

Articles of Confederation Document Analysis

Directions: Review the following assigned Primary Source documents and answer the following question for each document. “Did the Articles of Confederation provide an effective form of government from 1781 to 1789?”

Doc	Did the Articles of Confederation provide an effective government? (Yes or No?)	How Can You Tell?

Document A: Excerpts from the Treaty of Paris, 1783

Article 1: His Britannic Majesty acknowledges the said United States, viz., New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, to be free sovereign and independent states, that he treats with them as such, and for himself, his heirs, and successors, relinquishes all claims to the government, propriety, and territorial rights of the same and every part thereof.

Article 2: And that all disputes which might arise in future on the subject of the boundaries of the said United States may be prevented, it is hereby agreed and declared, that the following are and shall be their boundaries, viz.... and from thence on a due west course to the river Mississippi;

Document B: John Jay's Instructions to the United States Minister to Great Britain, 1785

"You will in a respectful but firm manner insist that the United States be put, without further delay, into possession of all the posts and territories within their limits, which are now held by British garrisons. And you will take the earliest opportunity of transmitting the answer you may receive to this requisition....."

Document C: John Jay's Speech to Congress on Negotiations with Spain's Minister Diego de Gardoqui, 1786

Mr. Gardoqui strongly insists on our relinquishing [our right to navigate the Mississippi]. It always has been, and continues to be, one of their maxims of policy to exclude all mankind from their American shores.

I have often reminded him that the adjacent country was filling fast with people; and that the time must and would come when they would not submit to seeing a fine river flow before their doors without using it as a highway to the sea for the transportation of their productions.... He said that the time alluded to was far distant.... Many fruitless arguments passed between us; and tho' he would admit that the only way to make treaties and friendship permanent was for neither party to leave the other any thing to complain of; yet he would still insist that the Mississippi must be shut against us.

Document D: Letter from George Washington to Henry Lee of Virginia, 1786

The accounts which are published of the commotions... exhibit a melancholy proof of what our trans-Atlantic foe has predicted; and of another thing perhaps, which is still more to be regretted, and is yet more unaccountable, that mankind when left to themselves are unfit for their own Government. I am mortified beyond expression when I view the clouds that have spread over the brightest morn that ever dawned upon any Country... To be more exposed in the eyes of the world, and more contemptible than we already are, is hardly possible.

Document E: Excerpt from Proceedings at Annapolis Convention, 1786

That there are important defects in the system of the Federal Government is acknowledged by the Acts of all those States, which have concurred in the present Meeting; That the defects, upon a closer examination, may be found greater and more numerous, than even these acts imply, is at least so far probably, from the embarrassments which characterize the present State of our national affairs, foreign and domestic, as may reasonably be supposed to merit a deliberate and candid discussion, in some mode, which will unite the Sentiments and Councils of all the States. In the choice of the mode, your Commissioners are of opinion, that a Convention of Deputies from the different States, for the special and sole purpose of entering into this investigation, and digesting a plan for supplying such defects as may be discovered to exist, will be entitled to a preference from considerations, which will occur without being particularized.

[Circumstances] are of a nature so serious, as, in the view of your Commissioners, to render the situation of the United States delicate and critical, calling for an exertion of the untied virtue and wisdom of all the members of the Confederacy.

Under this impression, Your Commissioners, with the most respectful deference, beg leave to suggest their unanimous conviction that it may essentially tend to advance the interests of the union if the States, by whom they have been respectively delegated, would themselves concur, and use their endeavors to procure the concurrence of the other States, in the appointment of Commissioners, to meet at Philadelphia on the second Monday in May next, to take into consideration the situation of the United States, to devise such further provisions as shall appear to them necessary to render the constitution of the Federal Government adequate to the exigencies of the Union...

Document F: Excerpts from the Northwest Ordinance, 1787

Article 5. There shall be formed in the said territory, not less than three nor more than five States.... And, whenever any of the said States shall have sixty thousand free inhabitants therein, such State shall be admitted, by its delegates, into the Congress of the United States, on an equal footing with the original States in all respects whatever, and shall be at liberty to form a permanent constitution and State government: Provided, the constitution and government so to be formed, shall be republican, and in conformity to the principles contained in these articles