



# Historical Cabinet: Constitutional Convention, US, 1787 (HC)

Chairs:

*Maya Schmeidler and Hagar Asaf*

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## Chair Letters:

Dear delegates,

My name is Hagar Asaf and I welcome you to the American Constitutional Convention. I'm thrilled to be one of your chairs, and I hope every single one of you will have an incredible experience in our committee.

I am currently in the eleventh grade studying in Ohel Shem High School in Ramat Gan. This is my third year being part of the MUN club in my school, and I can say with certainty that this experience has resulted in me learning and growing beyond what I thought was possible.

Other than MUN, I debate at Tel Aviv University, love learning computer science, math, politics and history, volunteer at Magen David Adom, read, and watch Brooklyn 99 (which, to be honest, I probably do too much).

I'm excited to meet all of you in February, and until then I am more than available for questions and concerns via email.

Hagar Asaf - [hagar.asaf10@gmail.com](mailto:hagar.asaf10@gmail.com)



Dear delegates,

My name is Maya Schmeidler (don't bother trying to pronounce it, too many have tried and failed), and I welcome you to our humble Convention. My plan for this committee is to have a whole lot of fun as a founding father of the United States of a 'murica. I hope each and every one of you will enjoy this just as much, if not more.

I absolutely love this topic and the structure of this committee, and I can't wait to see how you will use the format we've built to share some insane ideas. I have been doing MUN for 3 years now, and I just know this experience will be unique and fascinating.

When I'm not doing MUN (which should mean a lot more free time than it actually does...), I enjoy doing puzzles, watching movies (and making people I care about watch my movies), reading, listening to and watching musicals - but let's be honest, I spend most of my free time sleeping.

I can't wait for this conference, and I am available via Email for anything you might wish to say to me.

Your Obedient Servant,

M. Smed.

Maya Schmeidler- [mayoki1000@gmail.com](mailto:mayoki1000@gmail.com)



## Introduction to the Committee:

You have been chosen for the Constitutional Convention! The American Constitutional Convention took place from May 25 to September 17, 1787 in the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia, now known as Independence Hall. The Convention was one of the most momentous occasions in the history of the United States, and set the new country on a course towards becoming a Constitutional Republic.

There were 55 delegates in attendance, representing all 13 states except Rhode Island, which had refused to send delegates to the Convention in fear of the formation of a strong central government which would interfere in its economic business. George Washington, who had become a national hero after leading the Continental Army to victory during the American Revolution, was unanimously selected as the president of the Convention.

The purpose of the Convention was to address the numerous problems of the weak central government that existed under the Articles of Confederation. Although the Convention had been officially called to revise said Articles, the intention of many of its members was to create a new government rather than fix the existing one.

The United States Constitution that emerged from the Convention established a democracy that rests on a three-branched federal government with specific and effective power regarding all state issues. After the ratification process, the Constitution officially came into effect in 1789 and has served as the foundation of the United States Government ever since.

As delegates to this convention, your mission in this committee is to debate and redraft the Articles of Confederation, represent your state's interests, and hopefully secure your legacy as the founding fathers of the United States of America. Do not throw away your shot.

## The Structure of the Committee:

The Constitutional Convention originally had 55 delegates from 12 of the 13 states. **Each state had one vote**, in order to make all states equal. This means that delegates from each state had to work together to represent their state and their own interests. After opening debate and reaching a relatively conclusive chunk of ideas, the delegates would nominate people for different committees within the convention, for example, a committee responsible for drafting the ideas all had agreed upon would have been called the Committee of Style, and those more skilled with a quill would be called upon to join. So they would essentially be responsible for penning the greatest

documents and an important part of what made these people the founding fathers. In our committee, it is important to note that things will be run a little differently. Yes, you will be voting by state, and yes, we will be dividing you into sub-committees on your first day.

However, instead of just one committee that does all the writing, each subcommittee will be responsible for writing about a different issue. Then, afterwards, when the subcommittees reunite as the Committee of the Whole, everything will be debated and voted upon.

Welcome, delegates, to the room where it happens.

## **Historical Context:**

The relevant events unfurled over the course of 30 years. The colonies went from loyally subservient subjects of England, to the first democracy that has lasted to the present day. While to some going thirty years back may seem redundant or just plain boring, the same people who fought in the French and Indian war would later fight in the Revolutionary war, and following that, be the forces who fought for the ideas that are still represented to this very day. Which is why we've got to go back a bit to understand these people and through their lives one can begin to understand their conflicts and debates(We apologize in advance).

### **The French and Indian War (1754-1763):**

In 1754, the French and Indian war broke out. Essentially, it was a dispute over land(the Ohio River Valley) between the British Colonies and the French, with Native American clans rallying to help both sides. The British won the war, while the French were made to leave all their settlements in North America(they were divided, albeit unevenly, between the British and the Spanish). The war was followed by and in some cases was led to by the following events;

1. The war handed a number of colonial soldiers the experience that would prove to be crucial in the revolutionary war, not to mention George Washington's first claims to fame. This also strengthened the colonies relations with the Native Americans who fought with them, and would later join them in the war of independence as well.
2. Despite the colonies being part of the military force behind the French and Indian war, to the colonies this war was about the British wanting to expand their influence on the world by conquering as much land as possible, and not for the colonies themselves. As a result, they felt that they weren't fighting for themselves or for their people but for an abstract monarchy across the sea.
3. Since they were victorious the British conquered a substantial portion of North America, including most of modern-day Canada, and all the land east of the Mississippi River(excluding Florida and parts of Louisiana which were under Spanish rule). However, for political reasons, the King decided that land west of the appalachians would belong to the Native Americans, and removed the settlers that lived there. This only heightened the resentment towards the

crown among the settlers, without making much of an impact on Natives, who preferred fleeing west regardless, to stay out of any future wars between the superpowers of the time.

4. Shortly after the war began, the colonies convened for the first time, sending a representative from each colony to Albany. The Albany Congress, as it had been named, was the start of the colonial Union.

Here Benjamin Franklin, a delegate of Pennsylvania proposed the Albany Plan of Union, in an attempt to help the British government fight the war by providing them a united colonial front to work with. The plan provided for a loose confederation presided over by a president general which had limited authority to levy taxes to be paid to a central treasury.

This plan was approved by the delegates, but the crown rejected it because it was scared of the power of the united colonies, and the colonies themselves rejected it because they refused to sacrifice any of their sovereignty. In fact, despite its failure, the Albany Plan proved to a farsighted document that would later prove important to the states in issues later addressed in the Constitutional Convention.

5. The French and Indian War, like all wars, racked up a large amount of debt on both the British and French sides. The British decided to use the colonies to get themselves out of aforementioned debt. Which is why immediately following the war, the British began enforcing the Navigation Acts of 1651, which prevented the colonies trade with foreign nations, and making all trade pass through Great Britain to be taxed properly. The problem with these acts is Mercantilism, which was a trading system that made the colonies very dependent on the British financially, by taking raw goods to Great Britain where they were taxed and built into the finished products which would then be sold back to the colonies, at a larger cost to the colonies due to the fact that finished products cost more than the raw materials. This protected the British businesses that traded with the colonies, and placed all gold and silver safely within Britain. The Navigation acts remained unenforced however, until 1763, because the British allowed for salutary neglect. These acts cut off the colonies from the rest of the world and in the eyes of the colonists would completely destroy the relatively independent economies each colony had fought to build. Additionally, the British decided to further their influence on the colonies and decided to crack down on smugglers.

At the time, trading with enemies of the crown was illegal so it was decided that all colonial trade from that point forward would be done through England alone. The British believed

this would help them financially. The colonies however, were outraged at the idea of being forced to trade with each other through England, at being forced to stop trading with the West Indies(a rather popular trading route), at having 100% of their exports subject to close supervision by the British(destroying the smuggling businesses in the colonies) and at being seen as nothing more than an overseas factory. The thing that incurred their wrahtes the most at this time though, was the Writs of Assistance of 1760. This allowed British soldiers to search premises and seize properties without a warrant to hunt for(and loot) smuggled contraband. This was seen as a personal offence, the first of many to come.

### **The Road to Revolution(1763-1776):**

It doesn't matter how one chooses to look at things, 13 measly colonies do not just wake up one morning and decide to attack the entire British Empire. This chain of events is the first of its kind and even then it has things that set it aside. Seeing as some of your characters were willing to go to war and die because of these ideas and actions, it might be worth a quick glance at what actually happened.

1. For the record; each state from the moment of its founding, had a charter, a government and laws. They each had their own religions, cultures, and traditions. Part of the cause for the settlement in the New World in the first place was to be able to practice a form of Christianity that wasn't accepted back home. While in some of these colonies the church was the state, in others there was a melting pot of different kinds of good christian people, who all managed to coexist, cementing ideas of religious freedom(for christians) in the minds of entire colonies. As a result of this and the clashes between the different branches, a slightly more liberal mindset regarding religious freedom was common amongst the people. So much so, that the future United States could possibly not only separate church and state, but guarantee religious freedom to all.
2. The year the French and Indian War ended, and the Treaty of Paris was signed and approved, King George III issued the Royal Proclamation of 1763. After the British victory in the French and Indian war, the King's newly conquered subjects were a cause of tension, in the King's eyes. The French traders continued trading as they did under French rule, with no regard for the Crown's trading laws, or even colonial ones, just disobedient enough for the King to worry about tensions rising. Moreover, the Native Americans who had fought beside the French hadn't ceased to fight and would attack British forts any chance they got(Pontiac's Rebellion).

This kind of energy in the new land scared the crown, who were in debt, and did not want to face any more conflicts. Furthermore, with the recently enforced Navigation Acts making the colonies trade only with Great Britain, the Crown believed that westward expansion would provide the colonies with new trading opportunities that the British simply didn't have the means to prevent, leading to more financial loss. These all built the framework for the Proclamation of 1763, which was effectively meant to subdue the distrust between the conquered and the colonies. It merely prevented colonial settlers from settling in the territory. The results were a little different. Many colonists believed that settling west would grant them the financial opportunities they needed to pay off war debts. The colonists saw this as a freedom taken from them by the crown. A freedom which runs a little deeper than a lack of expansion or a trading law. In their eyes, this is the Crown trying to repress and disable the colonies from their true capabilities in order for England to have power over them. This was one of the first things that lead to the divide between Britain and the colonies.

3. "No taxation without representation," was the main outcry of the protests before the revolutionary war which were the result of a series of Acts. For the most part these were taxes imposed on colonies, but in all cases these Acts provoked the colonies. Throughout the majority of the previous century Great Britain didn't meddle with colonial affairs, leading the colonies to develop their own governments and officials. Which means the colonies did not need to be represented in British parliament as parliament rarely did anything that concerned them. While colonists in Britain weren't as highly regarded as the locals, the British de facto policy of salutary neglect went both ways. The second that Parliament began making laws, and levying taxes on the colonies, - an entire unrepresented population in England - tensions skyrocketed and the colonies began protesting. Unfortunately, the taxes themselves, and the sudden strict enforcement(along with the malevolence with which smugglers were judged) were grievances that woke up even more dissidence. Here they are:
  - a. **The Currency Act:** The independence of each colony was also an important issue at the time as each colony had its own form of currency. The British had banned them from minting money, but each of the colonies had "bills of public credit" which served as a formal if unconventional currency. However, in order to repay debts actual money is required, meaning people needed gold and silver to pay for debts(private or public) making these minerals a rare commodity, and as there weren't any mines in the

colonies there was no way to get them. The colonies suffered a constant shortage of 'hard currency' (silver and gold) with which to conduct trade.

There were no gold or silver mines in the American colonies. Silver and gold coins (hard currency) could only be obtained through trade as regulated by Great Britain. British Acts effectively stopped trade between the colonies with French, Dutch, and Spanish in the West Indies. Triangular Trade, coupled with the policy of Mercantilism, provided a "favorable balance of trade" for Great Britain but an "imbalance of trade" in the colonies, resulting in a massive trade deficit; a direct result of the British policy. This caused the colonies to suffer a chronic shortage of funds. The Currency Act, which banned the bills of public credit from being accepted in trade with England, - the only nation the colonies were permitted to trade with - threatened to destabilize the entire colonial economy of each of the colonies.

"The impact of the Currency Act upon the Revolutionary Movement should not be overlooked. Its psychological effects were especially important. It served as a constant reminder that the economic well-being of the colonies was subordinate to the desires of the imperial government at the very time when colonial legislatures were beginning to demand equality for the colonies within the empire."

- Jack Greene and Richard Jellison, *William and Mary Quarterly*, October 1961

This began uniting the colonies under disdain for Great Britain. Specifically, the industrial areas in the North and agricultural areas in the South were angered and fought against the Currency Act.

- b. **The Sugar Act:** The Sugar Act placed taxes on a long list of goods extending far past sugar. While the tax on these things was cheaper than previous taxes, the strict enforcement and merciless punishment for smugglers all of a sudden, brought about immediate consequences for the colonies. The Act reduced the markets available to the colonies and the amount of currency they could use to purchase the British manufactured goods (which they were already having issues with because of the Navigation Acts that quartered the colonies into a financial disadvantage). After this act, thoughts of secession trickled into the minds of colonists.
- c. **The Stamp Act:** This act is the first to directly affect all colonists, and the first serious assertion of governmental authority over the colonies. Up to March 22, 1765, all taxes

were mainly relevant in trade with other countries, things that had an effect on exporters and merchants. The Stamp Act, on the other hand, required all American colonists to pay a tax on every piece of printed paper they used. This included newspapers, legal documents, playing cards, diplomas. Once the tax was paid, a revenue officer would stamp the paper. As is quite clear, there wasn't a single colonist who remained unaffected by this tax as it was direct and internal, it united very powerful members of society, namely lawyers clergymen, journalists, and businessmen. According to the British constitution, it is an Englishmen's right to be taxed only by representatives of their own choosing and seeing as no such representatives did exist in parliament, the colonists deemed the Stamp Act as unconstitutional. This tax was enacted by the British in order to pay the British soldiers still stationed in America.

In addition to the antagonistic views becoming popular by this, the Stamp Act also led to the Quartering act.

- d. **The Quartering Act of 1765:** Due to the French and Indian war many British soldiers were still positioned in various locations in the colonies. The colonists resented this alone, because many local men and soldiers fought in the war and the colonists saw little reason for military to be present in times of peace. The Stamp Act not only paid for their stay in the colonies from colonial tax money, but also served as a precedence for this act, which essentially forced the colonists to provide them shelter in public facilities, and if no such option was available, in their own homes.
- e. **The Declaratory Act:** The Stamp Act sparked such protests that the crown later repealed it releasing instead the Declaratory Act. An act intended to assert authority alone, all it said was that parliament has, and has always had, full power and authority to make laws that apply and force the colonies in any case. This infuriated colonists, because it showed they had no one in their corner all the way across the sea.
- f. **The Townshend Acts:** Finance Minister, Charles Townshend, faced with the debts of the British Empire, and unruly, but promising colonies, decided(again!) that the way to pay English debts is to tax the colonies, tighten customs enforcement, and push imperial authority. This time however, the tax will be import duties on the main good imported from Great Britain, basing the colonies even further under England's wing.

The act also promised a salary directly from the Crown (to prevent provincial assemblies from withholding their wages).

Outraged, one by one people north to south boycotted the taxed English goods, whole colonies, and even the respected Virginia House of Burgesses condemned the acts. Additionally, mock hangings and intimidation began running rampant throughout the colonies. In response to the more violent protests King George simply sent more troops to the colonies in order to keep the peace, leading to several unpleasant outbursts with citizens of the colonies. The most famous of these is the Boston massacre. After seeing the results of the British peacekeepers Parliament repealed the taxes of the Townshend Acts, except for the one on tea...

- g. **The Tea Act:** Parliament kept the tax on tea after they repealed the Townshend Acts because it was the most lucrative, and they felt they needed to show their power over the colonies (so they don't think violent protests lead to the retraction of laws). This becomes even more apparent when one looks at how the Tea Act actually lowered the tax on tea under the Townshend Acts, and yet many colonists perceived it as a way for Parliament to show that they had the power and the right to unfairly tax the colonies. Which is why for the colonists it became apparent that they had to boycott the newly imported tea. The Sons of Liberty took this a step further and dumped 45 tons of tea into the Boston Harbor. Not all of the colonists agreed with this action, because it could encourage more property damage and chaos, not to mention the fear of retaliation. Others, though, believed that it was a legitimate protest, that united colonists everywhere. One such man was Patrick Henry, who at the First Continental Congress declared;

"British oppression has effaced the boundaries of the several colonies; the distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians and New Englanders are no more. I am not a Virginian, but an American."

The Boston Tea Party evoked the wrath of the British empire, who did, obviously, retaliate ten-fold.

4. **The Empire Strikes Back:** These are the punitive measures England took against the colonies after the Bostonians refused to pay for damages of the Boston Tea Party. The King decided on a policy of coercion to be applied to Massachusetts as an example to the colonies, and a series of acts referred to as the Intolerable Acts:

- a. **The Boston Port Act:** This act closed down the port stifling the city's main business opportunity, and pipeline for goods and resources. This was done by a siege of British ships in Boston harbor.
- b. **The Massachusetts Government Act:** The colony's charter was effectively repealed, taking power away from the colony and delivering it to the Crown. This led to severe limitations on freedom of assembly. The importance of this was that town meetings at the time were a key ingredient in the American form of government. Lastly, the popularly elected officials in Massachusetts were replaced by royal appointees of the Crown.
- c. **The "Murder" Act:** Formally known as the Administration of Justice Act, the colonist tagged it as the "Murder Act" as it gave accused murderers a chance to flee colonial justice. Basically, it provided British officials accused of **capital crimes** in the execution of their duties (such as suppressing riots, or collecting taxes) could be tried in England, and not by the colonies, in order to avoid the local juries.
- d. **The Quartering Act of 1774:** In addition to forcing the colonists to open up their homes to the now hostile British soldiers, this act denied compensation for colonists who did. The act also outlined a series of things the landlords would be required to provide their unwelcome guests, including food, liquor, salt and bedding. All of this was to be paid out of colonists private money. This was particularly cruel, especially considering the siege on Boston harbor, and the tension on both sides.
- e. **The Quebec Act:** This act may not have been a direct result of the Boston Tea Party, but its nature fueled the rage of Americans everywhere. Ever since the French and Indian War, the British had been attempting to bring Quebec into the Empire, to no avail. The Quebec Act was intended to give the French inhabitants better lives, under the British occupation since 1763. The act gave Quebec an independent permanent administration, recognized the French civil code for most matters, recognized the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec, allowing Catholics to run for elected offices, (under British occupation!). The territory of Quebec was expanded to include the Ohio River Valley, which was a heavily disputed area in the French and Indian war, where colonists were prevented from settling in, in order to keep the peace was now

being stripped away from them, amidst all of these taxes, and given to the French; a clear British enemy. The colonies saw this act as an intolerable act as it nullified colonial claims to Western territories which could have been beneficial to them, proved that the Proclamation of 1763 was hogwash, and also gave the French exactly what the colonists wanted, and the colonists got stepped on time after time.

5. In the wake of the Intolerable Acts, the colonists were left with a few options. Most of them involved trying to make peace with England, while a few saw independence as the only way to rise up. Seeing as the colonists did not wish to go to war with the most powerful country in the world, they chose to make amends. During the Second Continental Congress, John Dickinson drafted and approved the Olive Branch Petition. This document was a last resort to avoid war with Great Britain, and declared the colonies loyal to the Crown, and asserted their rights as loyal British subjects. When King George III received the Petition, he didn't bother to read it, and proclaimed that the colonies had begun an open rebellion against the Crown; essentially forcing the colonies to go to war against His Majesty. This was perceived as "a low blow," and the King's hostility resulted in less attachment and sentimentality for the British, because when push comes to shove the King would send fully armed battalions to win back the colonies and strengthened the case for independence.
  
6. The Continental Congresses: The first and second continental congresses were the first times the American government unified the states for a common goal. The First Continental Congress convened in order to take action against the Intolerable Acts, the result was a document similar to the Olive Branch Petition which was meant to remind Parliament that the colonies were British subjects and should've been treated that way. They also agreed that if in a year or two, Britain still hadn't made any changes Congress will reconvene. During those two years, at the battle of Lexington and Concord, the war officially began, leaving the Second Continental Congress in a very confusing position.

Do they meet again to make amends? Do they demand their rights from Parliament? Do they boycott? Do they fight the British Empire? Do they declare independence? Who's going to fight in this war, with what money?

The delegates of the Congress decided to try and make peace with the Olive Branch Petition, and as a result found themselves in an open rebellion against England. At this point the Continental Congress focused on one thing and one thing alone, whether or not to declare independence from Great Britain. The Loyalists believed that the state of

relations with England were temporary, and would settle down if the colonists chose to let things go, and that regardless, the colonies could be obliterated in a war against Great Britain. The Patriots, fought for the rights and freedoms they realized Great Britain would not give them. And slowly the room was convinced into approving Lee's resolution to declare independence and form the United States. The Congress appointed a Committee of Five to draft the Declaration while debates continued, in the end it was decided that the colonies would join forces as the United States of America, and go to war against the British, and Congress granted itself the power to declare war and control the war effort. The Declaration of Independence which was heavily influenced by philosophers of the time; Thomas Paine, Locke, and Descartes. The result was a document that not only declared war on England and declared independence for the states, but also built a nation that promised "...Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness..." to all its citizens (which only included Christian white men, but ok). Thomas Jefferson's work is a major part of what influenced the Constitution.

### **The Revolutionary War (1775-1783):**

How does a ragtag volunteer army in need of a shower somehow defeat a global superpower? There's nothing quite like a war when it comes to bringing people together. Now the American people are officially United for the first time. The war itself also had a lasting effect or two on the founding fathers. We'll see you on the other side of the war.

The main issue was Congress, and the brand new Articles of Confederation (more on them later). Congress was given the power to declare war and was in charge of the war effort. This means that Congress were responsible for raising money from the states to be able to pay for it. The problem was the Congress had no way of collecting money from the states, as it couldn't levy taxes. So there was no way to buy resources and supplies that were desperately needed during the war (especially in the Winter at Valley Forge), not to mention no strength to attack the oncoming redcoats. However, it is thanks to Congress, that George Washington was made Commander in Chief of the Continental Army (He's a General, Wheel!), who saved the day on multiple occasions. Congress is also responsible for how united the states appeared to be (despite how much they weren't under the surface), congressman Benjamin Franklin was able to secure an alliance with a European power who had a history, fighting the British, who was willing to financially support the revolution. Who provided those funds? France. The Franco-American alliance led the Spanish and the Dutch to join the fight on the European fronts. The French donated guns and ships, and so

the balance shifted, and with these new resources the colonies were able to make the Redcoats redder with bloodstains, and turn the world upside-down.

## **The Current Situation(1783-1787):**

Let's take a look at how lucky we are to be alive right now.

### **The Articles of Confederation:**

The Articles of Confederation served as the United States' first constitution. Drafted in 1776 and ratified by 1781, the document was an agreement between the 13 original states and functioned as a stepping stone between the initial government by the Continental Congress of the Revolutionary Period and the upcoming Constitutional Convention.

The point of the Articles of Confederation was to secure a "firm league of friendship" between independent states. This alone gave no power to the federal government, and if that weren't enough, the states acted more like rivals than friends. Although the document effectively established the United States as a sovereign nation, it proved to be severely inadequate. On paper, Congress had the power to regulate foreign affairs, war, the postal service, the appointment of military officers, borrow money, determine the value of coin, etc. In reality, however, the Articles gave the weak federal little power over the states, if any. It was solely dependent on the states for revenue, and nonetheless had no power to force the states to pay. Additionally, each of the states functioned relatively well without Congress so none of the states had an interest to support the government. Moreover, the Articles of Confederation could only be amended by a unanimous vote of the states - meaning any state had effective veto power over any proposal. The government was rendered unable to pass or enforce any law that individual states found might counter their interests.

This lack of power proved to be extremely problematic on numerous occasions.

The 1763 Treaty of Paris, which ended the American War of Independence, required that debts owed by Americans to British subjects were to be honored, and further imposed that former British loyalists could bring forth lawsuits in U.S. courts to recover confiscated property. These

stipulations were detested, and many states blocked their enforcement. This led to British refusal to vacate military forts in U.S. territory.

Additionally, the Spanish Government, which controlled New Orleans, prohibited American ships from navigating the Mississippi River. Southern delegates of the Confederation Congress sought to lift this ban, while coastal merchants, especially in the northeast, were willing to make concessions in exchange for a treaty with other favorable commercial terms. The unreasonable majorities needed for ratification of such measures under the Articles of Confederation often resulted in a stalemate along the border between North and South.

In summation, the weaknesses of the articles were;

1. Each state only has one vote in Congress, despite size differences
2. Congress doesn't have the power to tax, or to regulate foreign and interstate commerce
3. There is no executive branch to enforce any acts passed by Congress, or a judicial branch with a national court system
4. Amendments to the Articles of Confederation required a unanimous vote
5. Laws required a 9/13 majority to pass in Congress

### **Foreign Affairs-Relations with Europe:**

Following the end of the American Revolution, the United States struggled to define its foreign policy and to determine how to implement it. In 1776, the Continental Congress had drafted the Model Treaty, which served as a guide for U.S. foreign policy during the 1780s. The treatment sought to abolish trade barriers such as tariffs, while avoiding political or military entanglements. It reflected the foreign policy interests of many Americans, who aimed to play a large role in the global trading community while avoiding war. However, lacking a strong military or government under the rule of the Articles of Confederation, the U.S. was forced to accept unfavorable terms of trade during the 1780s.

During the American revolution, a cash-strapped Continental Congress secured loans from France. Paying off these debts and various others incurred during the Revolution proved to be one of the major challenges of the post-independence period. In order to pay for its significant expenditures during the Revolution, Congress printed more money and obtained loans to meet

the budget deficit. The heavy reliance on printing money led to severe hyperinflation, further deteriorating the economic state of the new nation.

After fighting between the Americans and the British ended in 1783, the new U.S. Government established under the Articles of Confederation needed to pay off its debt, but lacked sufficient tax authority to secure any revenue. The government struggled to pay off the loans. The United States also owed money to the Spanish Government and private Dutch investors, but focused on paying off the Dutch because Amsterdam remained the most likely source of future loans, which the United States successfully obtained in 1787 and 1788, despite its precarious financial state.

Under the U.S. constitution of 1789, the new federal government finally obtained increased authority to manage U.S. finances and to raise revenues through taxation. Slowly but surely, the United States' finances were placed on firmer ground, and as a result so were its foreign relations.

### **Shay's Rebellion:**

Shay's Rebellion was an armed uprising in Massachusetts, which took place during 1786 and 1787. Daniel Shays, an American Revolutionary War veteran, led four thousand rebels in an armed protest against economic and civil rights injustices. The protests primarily opposed the state government's increased efforts to collect taxes on both individuals and their trade. The problem was Congress's inability to tax or raise money. Many veterans were promised financial compensation for their efforts in the war, and as the government couldn't afford to pay them they had a creative solution on hand. They gave bonds to these veterans, a sort of governmental "I O U" which left many veterans unable to provide for themselves. So it's no surprise that some turned to rebellion.

Shays and the protesters attempted to overthrow the government, which found itself unable to finance troops to quell the rebellion. Consequently, the rebellion was put down by the Massachusetts State Militia as well as a privately funded local militia. The process of ending the rebellion took months, and many desired a federal government that would be able to put down such insurrections. The events of the rebellion served as a catalyst for the Constitutional Convention and the creation of a new, stronger federal government.

## Slavery:

Slavery in and of itself was starting to become an issue. After all, the Declaration of Independence, mentioned a few inalienable rights that were to extend to all human beings. Unfortunately, African Americans at the time were counted as property, not as people. In fact, over the course of the previous century, the import of slaves was a big part of the American economy, serving as a main player of Triangular trade, which made sure Africa England and the colonies would always be able to trade with each other. Slaves were brought over to work all over the colonies. In order to promote economic growth, some colonial governments realized they needed to promote the slave trade. They began penalizing manumission, illegalized miscegenation, and in certain places; with every slave purchased the owner would be granted land. This led to gigantic plantations sprawled all over the Southern states. This became so extreme that in the South the slave population outnumbered the free population. However, because of the Declaration of Independence, some ideas about equality began pilfering their way into the minds of the people. Florida promised freedom for runaway slaves, The Quakers began preaching against slavery and forming anti-slavery movements, Vermont abolished slavery, and in Massachusetts, a slave managed to successfully sue her master for freedom, thereby setting a precedent and extinguishing legal slavery in Massachusetts as well. Additionally, General George Washington( encouraged free black men to come join the ranks of the Continental Army. It has very recently come to light that England is pushing for abolishing the slave trade entirely.

## Summary:

Finally, delegates from 12 out of 13 states have agreed to meet. What comes next? You will discuss the faulty articles, and try to build a new strong nation. However, the road to the final agreement will be strenuous and difficult. There are countless points of contention between the delegates. America, the great unfinished symphony sends for you. We'll let you make a difference. A place where even orphan immigrants can leave their fingerprints and rise up. Which is the reason we strongly encourage delegates to focus mainly on these issues during preparation and during the conference itself, in order to have an accurate and interesting debate, considering you will be divided up into subcommittees to write about these topics yourselves. The subcommittees will be the Committees of Representation, State Powers, Economy, Foreign Affairs, and Internal Affairs.

Good luck in the remainder of your research and remember: history has its eyes on you.

## **Suggested Reading:**

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