

The Articles of Confederation

The Articles of Confederation established the first governmental structure unifying the thirteen states that had fought in the American Revolution. They went into effect on March 1, 1781 and lasted until March 4, 1789 when they were replaced by the US Constitution. Why did the Articles of Confederation only last eight years? In effect why did the Articles of Confederation fail?

The purpose of the Articles of Confederation was to create a confederation of states whereby each state retained "its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right . . . not . . . expressly delegated to the United States in Congress assembled." In other words, every state was as independent as possible with the United States only responsible for the common defense, security of liberties, and the general welfare. To this effect, the Articles were purposely written to keep the national government as weak as possible. However, there were many problems that soon became apparent as the Articles took effect.

Following is a list of the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation:

- Each state only had one vote in Congress, regardless of size.
- Congress had not have the power to tax.
- Congress did not have the power to regulate foreign and interstate commerce.
- There was no executive branch to enforce any acts passed by Congress.
- There was no national court system.
- Amendments to the Articles of Confederation required a unanimous vote.
- Laws required a 9/13 majority to pass in Congress.

Under the Articles of Confederation, states often argued amongst themselves. They also refused to financially support the national government. The national government was powerless to enforce any acts it did pass. Some states began making agreements with foreign governments. Most had their own military. Each state printed its own money. There was no stable economy.

In 1786, Shays' Rebellion occurred in western Massachusetts as a protest to rising debt and economic chaos. However, the national government was unable to gather a combined military force amongst the states to help put down the rebellion.

As the economic and military weaknesses became apparent, individuals began asking for changes to the Articles that would create a stronger national government. Initially, some states met to deal with their trade and economic problems. As more states became interested in meeting to change the Articles, a meeting was set in Philadelphia on May 25, 1787. This became the Constitutional Convention.

The Articles of Confederation was a written agreement which was considered to be the first constitution of the United States of America. The US Constitution, on the other hand, is the constitution which acts as the supreme law in the United States today. Both were poles apart, and that's exactly what the comparison between the two shows. In fact, it was only because of the numerous weaknesses of the Articles that the present day US Constitution was drafted.

Articles of Confederation leads to the US Constitution

The Articles of Confederation (or Articles) was a written agreement, ratified by the thirteen original states of the United States of America, which laid the guidelines as to how the US government was supposed to function. Sometimes, simply referred to as Articles, this agreement was created in November 1777, and ratified by the 13 original states in March 1781. Within a few years of its ratification, it was subjected to severe criticism by the Founding Fathers of the United States. Eventually, it was decided that this agreement had to be revised to suit the needs of the nation as a whole. In May 1787, delegates from the 13 states met in Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation. However, in course of convention all the delegation members came to a mutual conclusion that rewriting the entire Constitution was