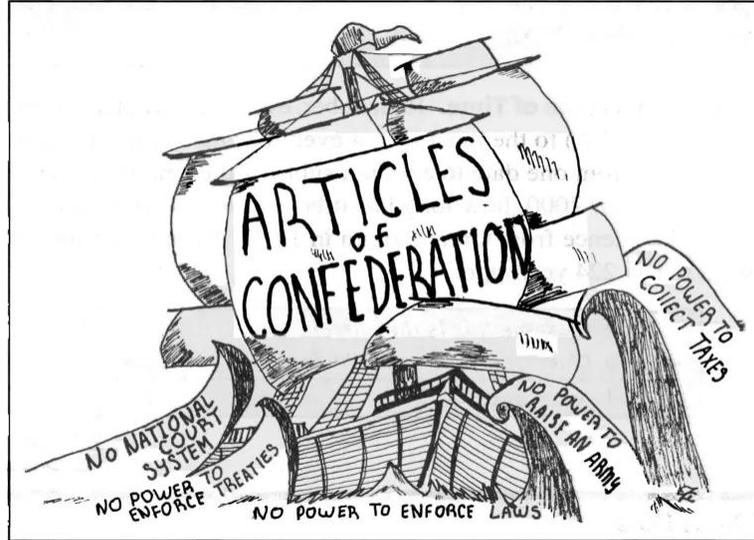


The Articles of Confederation



"Rough Sailing Ahead?"

The Articles of Confederation were the first **constitution** (written framework) for a national government. It was created and proposed by the **Second Continental Congress** during the Revolutionary War in 1777. It went into effect in 1781 after all thirteen states **ratified** the document. The Articles created a **confederation** (an alliance of independent states). The thirteen states gave some powers to the newly created federal government but kept for themselves most of the power. The Articles of Confederation was more of a treaty among the thirteen states rather than a plan for a centralized government.

Today, the Articles of Confederation are seen as America's first failure at creating a government.

A Timeline of Events for the Articles of Confederation

Year	Events
1776	The declaration of Independence was written and the Revolutionary War began
1777	The Articles of Confederation were passed, New York had the first Constitution
1781	The Articles of Confederation went into effect
1783	The Treat of Paris ended the American Revolution
1785	The Land Ordinance Act of 1785 was passed
1786	Shays' Rebellion took place
1787	The Northwest Ordinance was passed
1787	The Constitutional Convention was held in Philadelphia, ending the Articles of Confederation
1788	The Constitution of the United States of America was ratified

Successes of the Articles of Confederation

The new federal government was given certain powers such as it could make treaties, declare war, and receive foreign ambassadors.

In addition, the Confederation Congress is credited with several notable **achievements**:

1. They ended the American Revolution with the negotiation of the Treaty of Paris in 1783 which also set the United States borders at Canada, the Mississippi River, and Florida.
2. They passed the Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Land Ordinance of 1787 that created a plan for settlement in the Northwest Passage area of the country. These acts also created guidelines for adding new states to the nation as the nation expanded westward. Anyone who settled in these new territories was automatically granted equality of citizenship.
3. The Articles of Confederation contained a bill of rights that protected religious freedom, the right of a **writ of habeas corpus**, and a trial by jury. [***habeas corpus*** is a fundamental right that protects against unlawful and indefinite imprisonment].
4. The Articles of Confederation prohibited slavery in the Northwest Territory but it also allowed for the return of fugitive slaves.

The Northwest Ordinance



The Articles of Confederation were in effect during the Critical Period of the 1780's and contained many weaknesses. The American people were still in fear of having a strong, central government so they wanted the individual states to protect its powers. Limited Powers for a central government saw the creation of a **unicameral legislature**, each state, regardless of its population, had only one vote. Nine votes (out of thirteen or 2/3) was required to pass laws and any amendments had to be passed unanimously.

The Articles **lacked a president** to direct operations and there was **no national judiciary system** created. There was **no national currency** as states were still allowed to coin their own money and the new Congress did **not have the power to tax** the people directly. They had to ask the states for funds. In addition, there was **no power given to raise a national army**, troops had to be requested from the states if the need arose.

The new nation had to borrow heavily to finance the Revolutionary War but with no power to tax, the nation's economy was failing. New trading partners from overseas lowered their prices below domestically made goods closing many businesses. States continued to act independently of the central government regarding imports.

The Articles of Confederation were not working and it was nearly impossible to strengthen them as all thirteen states had to agree on an amendment, and this rarely took place. In May 1787, a **Constitutional Convention** met in Philadelphia for **“the sole and express purpose of amending the Articles of Confederation.”** Once the convention began it became evident that the Articles of Confederation had to be terminated and a new Constitution created.

How the Articles of Confederation were corrected by the Constitution	
Articles of Confederation	Constitution of the United States
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confederacy: State governments, not the national government, have the most power • No executive officer to carry out the laws of Congress • No national courts, only state courts exist • Congress is responsible to the states. The states are sovereign • Laws must be approved by 9 out of 13 states • Unicameral legislature with one vote per state regardless of population • Congress has no power to tax • Congress cannot raise and maintain a national army. They have to ask states for troops • Congress cannot regulate trade among the states nor the nation's foreign trade • Congress can make foreign treaties but not involving foreign trade. Each state managed its own interstate and international trade • Congress could coin money but so did many states • All 13 states must agree to any amendment of the Articles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal System: Power to govern is divided between national and state governments • The Constitution and acts of Congress take supremacy • A President heads the executive branch • Both federal and state courts exist • Congress is responsible to the people • Legislature is bicameral (2 houses) with one house based on the nation's population • Laws require a majority vote in both houses of Congress • Congress has the power to levy (raise) and collect taxes • Congress can raise and maintain military forces • Congress is given sole control over interstate and foreign trade • Only the national government can coin money • The Amendment process does not require a unanimous vote and involves both Congress and state governments