement, enforce laws were all placed with the Congress.
- ✓ The national government included no President or executive branch.

#### • Powers of the National Congress

- Declare&conduct war, negotiate peace, regulate foreign affairs, administer relations with Indian nations.
- ✓ Congress had **no power to raise money through taxes**.
- ✓ Congress relied on money contributions from the states
- major issues, including declaring war and making treaties, 2/3 of the states (nine) had to approve.
- ✓ Amending the Articles was almost impossible because all 13 states had to approve any change



New-HAMPSHIRE, MASSACHUSETTS-BAY, RHODE-ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS, CON-NECTICUT, NEW-YORK, NEW-JERSEY, PENNSYL-VANIA, DELAWARE, MARYLAND, VIRGINIA, NORTH-CAROLINA, SOUTH-CAROLINA AND GEOR-GIA.



The Articles of Confederation were the original constitution for the union of the 13 states. Analyze Primary Sources What does the full title of this document suggest about the planned relationship among the states?

#### **Organization of the Articles of Confederation**

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	FOREIGN POLICY	TAXATION	COMMERCE
<ul> <li>Made Congress the governing body of the federal government</li> <li>Gave Congress the power to issue bills of credit</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Gave Congress the power to sign treaties and make alliances with other nations</li> <li>Gave Congress the power to manage relations with Native Americans</li> <li>Gave Congress the power to declare war</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Gave states the power to tax</li> <li>Gave states the power to impose duties and tariffs on trade with other states</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Gave states the power to regulate commerce</li> <li>Gave states, rather than the federal government, the power to settle disputes</li> </ul>

Sources: Encyclopædia Britannica; Central Connecticut State University; OurDocuments.gov; USHistory.org

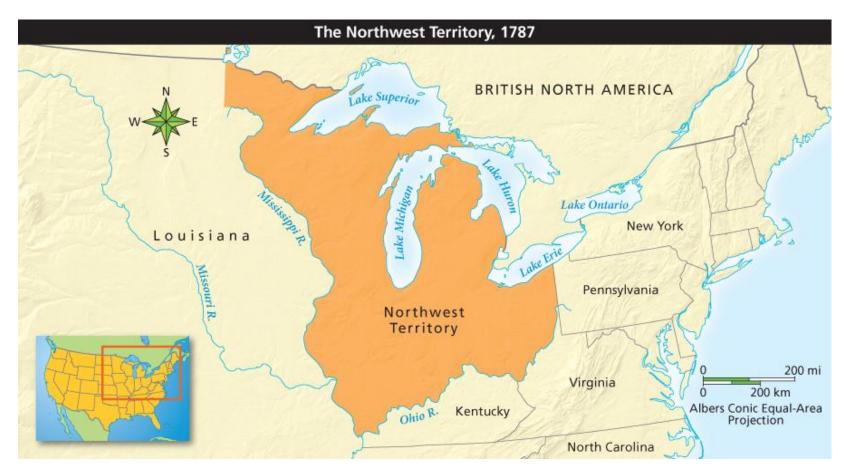
Analyze Information Did Congress or the states exercise more authority under the Articles? What details support this evaluation?

- The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided a plan for organizing the western territory of the United States and steps for them to follow in order to join the United States.
- This territory, called the Northwest Territory, lay north of the Ohio River and west of Pennsylvania to the Mississippi River.
- By selling this land to speculators and farmers, the Congress hoped to raise revenue and extend America's republican society westward.

- Land Ordinance of 1785
- ✓ Federal surveyors divided the land into hundreds of townships
- ✓ Subdivided each township into 36 "sections" of one square mile (640 acres), to be sold for at least one dollar per acre.
- ✓ Ordinary farmers could not afford to pay \$640
- Price and size of the sections favored wealthy land speculators who had cash.
- ✓ Ordinary settlers had to buy it from the speculators.

#### • Government under the Northwest Ordinance

- Territories that were admitted to the Union would not be colonies, but would be on equal footing with the original 13 states.
- $\checkmark$  The Northwest Ordinance banned slavery in the territories.
- ✓ It enabled settlers to move into the western territories, where American Indians already lived.
- $\checkmark$  Settlers ignored American Indian claims to the land.
- $\checkmark$  This angered American Indians and led to further conflict with them.
- ✓ Territorial government led by a governor, secretary, and three judges.
- Citizens would enjoy freedom of religion, trial by jury, and the rights of common law, including habeas corpus.

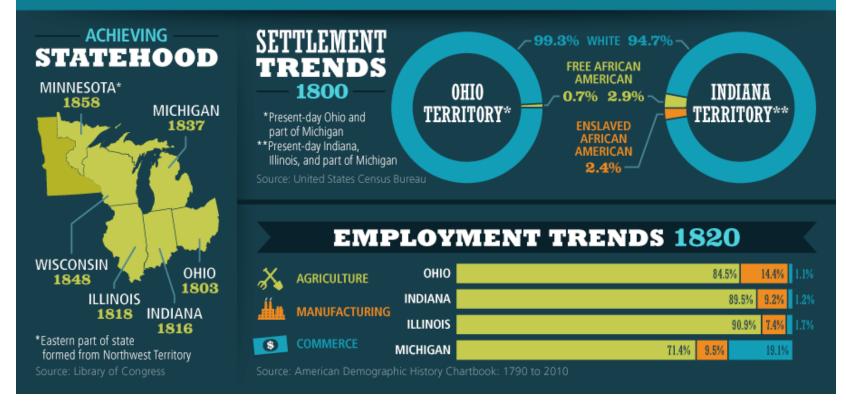


Analyze Maps How might the location of the Northwest Territory have made it difficult for the Confederation government to manage?



Federal surveyors working under the Land Ordinance of 1785 used sophisticated equipment like this theodolite to measure the horizontal and vertical angles that divided land into townships.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORY



Analyze Information In what ways was the Northwest Territory similar the rest of the United States in the late 1700s? In what ways was it different?

- During the mid-1780s, the Spanish and the British did not take the United States seriously.
- Britain and Spain thought the republican Confederation seemed weak to the point of anarchy, or lawlessness.

## • The Closure of New Orleans

 ✓ New Orleans was an important trading port for Americans. Settlers shipped their goods down the Mississippi River to market in New Orleans.

## • Disputes with Britain

- ✓ Britain renewed the policy of mercantilism, which meant that Americans could only trade with the British Empire under rules that favored British interests.
- ✓ The British cut off American trade with the West Indies, one of the biggest markets for American goods.
- ✓ The British also continued to hold forts on the American side of borders set by the Treaty of Paris.



The location of New Orleans at the juncture of the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico has made the city a key commercial hub for centuries.



Analyze Maps What geographic factors likely made the British West Indies an important trade partner with the young United States?

- The fledgling government under the Articles of Confederation found itself facing a host of difficulties.
- It soon became clear to many that the Articles themselves were part of the problem.

- Economic Weaknesses
- ✓ To fight the Revolutionary War, America had borrowed money from France.
- $\checkmark\,$  They needed to pay the money back with interest
- The weak U.S. government under the Articles of Confederation did not have the power to tax the states or the people and raise the money.
- Shays' Rebellion
- ✓ American farmers faced hardships such as lower prices for their goods and rising debt
- ✓ Daniel Shays, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, became a leader among the farmers.
- ✓ In 1787, he led about 1,000 farmers to seize weapons from the Springfield Armory and attempted to shut down the courts.
- ✓ Massachusetts Army marched west to suppress the rebellion.

## Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation

- Congress could not levy or collect taxes.
- Congress was powerless to regulate interstate commerce and foreign trade.
- Each state had only one vote in Congress, regardless of its size.
- A two-thirds majority (9 out of 13 states) was required to pass laws.
- Articles could only be amended with the consent of all states.
- There was no separate executive branch to enforce acts of Congress.
- There was no system of federal courts.

Analyze Information Which weaknesses would likely cause the most problems for the nation over time?



American farmers faced hardships such as lower prices for their goods and rising debt in the late 1700s. Growing discontent due to the possibility of foreclosure and a loss of livelihood pushed some farmers to rebel.

#### **Quiz: The States Create Republics**

Which form of state government was considered the most democratic and the least conservative?

- A. bicameral legislature with strong governor
- B. bicameral legislature with weak governor
- C. unicameral legislature with strong governor
- D. unicameral legislature with weak governor

In what significant way did most state governments differ from the federal government under the Articles of Confederation?

- A. The federal government had a bicameral legislature.
- B. Citizens elected their federal representatives.
- C. State governments negotiated with American Indian nations.
- D. The federal government did not have an executive branch.

#### **Quiz: The Northwest Territory**

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided a plan for

- A. abolition of slavery throughout the nation.
- B. recognition of American Indian nations.
- C. statehood for territories.
- D. distributing the public lands.

Following the American Revolution, Britain tried to retaliate against the United States through

- A. attacks on merchant vessels.
- B. mercantilist trade policies.
- C. port closures.
- D. trade boycotts.

After the Revolution, the national government lacked the funds it needed to repay its war debts because

- A. Congress had committed the nation to unfavorable trade agreements.
- B. the Articles failed to give Congress the power to tax.
- C. the Articles permitted Congress to borrow money from states.
- D. the Articles did not create a national banking system.