



U. S. History: From the Colonial Period to 1877

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7.1 CREATING REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS

INDEPENDENCE AND CONFLICT	American victory in the Revolutionary War brought INDEPENDENCE AND CONFLICT, as former Patriots attempted to establish republican institutions at the state and national levels.
STATE CONSTITUTIONS <u>Patriots:</u> Direct Rule	During the Revolutionary War, state politicians debated about how democratic the new state constitutions should be. Many PATRIOTS wanted the people to RULE DIRECTLY. In PENNSYLVANIA, democratic ideals inspired the establishment of a UNICAMERAL LEGISLATURE and brought UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE to white males.
<u>Moderates & Conservatives:</u> Division of Powers Checks & Balances	But MODERATES AND CONSERVATIVES sought to CURB THE POWER OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY by DIVIDING POLITICAL AUTHORITY among several branches of government. By establishing an elected governor with veto power and appointing a judiciary, republican conservatives sought to CHECK THE EXCESSES OF POPULAR MAJORITIES, which were increasingly made up of men from the middle class of society. Through such innovations, they laid the framework for the federal Constitution, which granted more authority to the privileged classes.
Property Qualifications for Voting	Under most state constitutions, the only people allowed to vote or hold political office were PROPERTY HOLDERS. The justification for such a restricted franchise, which few questioned, was that only property owners possessed the intellectual and economic independence to make wise political decisions. About one-quarter to one-half of the adult white male population was disfranchised by property qualifications.
Second-Class Citizenship for Women	The new state governments did LITTLE TO IMPROVE THE WELFARE OF WOMEN. There existed a clear contradiction between republican theory and the continued relegation of American women to second-class citizenship. Though gender roles were left greatly unchanged during the period, the democratic currents of the time did give UNMARRIED AND WIDOWED WOMEN the RIGHT TO VOTE in NEW JERSEY and encouraged a broader national commitment to women's education
Slaves Denied Basic Human Rights	In southern states, legislatures included specific language in the constitution denying slaves from basic human rights. SLAVERY would eventually be abolished in New England and phased out in the middle Atlantic states, but it SURVIVED IN ALL THE SOUTHERN AND BORDER STATES. Few southern whites could envision any alternative to slavery.
ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION	The Articles of Confederation, ratified in 1781, established the first national government by confirming the powers of the CONFEDERATION CONGRESS (formerly the Continental Congress).
<u>Congress:</u> War, Foreign Affairs, Money	Congress had the POWER TO MAKE WAR and CONDUCT FOREIGN AFFAIRS and to APPROPRIATE, BORROW, AND ISSUE MONEY. However, TAXES and TROOPS were to be requisitioned from the STATES, and there was to be no national executive branch. All THIRTEEN STATE LEGISLATURES would have to approve any measure intended TO AMEND OR RATIFY THE ARTICLES. In short, the Articles allowed the states considerable power and sovereignty.
<u>States:</u> Taxes, Troops, Unanimous Vote to Amend	Running the new government under the Articles of Confederation was difficult. Daily activities were handicapped by the LACK OF A QUORUM to conduct business. State legislatures were slow to select delegates, and those appointed were often reluctant to come. The attempt to avoid an executive branch failed, and EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS were created to handle administrative functions. By the time the Articles

	<p>were fully operative, the best POLITICAL TALENT was no longer participating at the national level but at the state level, where REVOLUTIONARY IDEOLOGY was being implemented in STATE CONSTITUTIONS.</p>
<p>THE CRITICAL PERIOD</p>	<p>During the first decade, the STATES WERE SOVEREIGN and all-powerful. Americans identified themselves as Virginians or New Yorkers rather than Americans. State government was the laboratory where the Revolution’s principles were first tested.</p> <p>From 1781 to 1786, many Americans worried that the Articles of Confederation were too weak. Others, however, defended the Articles as the best guarantee of individual liberty. The issue remained controversial throughout the period.</p>
<p>Financial Chaos</p>	<p>Because of the war, the confederation and the individual states had enormous debts. They had printed virtually WORTHLESS MONEY to take care of these debts, causing a serious postwar DEPRESSION. Because the Articles of Confederation reserved most key economic functions to the states, Congress was helpless to tax trade, control inflation, stop the flow of state-issued paper money, or pay the debt. But the confederation had one source of potential revenue, the national domain.</p>
<p>Land Ordinance of 1784</p>	<p>Thomas Jefferson drafted the original policy for handling the NATIONAL DOMAIN, the territory north of the Ohio River and east of the Mississippi. He wanted to give land to settlers to encourage rapid and democratic settlement and avoid land speculation, provide that states have representative governments equal in value with the original states after they reached a certain population, and prohibit slavery, The ORDINANCE OF 1784 adopted his ideas about surveying the land but rejected free land and abolition. The ORDINANCE OF 1785 stipulated that land be sold in 640-acre parcels for \$640 in cash or debt certificates, a very large sum that favored wealthy land speculations. The Northwest Ordinance promised territories eventual self-government, devised an interim plan, and prohibited slavery.</p>
<p>Northwest Ordinance of 1785</p>	
<p>SHAY’S REBELLION</p>	<p>After the war, worthless currency, large state debts, and the disruption of trade plunged America into a RECESSION. Creditors urged politicians to pass laws that would limit the use of paper money and impose higher taxes to accelerate debt repayment. In some states, the debtors resisted such measures and pro-debtor legislation was passed. However, in Massachusetts, where such legislation was not enacted, farmers resisted under the leadership of DANIEL SHAYS, a poor farmer and former continental army officer, and the popular movement turned into a full-scale uprising of disgruntled farmers. Though put down, this challenge to state authority reflected GROWING DISCONTENT.</p>
<p>CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION</p>	<p>The ECONOMIC RECESSION and SHAY’S REBELLION helped to convince Americans that the Articles of Confederation must be strengthened. In May 1787, a CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION met in Philadelphia. The Convention was actually authorized only “for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation.” Many of the delegates, however had reached the conclusion that only a complete reorganization of the confederacy into a strong central government could solve the problems of the new nation.</p> <p>Why did the states favor governments with division of powers and a system of checks and balances? Who did these features benefit most?</p> <p>Why didn’t the Articles of Confederation have more than one branch of government?</p> <p>What important powers did the Confederation Congress lack? What problems did this cause for the new nation?</p>