Republicanism, State Constitutions, and the Articles of Confederation, 1776-1787

I. After the Revolutionary War, the U.S. still faced many problems

II. State Constitutions

III. The Articles of Confederation

IV. The Critical Period Under the Articles of Confederation (1781-1787)

V. Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation

VI. Annapolis Convention (11-14 Sept. 1786)

VII. Shays’ Rebellion, 1787
I. After the Revolutionary War, the U.S. still faced many problems

A. Frontier Indians; Settlement of West; Reconciling power & liberty

B. Critical Issue: Meaning of “Republican” Government
II. State Constitutions

A. By 1777, 11 of 13 colonies had adopted new written state constitutions

B. Constitutions provided for 3 branches of government: checks & balances

C. Constitutions approved by conventions elected directly by the people

D. Conventions sought to limit the power of the Governors

E. Adoption of Bills of Rights -- substantive and procedural rights
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III. The Articles of Confederation

A. Relatively easy for colonists to make new state governments

B. However, no good outline for constructing a new central government

C. Second Continental Congress was first national government

D. 12 June 1776: Committee appointed to develop a new national government

E. Articles of Confederation (1777 endorsed by SCC; 1781 went into effect)

F. AOC: A perpetual league of friendship among otherwise sovereign states

G. AOC: Unicameral Legislature; Each State = 1 vote; Enumerated Powers
IV. The Critical Period Under the Articles of Confederation (1781-1787)

A. Land Ordinance of 1785

B. Northwest Ordinance of 1787 (13 July 1787)
The Seven Ranges—first area surveyed

GEOGRAPHER’S LINE (BASE LINE)

FIRST RANGE
SECOND RANGE
THIRD RANGE
FOURTH RANGE
FIFTH RANGE
SIXTH RANGE
SEVENTH RANGE

NORTHWEST TERRITORY
OHIO (1803)
KENTUCKY (1792)
PA (1795)

Lake Erie

6 miles

6 miles

6 miles

6 miles

First township six miles square

- Four sections reserved for subsequent sales
- Section 18 reserved for school funds

One Section = 640 acres (1 mile square)
A Half section = 320 acres
B Quarter section = 160 acres
C Half-quarter section = 80 acres
D & E Quarter-quarter section = 40 acres

One township (six miles square)

Land Ordinance of 1785
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V. Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation

A. No Executive or Judicial Branch

B. No Power to Enforce Taxation

C. Little Power to Regulate Interstate Trade

D. 9 states of 13 needed to pass a law

E. 13 states of 13 need to amend AOC

VI. Annapolis Convention (11-14 Sept. 1786)
What event in Massachusetts during 1786-87 led to the Constitutional Convention, and why?

Daniel Shays, left, and Job Shattuck, shown in this engraving from *Bickerstaff's Boston Almanack* for 1787, led debt-ridden farmers against the Massachusetts state government. (National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian)