

Chapter 9: The Confederation and the Constitution Notes

Chapter Notes and Thematic Connections

- American Revolution was not a true revolution
 - Not sudden or very violently like the French or Russian Revolutions that followed shortly afterwards
 - Many people still lived normal lives and were not greatly affected by the revolution
 - More of an “accelerated evolution” than a true revolution
- People unsure what to do with the extra freedom from when they won independence

A Shaky Start Toward Union

- It is very hard to set up a new government, never mind a “new *type* of government”
- Political spectrum shifted far left (unstably radical) after losing many Loyalists
 - 80,000 Loyalists left during the Revolutionary War (the “Loyalist Exodus” from last chapter)
- Unity and allegiance came from common cause of war, but that had disappeared in peacetime
- “Hard times” set in after the war
 - British had a surplus of goods, lowered prices and became very competitive against less advanced American industries
 - Led to the allurements of a resumed dependence on Great Britain similar to the previous system of mercantilism; Great Britain had better goods at cheaper prices, but their monopolization of the American market would mean less economic freedom
 - Americans urged fellow Americans to buy American-made goods
- The political structures of the states were very similar
 - Some ideas from Great Britain, some from colonial rule; combined, these led to a “rich political heritage” of traditional and revolutionary government beliefs that later affected the creation of the government of the states
- Had many good leaders
 - E.g., “George Washington, James Madison, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton”
- The Revolution had made many economic and social changes
 - Changes in “social structures and customs, economic practices, and political institutions”

Work, Exchange, and Technology: Shortly following the American Revolution, many of the greatest concerns were economic. Besides the daunting task of creating a new government from scratch, the Americans had to survive without the help of the British. The British, however, tried to lure them back into their power by offering superior goods at lower prices than the ones produced from the “baby industries” from America; this, however, would violate the original cause of the Americans during the Revolution to create total independence for themselves from Great Britain. As a result, this resulted in an encouragement of domestic industries. This promoted the Hamiltonian idea of a more industrial society, but also had the self-sustenance that Jefferson advocated in his ideas for about an independent

society of yeoman farmers. This fits strongly into the theme of “Work, Exchange, and Technology” in all its facets: work increased in the United States as it faced global competition; exchange decreased as America continued to fight for its independence, economically as well as politically; and technology improved as the baby industries grew to compete with those in Europe.

Constitution Making in the States

- Second Continental Congress (in 1776) told states to write their own constitutions
 - In essence asking them to become new states under the idea of republicanism (drawing power from the people)
 - Massachusetts had Constitution drafted and then ratified by the people; this process was copied with the federal Constitution (10 years later)
 - Most of the state Constitutions were very similar
 - Most had a bill of rights, which guaranteed rights for the people that the government could not violate
 - All had weak judicial and executive branches and strong legislative branches for fear of corrupt justice system or despotic leader (as had happened in Great Britain during their rule of the colonies)
 - View started shifting after Jefferson said, “173 despots [in a legislature] would surely be as oppressive as one” — this meant that a legislative branch could be corrupt as well as an executive branch
 - Most required regular elections of the officials so that they would “stay in touch” with the people and keep to their interests in order to be re-elected
 - All were written documents that declared fundamental law, law that governed the government and could not be easily changed like the more transient constitution of Great Britain
 - In Great Britain, a “constitution” was a collection of legal documents, which was not as cohesive or as binding as the American constitutions
- Greater involvement in the democracy from people from farther west, who were usually poorer
 - They decided to move the capitals of most of the colonies farther inland from the “haughty eastern seaports” to the “less pretentious interior” of the states
 - Included “New Hampshire, New York, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia”

Politics and Power: The creation of the many state constitutions was a culmination of Revolutionary beliefs into concrete, written documents that cemented in rights and established a firmer sense of equality for all. All of these were alike in that they promoted the same new political ideals from the Revolution, namely the fundamentals of Republicanism (drawing power from the consent of the governed). This meant that all of the states created a strong legislative branch and a weak executive and judicial branch in order to give greater representation and prevent a despot from taking power like in Great Britain. They began incorporating the new idea of regular elections as another safeguard to prevent against authoritarianism. Lastly, they united themselves by creating a common body of legislature defined by the Constitutions that delineated “fundamental law,” which was the *basis* of all the government, but not the decider for every little situation (as was previously with English constitutions that were simply

collections of laws). All of these were radical changes in political structure, many of them strongly engineered against English governing ideals, which were ideals that persisted through the Articles of Confederation and were motivators of the antifederalist movement (as some of these radical political ideas were against those more stable laws of the later Constitution).

Economic Crosscurrents

- War created positive economic changes
 - Land was more equally divided
 - Lands owned by Great Britain were taken by the states and redistributed
 - Large estates were redivided (e.g., Roger Morris' estate → 250 lots of land)
 - Redistribution of land accelerated "economic democracy" (self-governed equality of citizens)
 - Industry was growing in the Americas
 - Before and during the war, the nonimportation agreements encouraged local industries to grow without competition from Great Britain (forced lack of imported British goods)
 - Although industry grew, farming was still the major driver of the economy
 - After Revolution, British cut off main supply for goods, forcing Americans to make goods for themselves and therefore also promoting industry
 - New trade with other countries opened up (now that exclusive trading in the mercantilistic system with Great Britain was gone)
 - Lots of trade in Baltic and China seas
- War created negative economic changes
 - War created "demoralizing extravagance, speculation, and profiteering" (profiteering is illegal means of quick income, e.g., through the black market)
 - Profiteers made up to 300% profit
 - Profiteers became very wealthy and "noisily conspicuous," while many of the richer class from the beginning of the war became poor
 - State governments borrowed a lot of money, very difficult to pay it back
 - Caused inflation that made life for citizens difficult (regular goods cost too much)
 - Taxes were held in high disdain
 - Made people value all laws and the legal system much less

Work, Exchange, and Technology: Not only was economics a concern in early U.S. history, but it quickly began to look positive. Great Britain (which was bitter after their defeat in the American Revolutionary War) stopped trade with the United States, which goods more difficult to obtain. However, this need was met with an increase in domestic industry, and this further supported the American ideal of non-dependence on another country (hence the pre-Revolutionary non-importation agreements; the British embargo essentially enforced this and promoted American ideals further). Despite the increased need for industry, farming was still the predominant driver of the economy, which promoted the Jeffersonian-Republican's ideal of the yeoman farmer and the independence (self-sufficiency) of

economy. Also benefitting the economy was the seizure and sale of former Loyalist lands, as well as the breaking up of large aristocratic estates. On the flip side, debt and inflation built up as taxation became more loosely enforced (the colonists strongly opposed it because they had been suppressed by English taxes). These economic flaws called for the need for a strong central power that could officially and powerfully enforce the collection of taxes for the common good (and not for the exploitation of the states), which was later fulfilled by the stronger central government in the Constitution.

Creating a Confederation

- The Second Continental Congress had little power over the colonies, who were mostly sovereign
- Articles of Confederation (began drafting in 1776, adopted by Congress 1777, unanimous ratification by 1781 with Maryland's approval) was the document that defined the first government of the United States
 - Used to convince the French that the Americans were serious about creating their own government in order to strengthen their alliance during the war
 - Had to be ratified by all the colonies; Maryland was the last to adopt it, only a few months before the war ended with the Battle of Yorktown
- Greatest reason that states didn't want to ratify it right away was because of the Articles' distribution of western lands
 - Some states had more land than other states; the smaller states argued that larger states could sell off their land to pay off debt, while the smaller states could not
 - Maryland was the last state to agree, and only did so because New York gave up some of its western lands and Virginia almost did as well
 - Western lands claims of the states were given up to the central government, which they claimed were for the "common benefit" — later it would be used to create new republican states like the current ones (not colonies under a subordinate position like Great Britain had done with American land claims)
 - In the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 the large western lands were defined and given to Congress to handle
 - Common western lands helped bond the states together
 - If a state left, it would not get any benefits from the sale of land in the western lands that it has claims in
 - Westward-expanding pioneers had to buy land directly from the federal government, not the state governments

(see *Geography and the Environment* under "Landmarks in Land Laws" (two sections down))

The Articles of Confederation: America's First Constitution

- Some people call it the "Articles of Confusion"
- Supposed to provide a "firm league of friendship" between the states, allowed them to work together for common problems like foreign affairs
- Strong (but "clumsy") legislative branch (Congress), weak executive branch, little judicial branch (left to the states to handle)
- Equal representation in the states
 - Unfair because more populous states had the same one vote as less populous ones

- Nine states' approval (~3/4) were necessary for most important bills
- Unanimous approval (all 13 states) necessary for amendment to the Articles of Confederation
 - Was almost impossible to get unanimous support for any decision, and therefore little to no change to the original Articles of Confederation could be made
 - If this were not the case (if less than unanimous support was required for amendments to the Articles of Confederation), then perhaps the Constitution would not be necessary to overhaul the Articles of Confederation, but the Articles of Confederation may have been "fixed"
- Even Congress, the strongest part of government, was weak
 - People didn't even trust an American version of Parliament for fear that it would turn out to be despotic similar to that back in England
 - It could not regulate commerce nor tax the states
 - States often had conflicting policies for these, which made trade and collecting taxes much more difficult and confusing
 - It asked states for a quota of taxes, but these were not strongly enforced or fulfilled
 - Congress couldn't even protect itself from some soldiers who were making a demonstration outside of Independence Hall in Philadelphia for lack of pay; they were forced to flee to Princeton College and held even less power there
- Some people were proud of the Articles of Confederation— although it was weak, it did manage to keep the colonies together
 - Thomas Jefferson praised it as the best governmental structure "existing or that did ever exist" in comparison to more monarchical European governments
 - It was considered effective in that it defined the first government of the United States and defined its main powers, such as making treaties and making a postal service
 - Was a stepping stone to the Constitution, keeping the colonies together, even weakly, before its successor would establish a firmer grip on the colonies

Culture and Society: The Articles of Confederation epitomized societal ideals at the time. Rather than being a very politically-sound document that used working, existing systems as a model, it was very radical in that it promoted the Revolutionary Republicanism ideas that had never truly been implemented. Societal thoughts were translated into political ones; perhaps this was not the best choice. This included the unanimous approval of all the thirteen states in order to ratify the Articles of Confederation and to make amendments to them, a weak central government and strong state governments, and the lack of a standing army. All of these, while they sounded altruistic and futuristic, ended up being the flaws of a weak and impractical government that the Constitution sought to fix. Although it did not last, it did create a legacy as the first formal American government, a sort of experiment or stepping stone whose mistakes were learned and the lessons turned into the greatly-revised Constitution.

Landmarks in Land Laws

- Congress was very prudent with the Western lands, created positive land distribution laws that helped in the long run

- Western frontier lands, known as the Old Northwest, been the subject of controversy during the ratification of the Articles of Confederation and were subsequently given up to Congress in order for the Articles to be ratified
 - Old Northwest area stretched westward up to lake superior, north to Canada, south to Kentucky
- Land Ordinance of 1785 was first land distribution law, saying that the land of the Old Northwest should be sold to pay off national debt
 - Land would be surveyed first to prevent lawsuits and confusion
 - Orderly distribution into 6x6mi “townships,” which were divided into 36 1x1mi chunks, one of which would be for a school
 - Very different from the unordered westward expansion of the southern regions, which had high rates of uncertain ownership and fraud
- Northwest Ordinance of 1787 mentioned the governing of the Old Northwest
 - Land would first be under the Congress, until it reached 60,000 inhabitants
 - When this threshold is reached, it can become a state (rather than a subordinate colony) with the same rights as any of the already-established states
 - This system worked very well, prevented another Revolutionary War that came from colonialism and mercantilism (that wouldn’t happen because these new states are equal), was used in future frontier lands for establishing new states.

Geography and the Environment: During the drafting of the Articles of Confederation, the greatest source of controversy was the distribution of large land claims by the states (a geographical issue). The issue was that smaller states were concerned that larger states had a great advantage from the extra land area that they owned, because they could sell off land excesses to pay off their debt, while the small states, more hard-pressed for land, would not have the liberty to use land as a source of income. Congress resolved this by passing various land laws, such as the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 that put the western claims of the states in a massive land reserve (the “Old Northwest”) that would be eventually turned into states. This had a huge lasting legacy: it prevented conflict by not giving Congress a dictatorial power over this land and by giving full equality to the future states that would occupy this land, and its effectiveness would be used in future westward-expanding pioneer adventures. Another law was the Land Ordinance Act of 1785 that organized the distribution and sale of land very neatly, which prevented chaos and violence when land was claimed and bought, as was the case in the South.

The World’s Ugly Duckling

- Great Britain had very bad relations with the United States shortly after the Revolution
 - Britain refused to send a minister to the United States for eight years
 - Britain refused to repeal the Navigation Laws or create trade treaties
 - Also closed off trade with the Americas from West Indies colonies (although the Americans smuggled some goods from there to the United States)
 - Britain believed that they would eventually take over American trade (Lord Sheffield of Britain’s view)
 - Britain kept trading posts (for fur trade with the Native Americans) along the Canadian (northern) border

- Excuse was that the Americans refused to pay debts to Loyalists after the war (a condition for the Americans from the Treaty of Paris)
- Main cause was probably to keep Native Americans loyal to the British to help them if the Americans attacked
- Some Americans called for uniform, higher tariffs against the British to make them comply and keep off their strict trade restrictions; however, Congress was limited in commerce and could not regulate this
- Spain was also hostile to the United States
 - Spain controlled much of the land south of the United States, and they claimed more land that included land granted to the Americans by the British, such as in Florida
 - Spain cut off the river of the Mississippi to the Americans, which was a major avenue of trade for the western United States
 - Spain, like Britain, sided with the Native Americans and pushed the Americans east of the Appalachians by antagonizing them and their greedy land policies
- About half of America's total territory was under British or Spanish threat; Americans did not truly own all of their land independently
- France was satisfied after defeating Britain, relations became worse with them
 - Demanded debt from aid in Revolutionary War to be repaid
 - Limited trade with the West Indies to the Americas
- Pirates (from North Africa, such as Dey of Algiers) took many merchant ships
 - Americans were not under the protection of the British, could not bribe the pirates or pay for protection from them
- John Jay (secretary for foreign affairs) thought these hardships would provide the American colonists some humility and experience for future times, one of the few positive outlooks on such destructive means

America in the World: The interactions between America and the powerful European nations (England, France, Spain) were not very great during this time period. The English were very bitter about their loss to their own colonies, and therefore stopped their trade with the colonies and kept a suspicious close watch on the Canadian border in case of attack. The French were surprisingly hostile, and they demanded repayment of the debt the colonies owed to them. The Spanish infringed on American land now that Great Britain was not protecting them. Pirates stole from American merchant ships now that they had lost Great Britain's protection. Although it had won its independence from Great Britain, the United States were beginning to feel the daunting aspects of ruling themselves. Rather than the mania of Revolutionary ideals that ruled the Revolution, the reality of the global situation began to set in the colonists with these hardships.

The Horrid Specter of Anarchy

- System of raising taxes was breaking down as interest at home built up and credit with other countries faltered
- Heavy inflation made buying regular items difficult; some states began to start printing the useless "rag money" again

- Shay's Rebellion (MA 1786) was when Captain Daniel Shays led debtor farmers to lobby the government for lighter taxes, issuing of paper money, and the end to property seizures
 - The farmers suffered from not being able to pay tax and therefore having their properties taken by the government
 - Local government raised army against them, small skirmishes stopped the movement
 - Led to condemnation of Shay to death (but later pardoned) and debt-relief laws
 - This led to a legacy of fear of a “despotic democracy”
 - Land-owning people worried about rule by mobocracy, worried about people who were too anxious to own land and gain “liberty” and were thereby driven mad by these ideals
 - The elite wanted a strong central government, but the debtors didn't for fear of being forced to pay off their debt
- Despite fears of anarchy, economic situation was actually improving by the time the Constitution was beginning its drafting
 - Less worthless money was being printed
 - People were beginning to become wealthy again
 - Merchants began shipping around the world again and resuming normal trade

Work, Exchange, and Technology: Again, the economic concerns of society were the greatest problems that the nation had. The increasing taxes and inflation made many of the lower, working classes angry, which sparked Shay's Rebellion, a coalition of angry farmers that had their property confiscated because they could not afford to pay the high taxes. Shay's Rebellion in turn sparked the fear of mobocracy, and the government had to create certain debtor-relief policies to stop it. Also like before, the economic situation was not so one-sided: there was also a positive side to the economics of the time, with inflation slightly decreasing and trading globally (exchange) beginning to start up again. This was the beginning of the upwards economic trend in the U.S., with trust in the taxes at its low but a stronger central government from the Constitution and a uniform taxing policy was soon to come.

A Convention of “Demigods”

- Convention in Annapolis, Maryland in 1786 about commerce
 - Only five states represented
 - Would have been complete fail if Alexander Hamilton hadn't allowed for the adoption of the report and called for Congress to reconvene to overhaul the Articles of Confederation
- All states but Rhode Island sent delegates to the next convention (Constitutional Convention)
 - Most of the delegates were elected by voters that were property owners, which may have made the results a little biased as the delegates were mostly wealthier, more well-established members of society
 - However, the delegates were opposed to making the Constitution something that puts wealthier people at an advantage
 - They were considered the “demigods” of society by Jefferson—the most capable people, using their time for their country rather than for personal matters
 - Had many great leaders
 - George Washington was head of the assembly because of his military prestige

- Benjamin Franklin was a senior member, albeit somewhat talkative
- James Madison made many contributions to the Constitution, called “the Father of the Constitution”
- Alexander Hamilton (who called for the Assembly) was a strong advocate for a strong central government
- Some Revolution leaders were in Europe (e.g., Jefferson, Adams, Paine), were not elected (e.g., Hancock, Adams), or did not want to come (e.g., Henry)

Patriots in Philadelphia

- All 55 delegates were wealthy and not in the poorer classes
- 19 of the delegates (~1/3) owned slaves
- Many were young (in terms of politicians) and were all nationalists
 - Wanted to strengthen the government rather than simply allow the current situation of poorly-ruled popular democracy to reign
- Delegates wanted to make a solid, stable government
 - Had to balance republicanism but protect it from “excesses at home and its weaknesses abroad”
 - Mobocracy and popular democracy forming at home, leading to debt and unsolved problems (“excesses at home”)
 - Strong opponents to the United States, such as the pirate Dey of Algiers and the British trade opposer Lord Sheffield, prompted the need for true central power in foreign relations (“weaknesses abroad”)
 - Constitution was formed out of necessity from the above weaknesses

Culture and Society: During this time period, most of the lawmakers were property-owning white males. This means that the wealthier citizens of society still ruled America, despite all the calls for a completely egalitarian system. At the Constitutional Convention, however, this was viewed as a positive point: Jefferson called them the “demigods of society,” the smartest and most well-established members of society that had the greatest interest to help their country (and were well-educated). Also during this time, many of the liberal and young, the older conservative Loyalists having been pushed out of the states during the Revolution. These leaders agreed that it was most important that a government that was stable and would endure for a long time (especially against mobocracy such as in Shay’s Rebellion and foreign threats such as with Spain’s encroachment on American land, which were the greatest threats to the unity of the states at the time) was more important than fulfilling all of the ideals of the Revolution; therefore, they tried to find a compromise that leaned towards longevity. Eventually, these two factors that were based on contemporary societal norms and concerns (young, liberal, able American politicians and the push towards stability) played a major part in framing the new government in the Constitution.

Hammering out a Bundle of Compromises

- Delegates decided to completely create a new ruling document rather than revising the Articles of Confederation
 - Technically this meant to peacefully overthrow the government
- Multiple schemes of government created

- Virginia's Plan ("large-state plan") wanted to have a Congress based on proportional representation (number of representatives based on state population)
 - This would favor large states because they get more representation, can boss around little states
- New Jersey Plan ("small-state plan") wanted to have a Congress based on equal representation per state (same number of representatives for every state)
 - This would give small states an unproportional amount of power, may not fit the true majority population's opinion
- Great Compromise created a system with equal representation in the Senate (Art. I, Sec. III of the Constitution) and proportional representation in the House of Representatives (Art. I, Sec. II)
 - Bills for taxes and revenue must come from House, where population mattered more
 - Broke the deadlock that came from the large- and small-state plans
- The Constitution was very short (only about ten pages and seven articles)
 - It was an example of common law, which gives an outline for government rather than delineating every little detail under it
 - As opposed to civil law, which states the rules for many different situations (e.g., India's 200-page Constitution)
- Role of the President was created
 - Inspired by governor during Shay's Rebellion, in which strong and able governor held off the revolt
 - President is powerful but still restricted by other parts of government (e.g., can appoint many officials but cannot declare war)
- President was one of many compromises in the Constitution because his powers and limitations
 - Another example would be the indirect means of election via the electoral college, which would give more power to the large states in the first round with proportional representation, and then give more power to the small states if there was a tie in the first round
 - There was also the three-fifths compromise that said a slave would count as $\frac{3}{5}$ of a person when calculating proportional representation (North said they did not count as citizens but South wanted the extra representation from the great population of slaves in their region, so an arbitrary number was chosen)
- Slavery was a difficult subject when drafting the Constitution
 - The word "slave" was carefully avoided in the Constitution
 - According to the First Continental Congress, the international slave trade could be stopped by Congress in 1807, and all states but Georgia banned the overseas slave trade

Safeguards for Conservatism

- The delegates agreed on most matters (otherwise the complete re-write of the government would probably have been aborted very quickly)
 - Agreed on stopping mobocracy, worthless money, anarchy

- Very worried about mobocracy after Shay's rebellion: as a result created indirect election of the federal judges, the President, and the Senate, leaving only the House of Representatives up to popular vote (and the voters were property-owning people, not the poor like in Shay's Rebellion)
- Most favored a strong government and a separation of power into three branches with a system of checks and balances between them
- Based system on republicanism idea of a power derived from the consent of the governed and that the powers of the government should be limited
 - First idea backed by opening words "We the People" in the preamble of the Constitution

Politics and Power: The Constitution had many compromises in order to be ratified by all of the states. Compromisation is a political power scheme: the Framers were adamant that the Constitution be ratified, but they also needed the support of the states; therefore, they formed it so that all the states would be satisfied to some extent with the resulting government. The largest proponent to this controversy was the representation in Congress; the Small- and Large-State Plans appealed to lesser and greater populated states, respectively, while the Great Compromise incorporated a two-house system in Congress with both systems to make it more fair (equal representation in Congress and proportional representation in the House of Representative, with slightly different delegations of tasks such as taxing bills only for the House). It also created compromises for the role of President and for the legality for slavery in that the President was limited and the overseas slave trade was to be stopped in a few years. The creation of the Constitution showed a great political prowess that allowed the politicians to work out the problems and create a working document, and it also showed that while not all the Republican ideals were promoted, this was because it had a compromise with efficiency. This extra efficiency created by a stronger central government became the key to the practical government that was established and continues through to today.

The Clash of Federalists and Antifederalists

- The Framers (drafters of the Constitution) saw the unanimous ratification of the Constitution as near impossible, especially with many people sticking by the Articles of Confederation and not wanting change and because Rhode Island did not send delegates and would likely veto the ratification
 - They proposed to ratify the Constitution if nine of the thirteen colonies approved — at the time, very radical idea (as opposed to the unanimous decision that ratified the Articles of Confederation and was the acceptable method at the time)
- The new Constitution was given to the states without recommendation, and it shocked the people
 - The secrets of the Constitutional Convention were so well kept that the people were very surprised by the complete change in the government; they had been expecting a revision of the current Articles of Confederation
- Division amongst the people to antifederalists (who opposed the new Constitution) and federalists (who supported the new Constitution)

- The antifederalists consisted of mostly poorer people, debtors, “paper-moneymen,” people who wanted more power to the states, and some prominent Revolutionary leaders (e.g., Samuel Adams, Richard Henry Lee, Patrick Henry)
 - They thought that the Constitution was a scheme to steal power from the poor people with a strong, oppressive central government that favored the more wealthy
 - Opposed the Constitution’s new systems of indirect representation, a federal stronghold at the capital (which became Washington, D.C.), a new standing army, a secular government, and a 2/3 ratification plan
- The federalists were at the higher classes of society, with many of the Revolutionaries from the Constitutional Convention (e.g., George Washington and Benjamin Franklin) and were typically settled on the eastern seaboard, were more educated, and controlled the press
 - Most of the newspapers were federalist; only about 1/8 were antifederalist

American and National Identity: With the Constitution being released for the first time to the common people of America, it created strong divisions in the people. The Federalists supported the stronger central government and included many of the delegates from the Constitutional Convention, as well as richer, more well-established members of society. Many of the poorer, less-educated people worried that this stronger central government would cause oppression of the lower classes again, and therefore they were against it; they were the Antifederalists. This separation would continue until the ratification of the Constitution, and therefore did not create a huge rift in American society; however, it was the last time people had strong votes for the system under the Articles of Confederation that supported popular democracy and was not efficient nor strong enough to rule effectively.

The Great Debate in the States

- States had elections to decide who would be going to vote for the Constitution
- Four small states were the first to approve the Constitution, with Pennsylvania second, then Massachusetts, and then three more states
 - Massachusetts also ratified the Constitution but only on the promise that an amendment would be passed that secured citizens’ rights through a Bill of Rights

The Four Laggard States

- Virginia had strong antifederalist opposition including Patrick Henry, but leaders such as George Washington swayed it; plus, with New Hampshire ratifying it, there would already be the nine states; Virginia ratified the Constitution as well
- New York had strong antifederalist opposition as well, but Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay wrote the book *The Federalist* that thoroughly explained the intentions of the Constitution to the people and swayed the population
- All states eventually ratified, but Rhode Island and North Carolina took until 1789 and 1790 to ratify (vs. the rest in late 1787 through 1788)

A Conservative Triumph

- It was a minority of Americans that had engineered the Constitution and allowed for its ratification
 - It was the minority's second victory, the first being the American Revolution over the British-style subordinate government
 - If the majority had voted, the Constitution may not have been ratified
- Conservatism won over more radical people
 - Rather than mob mentality, a stricter government was promoted
 - Worked towards stability more than the radical Revolutionary cause now for long-term government
- The Framers still had the three branches of government embody the Revolutionary principles

Politics and Power: It was ultimately the Federalists who won the majority votes against the Antifederalists and therefore ratified the Constitution, replacing the Articles of Confederation as the federal document defining the government. All of the states ratified the Constitution (over the nine out of thirteen threshold necessary for ratification) eventually, despite fierce opposition in the “laggard states”; however, even these states, which did not want to change the government or did not really care (as was the case for Rhode Island, which did not show up to the Constitutional Convention), were pressured into joining the new government rather than remaining in the old Confederacy alone. This led to again a conservative “revolution” that went to protect old ideals and return the government to some extent to European systems. The system was less radical and more stable. The fact that only a small minority of the people were able to exert enough influence and power over the entire United States was an amazing feat; also, it led to a political revolution of great import, which solidified a modified government that stands to today because of its stability.

The Pursuit of Equality

- People at the time looked for complete social equality (mainly amongst white men)
 - Many states “reduced” the requirement of holding property for voting
 - People wanted to be called the same titles as everyone else
 - Indentured servitude became almost gone by 1800 because of equality
 - Society of the Cincinnati was a hierarchal society created by former Continental Army officers, was laughed at by society because of its inequality and non-adherence to the trend of greater social equality
 - Primogeniture (dating back to medieval times and one of the major motivators of early immigration into the Americas) was stopped
- Religious equality and secularism were conflicting ideas of the time
 - The Anglican Church became the Protestant Episcopal Church and was disestablished
 - “Disestablishmentarianism” is the act of losing a church's official status
 - Congregational Church was still practiced during the time, however
 - Thomas Jefferson advocated for the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, which was passed
 - This disestablished the Anglican Church and guaranteed freedom of religion, which served as a precedent for the First Amendment (which includes freedom of religion)

- The fight for antislavery was strong
 - In liberal Quaker Pennsylvania, slavery was abolished
 - Some northern states phased out slavery, some individuals from middle colonies freed their slaves
 - Overseas slave trade became illegal, but domestic slave trade was still a problem
 - For the most part, slaves in both the North and the South were enslaved until the Civil War because of the slowness of abolitionist actions
 - There was still strong discrimination towards slaves, along with discriminatory laws such as the prevention of interracial marriage, education, property, and job positions for slaves
 - Slavery was not the most pressing issue of the time period (colonial unity, stability, and strength were) and the Framers had to focus on those; it was out of political convenience that the slaves did not get addressed in the Constitution, despite the rising wave of egalitarianism views
- Similar to equality for slaves, women's rights advocates were becoming more common
 - Some women fought in the war, and were allowed to vote in New Jersey for a while
 - No significant improvement in the civil rights (legally-defined) of women
 - Women were entrusted to teach children civic virtue
 - Civic virtue is a facet of republicanism, the idea that "democracy depended on the unselfish commitment of each citizen to the public good"
 - Women were respected in this new system of "republican motherhood", in which they had a strong role as "keepers of the nation's conscience" (by raising the next generation with the right mindset)

Culture and Society: After the Revolution, with its Enlightenment-Age ideals of natural rights, other minority groups that felt that they were suppressed began to speak up. Slavery was a major hypocrisy, with the white slaveowners vying for freedom yet subjecting to lifetime bondage other human beings; as a result, society shifted to more sympathetic views of the slave, stopping the horrific international slave trade. However, it could not stop domestic trade and violence towards the slaves. Similarly, women sought to improve their rights, but they were also mostly rejected; they were respected for their aid to the men in war, as well as for their dedication at home in the role of "republican motherhood" (teaching the children civic virtue—the Republicanism belief that government should work towards the common good) but they did not gain any civil (legal) rights. In society, the words of freedom and independence ran high, but it was only the white men who truly benefitted from it. This led to the continued suppression of the slaves for almost a decade until the Civil War, and women's suffrage rights would be denied until the twentieth century.