

The Origins of the American Constitution

- How did the political, social, demographic, economic and cultural experience of early America shape the design of the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution?
- What led to the creation of the Articles of Confederation?
- Who were the winner and losers under the Articles of Confederation? Why
- How did the experience of self governance under the Articles of Confederation shape the design of the Constitution of the United States?

A Profile of the Pre-Revolutionary Colonies

- Diversity in Language, [Religion](#) and Country of Origin
- Diverse Economies
- Constant Presence of Military Threat

Tradition of Self Governance

- Home rule (taxes and domestic affairs to the colonies)
- Elected Assemblies
- Asserted right to levy and collect taxes
- [Tradition of written constitutions](#)

Limitations of this self governance

- England retained control over military and trade.
- Little negotiation or incentives for action between colonies.

Impetus for Revolution

- After 7 Years War, England needs to raise revenue.
- Challenges home rule by establishing taxes, famously with the Stamp Tax of 1765, and later the Tea Tax in 1773.



Library of Congress
The Boston Tea Party

British Response Galvanized Americans

- Britain responds with the Restraining Acts and Coercive acts
- Closed all MA ports
- Dissolved MA assembly
- Decreed British troops be quartered in American homes
- Americans and British soldiers charged with crimes be sent to England.

Declaration of Independence

• We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Factors shaping the Articles of Confederation

- Experience with Monarchy created deep distrust of centralized authority
- Value domestic independence.
- Little experience with interstate cooperation, especially in defense or trade.

Provisions of the Articles of Confederation

- Created a permanent Congress where each state received one vote
- Major laws—taxes and constitutional change require unanimous agreement of all states.
- Military: States raise revenue, taxes, and outfit troops for battle. National military command answers to congress.
- No national executive or judiciary.
- States retain authority to negotiate trade overseas.
- States print and coin there own money.

Speaking of Collective Action...

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this system?
- What drawbacks are built into the articles of confederation?
- Do the decision rules create high or low transaction costs?
- Do the decision rules create high or low conformity costs?
