

The articles of confederation

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



The Articles of Confederation was America's first constitution. The Articles of Confederation were adopted by Congress in 1777 and provided for a "firm league of friendship" between the thirteen independent states. The Articles were in force from March 1, 1781, to June 21, 1788 and had both positive and negative effects on the states. The Articles of Confederation provided a very effective form of government with respect to the western lands but, in contrast, the government under the Articles of Confederation struggled in terms of foreign relations. The Congress of the Confederation passed very significant pieces of legislation dealing with the Old Northwest, the area of land south of the Great Lakes, east of the Mississippi River, and to the northwest of the Ohio River. The Land Ordinance of 1785 established the public land policy of the United States that lasted for more than 75 years. The Land Ordinance of 1785 provided that the land of the Northwest should be surveyed and sold with the proceeds sent to the Congressional Congress to help alleviate the national debt. The land that was surveyed was to be divided into townships six miles squared, each of which was then to be separated into thirty-six segments of one square mile each. In this monumental piece of legislation, the sixteenth section of each township was to be set aside for public schools. In addition to the Land Ordinance of 1785, the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 was passed under the Articles of Confederation. The Northwest Ordinance provided for the formation of not less than three, nor more than five, states. The Northwest Ordinance created three stages, in which the first two evolutionary territorial stages would be subordinate to the federal government. In the first stage, the total population included fewer than 5,000 adult males, the officials were appointed by U. S.

Congress and included a territorial Governor, Secretary, and three judges. The Governor and judges made laws. Under the second stage, total population included more than 5, 000 adult males, there were elected and appointed officials. The government officials included a territorial Governor, a Secretary, three judges and a non-voting Territorial Delegate to U. S. Congress that was elected by the territorial legislature. The law making body under this second stage was a Bicameral Legislature in which the lower house was made up by elected representatives, one representative for each 500 men, and an upper house with five members appointed by the U. S. Congress. When the time came that the region could boast sixty thousand inhabitants the voters would then elect delegates to write a state constitution, submit petition for statehood to U. S. Congress, receive approval of Congress to enter Federal Union on equal terms with other states, and then elect and appoint state government officials according to their specific state constitution. At this point in time the state would obtain all the rights and privileges of the thirteen charter members. In addition to creating the three stages, it contained provisions for the advancement of education, the maintenance of civil liberties and the exclusion of slavery. Above all, the Northwest Ordinance accelerated the westward expansion of the United States. The Land Ordinance of 1785 and the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 were among the solid accomplishments of the Confederation government. While the Articles of Confederation provided a fairly effective form of government with respect to the western lands it was not so successful with foreign relations. Most foreign nations did not take America seriously because of their lack of a powerful, centralized government.

America was viewed as the world's "ugly duckling" and was treated as such. Other nations were often confused whether the United States was one unified nation or thirteen separate ones. Britain refused to send a minister to the backwoods of America and suggested that if it sent one, it would have to send thirteen. Britain, still angry with the rebellious Americans, refused to make a commercial treaty or abolish its ancient Navigation Laws. Britain also continued to cause problems for Congress by refusing to retract their "redcoats" from trading post on American soil, devious British agents also stayed active along the north border in an attempt to annex the troubled area to Britain, in addition to pressuring the Indians to keep their tomahawks lined up on the side of the King as a barrier against future American attacks on Canada. Besides Britain, Spain also brought trouble to the newly formed nation. Spain was openly unfriendly to the new Republic by closing the Mississippi river to American commerce, and thus threatening the West with strangulation. Spain also claimed a large territory, north of the Gulf of Mexico including Florida, granted to the United States by the British in 1783. Spain and England together, using their influence among the bitter Indian tribes, prevented America from implementing efficient control over much of its total territory. In addition to the Spanish and English threat, France also provided America with some trouble. France demanded compensation for the money loaned during the war and constrained trade with their West Indies and many of their other ports. Foreign relations were very rough under the Articles Of Confederation. The Articles of Confederation did not supply America with a sufficient enough government. The government created under the Articles of Confederation did both positive and negative things for

the nation. While the Articles of Confederation provided a fairly effective form of government with respect to the western lands it was not so successful with foreign relations. Under the Articles of Confederation the central government was too weak, the "firm league of friendship" caused America to be the laughing stock of all nations.