
Role and Consequences Of the Articles of Confederation

The treaty of Paris in 1783 ended the revolutionary war between Britain and its former colonies, America. After a long and gruesome war with many lives lost, the former colonists finally won their independence at the Battle of Yorktown. The defeat of the British at the battle of Yorktown would not have been possible without the help of the French. The French played a strategic and important role in the colonists' plight for independence against Britain's stronghold. Holding their own personal prejudices against Britain and wanting them to lose colonies and thereby lowering some of Britain's status, the French decided to help the Colonists once they proved their perseverance to gaining independence at the Battle of Saratoga. With the help of France, winning their independence was only a matter of time for the colonists. British citizens were tired of footing a costly bill for a seemingly unnecessary war. After winning the war, and finally being acknowledged as their own country by Britain, Spain, and France (all of the important European powers at the time) the colonists had a new problem on their hands, forming a new government. As the predecessor of the constitution, the Articles of Confederation was the first document to outline a completely new and separate government from the British after the revolution. One of the most important things to note about the Articles, is that they did not call for a Central figure in the government like a President or any type of monarchy. The Articles clearly displayed the fears the colonists held on the role of a central government, and allowing a minority to control the actions of a majority. The authors of the Articles of Confederation gave limited power to a central government and clearly outlined numerous other ways the new American government would be run and this was all a result of fears and biases the colonists held after the revolution, and in part due to Britain.

The Articles of Confederation provided the power to each State. Decisions of a Federal government could not be made without all states agreeing. The Articles also called for the creation of a Unicameral Legislature, where each state held one vote. Under the Articles, the States and their elected officials were much more important than anything the Central government came up with. Instead of a multitude bowing down to the powers of a few, much like the colonists did to parliament and the King of England, the newly created central government bowed down to the will of the majority. The colonists hoped that with a government that made the will of its people the most important thing, then they would never have to deal with the oppression they suffered under the hands of England. After all the laws and Acts imposed on the colonies by Britain, such as the Quebec Act, Townsend Duties, The Quartering Act, Sugar Act, Stamp Act, and so forth the colonists were afraid of a minority imposing themselves on a vast majority, which is why they tightened the grip on the central government and limited their decisions and powers and only allowed States who were closer to the multitude to make major decisions, this is also why independent states came up with their own Bill of

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Rights and what individual promises were to be upheld for each citizen of a particular state. Someone during the time of the Articles is quoted in history as stating that the under the Articles, America was only a league of friendship and not a strong and united nation.

One of the main reasons the colonists moved for independence was to establish their rights and do what they please without an authority figure hovering over them telling them what to do. For this reason States had the most power under the Articles and the Unicameral legislature lived for the sole purpose to make the people happy. The people wanted to expand into the territory previously unavailable to them under Great Britain and The Proclamation of 1763. The Proclamation did not allow colonists to expand into the territory west of the original colonies, for the sole purpose of avoiding conflict with nearby Native Americans. Under the powers granted to them by the Articles of Confederation, Congress allowed settlers onto the previously uninhabited land in the Ordinance of 1785. This made many colonists happy but it also increased tensions with Native Americans. The consequences of the Ordinances of 1785 (fighting with Native Americans on newly settled land) highlighted the importance of a central government to make decisions that aren't only going to make citizens happy, but also make the best decision in the case of the nation.

After what historians have termed the American Revolution, the strong distrust of central government was rampant in the former colonies. This is apparent as, one of the main powers not granted to the already weak central government was the right to tax the colonists. This right is an essential part of running an effective government. The right to tax the newly found country, was only allowed if all 13 states agreed, which never happened. After fighting a revolution the colonists had to find a way to fund it. The revolution was funded by money borrowed from other countries. After the revolution the money to pay back these debts was expected from the colonists. The debt was never effectively paid off because all 13 states never agreed to find a way to pay back the massive debt. Each state avoiding the debt and refusing to pay back taxes resulted in distrust of the newly formed nation America, and other countries were not as willing to work with America. The central government tried printing off more money to pay for the massive debt which resulted in massive inflation, and the new Continental not being worth anything. All this was a result of the colonists fear of "taxation without representation" a term coined by Samuel Adams right before the revolution occurred. The colonists fear of a strong central government taxing them, in the end eventually hurt them enormously economically and otherwise.

With newly found independence, America was running on a high, a high as a result of defeating Britain and forming their own government. The creation of the Articles of Confederation and finding the way to run the country the way they wanted, seemed a huge leap for the newly found nation. But as they soon learned what you want is not always as good for you as it seems. Unrest as a result of inflation and other problems with the weak and uneventful central

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government led to rebellions within America itself. Shay's rebellion was result of unrest with the new central government, and it resulted in a brand new form of government being created and a stronger central government, one of the main problems with the Articles of Confederation. The problems with the Articles, led to the creation of The Constitution, the one document that has provided for and run The United States of America for over two hundred years.

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