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The Confederation and the Constitution, 1776-1790

PART I: Reviewing the Chapter

A. Checklist of Learning Objectives

After mastering this chapter, you should be able to

1. explain the political and social movement toward "equality" that flourished after the Revolution, and understand why certain social and racial inequalities remained in place.
2. describe the government of the Articles of Confederation and indicate its achievements and failures.
3. explain the crucial role of Shays's Rebellion in sparking the movement for a new Constitution.
4. describe the basic intentions and ideas of the Founding Fathers, and how they incorporated their fundamental principles into the Constitution.
5. grasp the central concerns that motivated the antifederalists, and indicate their social, economic, and political differences with the federalists.
6. describe the process of ratification of the Constitution, and explain why the federalists won.
7. indicate the ways in which the new Constitutional government was "conservative," yet preserved the central principles of the American Revolution.

B. Glossary

To build your social science vocabulary, familiarize yourself with the following terms.

1. **disestablish** To separate an official state church from its connection with the government. "... the Protestant Episcopal church . . . was everywhere disestablished." (p. 167)
2. **emancipation** Setting free from servitude or slavery. "Several northern states . . . provided for the gradual emancipation of blacks." (p. 167)
3. **chattel** An article of personal or movable property; hence a term applied to slaves, since they were considered the personal property of their owners. "... a few idealistic masters freed their human chattels." (p. 167)
4. **abolitionist** An advocate of the end of slavery. "In this . . . were to be found the first frail sprouts of the later abolitionist movement." (p. 167)
5. **ratification** The confirmation or validation of an act (such as a constitution) by authoritative approval. "Massachusetts . . . submitted the final draft directly to the people for ratification." (p. 168)
6. **bill of rights** A list of fundamental freedoms assumed to be central to society. "Most of these documents included bills of rights. . . ." (p. 168)
7. **speculators (speculation)** Those who buy property, goods, or financial instruments not primarily for use but in anticipation of profitable resale after a general rise in value. "States seized control of former crown lands . . . although rich speculators had their day." (p. 169)
8. **township** In America, a surveyed territory six miles square; the term also refers to a unit of local government, smaller than a county, that is often based on these survey units. "The six-

teenth section of each township was set aside to be sold for the benefit of the public schools. . . .” (p. 174)

9. **territory** In American government, an organized political entity not yet enjoying the full and equal status of a state. “. . . when a territory could boast sixty thousand inhabitants, it might be admitted by Congress as a state. . . .” (p. 174)
10. **annex** To make a smaller territory or political unit part of a larger one. “They . . . sought to annex that rebellious area to Britain.” (p. 175)
11. **requisition** A demand for something issued on the basis of public authority. “The requisition system of raising money was breaking down. . . .” (p. 176)
12. **foreclosure** Depriving someone of the right to redeem mortgaged property because the legal payments on the loan have not been kept up. “. . . Revolutionary war veterans were losing their farms through mortgage foreclosures.” (p. 176)
13. **quorum** The minimum number of persons who must be present in a group before it can conduct valid business. “A quorum of the fifty-five emissaries from twelve states finally convened at Philadelphia. . . .” (p. 177)
14. **anarchy** The theory that formal government is unnecessary and wrong in principle; the term is also used generally for lawlessness or antigovernmental disorder. “Delegates were determined to preserve the union [and] forestall anarchy. . . .” (p. 179)
15. **bicameral, unicameral** Referring to a legislative body with two houses (bicameral) or one (unicameral). “. . . representation in both houses of a bicameral Congress should be based on population. . . .” “This provided for equal representation in a unicameral Congress. . . .” (p. 179)

PART II: Checking Your Progress

A. True-False

Where the statement is true, mark **T**. Where it is false, mark **F**, and correct it in the space immediately below.

- ___ 1. The American Revolution created a substantial though not radical push in the direction of social and political equality.
- ___ 2. The movement toward the separation of church and state was greatly accelerated by the disestablishment of the Anglican church in Virginia.
- ___ 3. After the Revolution, slavery was abolished in New York and Pennsylvania, but continued to exist in New England and the South.
- ___ 4. Drawing up a written fundamental law in a special constitutional convention and then submitting the document directly to the people for ratification was an important new idea of the Revolutionary period.
- ___ 5. The state governments after the Revolution stayed mostly under the tight political control of the eastern seaboard elite.
- ___ 6. The United States experienced hard economic times and some social discontent during the years of the Confederation (1781–1787).
- ___ 7. The greatest failure of the national government under the Articles of Confederation was its inability to deal with the issue of western lands.

- ___ 8. The Articles of Confederation were weak because they contained neither an executive nor power to tax and regulate commerce.
- ___ 9. The Northwest Ordinance originally attempted to make the western territories permanent colonial possessions of the United States.
- ___ 10. Shays's Rebellion significantly strengthened the movement for a stronger central government by raising the fear of anarchy among conservatives.
- ___ 11. The states sent their delegates to Philadelphia in 1787 for the purpose of writing a new Constitution with a strong central government.
- ___ 12. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention were all extremely wealthy slaveholders.
- ___ 13. The "Great Compromise" between large and small states at the convention resulted in a bicameral legislature with different principles of representation in each.
- ___ 14. The antifederalists opposed the Constitution partly because they thought it gave too much power to the states and not enough to Congress.
- ___ 15. The federalists used tough political maneuvering and the promise of a bill of rights to win a narrow ratification of the Constitution in key states.

B. Multiple Choice

Select the best answer and write the proper letter in the space provided.

- ___ 1. Among the important changes brought about by the American Revolution was
 - a. the abolition of slavery everywhere except South Carolina and Georgia.
 - b. a strong movement toward equality of property rights.
 - c. the increasing separation of church and state.
 - d. full equality and voting rights for women.
- ___ 2. A major new political innovation that emerged in the Revolutionary era was
 - a. the election of legislative representatives capable of voting on taxation.
 - b. the shifting of power from the legislative to the executive branch of government.
 - c. the idea of a written constitution drafted by a convention and ratified by direct vote of the people.
 - d. the regulation of land sales by the courts.
- ___ 3. Despite the Revolution's emphasis on human rights and equality, the Founding Fathers failed to abolish slavery because
 - a. they saw it as necessary to maintain American power.
 - b. they feared black rebellion if slavery were removed.
 - c. of their fear that a fight over slavery would destroy fragile national unity.
 - d. almost none of them believed that slavery was wrong.

4. The ideal of "republican motherhood" that emerged from the American Revolution held that
 - a. women should be rewarded politically for having helped establish the American republic.
 - b. women had a special responsibility to cultivate the "civic virtues" of republicanism in their children.
 - c. the government should establish social services to help mothers raise their children.
 - d. mothers should be granted full political and economic rights in the American republic.

5. In the new state constitutions written after the Revolution, the most powerful branch of government was
 - a. the legislative branch.
 - b. the executive branch.
 - c. the judicial branch.
 - d. the military branch.

6. One way that American independence actually harmed the nation's economic fortunes was by
 - a. ending British trade and investment in America.
 - b. abolishing the stable currency system that had existed under the empire.
 - c. cutting off American trade with the British empire.
 - d. weakening the manufacturing efforts begun under the British.

7. Attempts to establish strong governments in post-Revolutionary America were seriously hindered by
 - a. the lack of strong leadership available in the new nation.
 - b. the revolutionary ideology that preached natural rights and suspicion of all governmental authority.
 - c. the hostility of the clergy toward the idea of separation of church and state.
 - d. the fear that a strong government would suppress economic development.

8. The primary political obstacle to the formation of the first American government under the Articles of Confederation was
 - a. disputes among the jealous states over control of western lands.
 - b. disagreement over the relative power of Congress and the executive branch.
 - c. conflict over the right of Congress to regulate trade and manufacturing.
 - d. conflict over slavery between northern and southern states.

9. The greatest weakness of the government under the Articles of Confederation was that
 - a. it was unable to deal with the issue of western lands.
 - b. it had no power to regulate commerce or collect taxes from the sovereign states.
 - c. it had no power to establish relations with foreign governments.
 - d. there was no judicial branch to balance the legislative and executive branches.

10. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 provided that
 - a. the states should retain permanent control of their western lands.
 - b. money from the sale of western lands should be used to promote manufacturing.
 - c. after sufficient population growth, western territories could be organized and then join the union as states.
 - d. the settlers in the northwest could vote on whether or not they should have slavery.

- ___ 11. Shays's Rebellion contributed to the movement for a new constitution by
- demonstrating the desire of western farmers for a strong government to assist them.
 - raising the fear of anarchy and disorder among wealthy conservatives.
 - raising the prospect of British or French interference in American domestic affairs.
 - demonstrating that the Northwest Ordinance had failed to resolve western land issues.
- ___ 12. Besides George Washington, among the most influential figures in the Constitutional Convention were
- John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, and John Hancock.
 - Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, and Thomas Paine.
 - John Adams, Abigail Adams, and Gouverneur Morris.
 - Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton.
- ___ 13. The "Great Compromise" in the Constitutional Convention provided that
- the House of Representatives would be elected by the people and the Senate by the state legislatures.
 - the large states would be taxed on the basis of population and the small states on the basis of territory.
 - there would be separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government.
 - there would be representation by population in the House of Representatives but equal representation of all states in the Senate.
- ___ 14. Antifederalists generally found their greatest support among
- small states like Delaware and New Jersey.
 - the commercial areas of the eastern seaboard.
 - the poorer debtors and farmers.
 - the wealthy and well educated.
- ___ 15. The crucial federalist successes in the fight for ratification occurred in the states of
- Georgia, Maryland, and Delaware.
 - Massachusetts, Virginia, and New York.
 - Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Rhode Island.
 - Connecticut, South Carolina, and New Hampshire.

C. Identification

Supply the correct identification for each numbered description.

- _____ 1. New name for the Anglican Church after it was disestablished and de-Anglicized in Virginia and elsewhere
- _____ 2. The idea that American women had a special responsibility to cultivate "civic virtue" in their children
- _____ 3. A type of special assembly, originally developed in Massachusetts, for drawing up a fundamental law that would be superior to ordinary law
- _____ 4. The first constitutional government of the United States
- _____ 5. The territory north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi governed by the acts of 1785 and 1787

- _____ 6. In the new territories, six-mile by six-mile square areas consisting of thirty-six sections, one of which was set aside for public schools
- _____ 7. The status of a western area under the Northwest Ordinance after it established an organized government but before it became a state
- _____ 8. A failed revolt in 1786 by poor debtor farmers that raised fears of "mobocracy"
- _____ 9. The plan proposed by Virginia at the Constitutional Convention for a bicameral legislature with representation based on population
- _____ 10. The plan proposed by New Jersey for a unicameral legislature with equal representation of states regardless of size and population
- _____ 11. The compromise between North and South that resulted in each slave being counted as 60 percent of a free person for purposes of representation
- _____ 12. The opponents of the Constitution who argued against creating such a strong central government
- _____ 13. A masterly series of pro-Constitution articles printed in New York by Jay, Madison, and Hamilton
- _____ 14. The official under the new Constitution who would be commander in chief of the armed forces, appoint judges and other officials, and have the power to veto legislation
- _____ 15. A list of guarantees that federalists promised to add to the Constitution in order to win ratification

D. Matching People, Places, and Events

Match the person, place, or event in the left column with the proper description in the right column by inserting the correct letter on the blank line.

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|---|---|
| _____ 1. Society of the Cincinnati | A. Group that failed to block the central government they feared but did force the promise of a bill of rights |
| _____ 2. Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom | B. Father of the Constitution and author of <i>Federalist</i> No. 10 |
| _____ 3. Articles of Confederation | C. An exclusive order of military officers that aroused strong democratic opposition |
| _____ 4. Northwest Ordinance of 1787 | D. Wealthy conservatives devoted to republicanism who engineered a nonviolent political transformation |
| _____ 5. Dey of Algiers | E. Legislation passed by an alliance of Jefferson and the Baptists that disestablished the Anglican church |
| _____ 6. Daniel Shays | F. Revolutionary War veteran who led poor farmers in a revolt that failed but had far-reaching consequences |
| _____ 7. George Washington | G. North African leader who took advantage of the weakness of the Articles of Confederation to attack American shipping |
| _____ 8. James Madison | H. The only state to allow a direct vote on the Constitution |
| _____ 9. federalists | I. Frustrated foreign affairs secretary under the Articles; one of the three authors of <i>The Federalist</i> |
| | J. Legislation that provided for the orderly transformation of western territories into states |

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| <p>___ 10. antifederalists</p> <p>___ 11. Patrick Henry</p> <p>___ 12. Alexander Hamilton</p> <p>___ 13. John Jay</p> <p>___ 14. Massachusetts</p> <p>___ 15. New York</p> | <p>K. First of key states where federalists won by a narrow margin over the opposition of antifederalist Sam Adams</p> <p>L. Virginia antifederalist leader who thought the Constitution spelled the end of liberty and equality</p> <p>M. Unanimously elected chairman of the secret convention of "demi-gods"</p> <p>N. Young New Yorker who argued eloquently for the Constitution even though he favored an even stronger central government</p> <p>O. Document of 1781 that was put out of business by the Constitution</p> |
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E. Putting Things in Order

Put the following events in correct order by numbering them from 1 to 5.

- ___ Fifty-five "demi-gods" meet secretly in Philadelphia to draft a new charter of government.
- ___ The first American national government, more a league of states than a real government, goes into effect.
- ___ At the request of Congress, the states draft new constitutions based on the authority of the people.
- ___ The Constitution is ratified by the nine states necessary to put it into effect.
- ___ Debtor farmers fail in a rebellion, setting off conservative fears and demands for a stronger government to control anarchy.

F. Matching Cause and Effect

Match the historical cause in the left column with the proper effect in the right column by writing the correct letter on the blank line.

Cause	Effect
___ 1. The American Revolution	A. Forced acceptance of the "Three-Fifths Compromise," counting each slave as three-fifths of a person for purposes of representation
___ 2. Agreement among states to give up western land claims	B. Made the federalists promise to add a bill of rights to the Constitution
___ 3. The weakness of the Articles of Confederation	C. Nearly bankrupted the national government and invited assaults on American interests by foreign powers
___ 4. Shays's Rebellion	D. Laid the basis for the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom and the separation of church and state
___ 5. The conflict in the Constitutional Convention between large and small states	E. Brought about somewhat greater social and economic equality and the virtual end of slavery in the North
___ 6. The North-South conflict in the Constitutional Convention over counting slaves for representation	F. Finally brought New York to ratify the Constitution by a narrow margin
___ 7. A meeting in Annapolis to discuss revising the Articles of Confederation	G. Issued a call to Congress for a special convention to revise the Articles of Confederation
___ 8. Antifederalist fears that the Constitution would destroy liberties	H. Forced the adoption of the "Great Compromise," which required a bicameral

Map Challenge

Using the map of *The Struggle over Ratification* on p.183, write a brief essay describing how the factors of (a) nearness to the commercial seacoast and (b) size of state influenced profederalist or antifederalist views. Indicate which states were exceptions to the general pattern.

PART III: Applying What You Have Learned

1. How did the revolutionary American ideas of natural human rights, equality, and freedom from governmental tyranny affect developments in the immediate post-Revolutionary period (1783–1789)?
2. How were women and African-Americans affected by the ideas of the American Revolution? Why was slavery abolished in the North but not in the entire nation?
3. Which problems of the post-Revolutionary period and weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation lead to the adoption of a new Constitution?
4. What were the basic features of the new Constitution, and how did they differ from the government under the Articles of Confederation?
5. Who were the federalists and the antifederalists, what were the issues that divided them, and why did the federalists win?
6. Should the Constitution be seen as a conservative reaction to the Revolution, an enshrinement of revolutionary principles, or both? What was most truly *original* about the Constitution?
7. In Chapters 4 and 5, the basic structure of early American society and economy was described. How was that structure changed by the political developments during the period after the Revolution? How did the Constitution itself reflect issues concerning social structure, economic equality, and the distribution of power?