**ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION**

**What was the Articles of Confederation?**

The first constitution (framework of laws for governing) of the young United States

Written in 1776 and ratified in 1781 (in effect until 1788 when a new Constitution was written)

**Weaknesses of Articles of Confederation**

One house (unicameral) congress - equal representation of states results in small state dominance and large state bitterness  
  
9/13 states must vote yes to pass legislation

(resulted in few bills being passed into law----sectionalism (interest in own state or region above the nation as a whole) stifles legislation  
  
Unanimous (all states) must vote to amend (alter) the Articles of Confederation (makes needed adjustments impossible)  
  
No executive branch

-No enforcement of laws (forced to depend upon states for enforcement of laws)  
-No leadership leaves the United States with no singular direction (fuels further sectionalism)

No national courts

-resolution of state to state problems - only when both states accept.

**Powers denied to Federal Government under Articles of Confederation**

No regulation of interstate trade (between states)

-Tariff (taxes on imported products) wars between states  
-No enforcement of foreign trade treaties/no treaties ratified

No power to tax directly

-Unable to raise revenue to run the government  
-Unable to pay off war debt   
-American veterans threaten to overthrow government due to lack of payment from Revolution (Newburgh Crisis/Conspiracy)  
-Foreign nations refuse to extend trade credit (afraid to loan the U.S. money)  
-Could not limit/control printing of state currency (multiple state currencies cause inconsistent currency/economy)  
-State economies carelessly inflated or greedily deflated (Shays Rebellion)  
their own paper money

- Continentals (currency used by colonies during the Revolutionary War) disrespected/desired less than state currencies (“not worth a Continental”)

Could not conscript (draft) troops directly

-Revolutionary War government unable to produce the needed troops for Washington's army  
-State militia structure results in disjointed war effort  
-Post war government unable to field a realistic standing army to protect the young nation  
(unable to achieve international respectability)

**Powers granted to Federal Government (with limitations) under Articles of Confederation**

Declare war

Cannot finance war - can only ask state legislatures for money to pay for war  
Can conduct war - but must depend on state legislatures for manpower (militias)

Enter into foreign relations and make treaties

-Sectional disputes hurt ratification process/few treaties ratified  
-Unable to promise foreign nations that its own States will honor treaty  
-Little respect given to Confederation government (often taken advantage of by foreign nations)

Issue money - little respect for Continental

-in competition with state monies  
-no power to tax/no hard reserves/Continental Dollar unbacked by specie (gold/silver)

**Inability to enforce Treaty of Paris, 1783**

John Adams (Minister to Great Britain) fails to resolve the following:

-To halt the impressment of American sailors on the high seas  
-To convince the British to evacuate Northwest Territory forts  
-To gain official recognition from Parliament  
-Southern planters refuse to honor pre-war debts with British merchants  
-Confederation government fails to protect loyalist property (British embittered)

John Jay and Spain

-Trade treaty fails to pass Congress (sectional disputes)  
-Spanish refuse to allow American navigation of the southern Mississippi  
-Spanish refuse American deposit at the New Orleans port  
-Border dispute over Florida left unresolved/secret agreement dies with Treaty

**The one success of the Confederation government**

**Northwest Ordinances**

**Land Ordinance of 1785**

-Provided for the surveying and selling of western lands  
-land separated into townships and plots for sale (640 acres)  
-land mandated for the establishment of public education  
-criteria for statehood established

**Land Ordinance of 1787**

-Calls for the admission of no more than 5 states in the Northwest Territory

(eventually becomes Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin)  
-outlaws slavery in the Northwest Territory

\*\*\*Problems with the Ordinances

-640 acres per plot (no sub-division) (purchase price beyond the reach of common laborer/small farmer)  
-speculators purchase plot then subdivide land and sell at enormous profit