

Governing the New Nation: Examining Our First Two National Governments

Objective: To compile the information necessary to have a basic working knowledge of both governmental structures, as well as their similarities and differences.

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about each form of government. The Articles of Confederation from 1781 will need to be downloaded from the internet. A simple Google search will return this document. The U. S. Constitution can be found in the *Give Me Liberty!* textbook in the Appendix section in the rear of the text after the “Declaration of Independence.”

The Articles of Confederation

Americans had just fought a war with England because they believed that the King and Parliament had consistently violated their natural rights and taken too much power away from their local colonial assemblies. Read the Articles of Confederation (AOC) closely in order to try and understand the structure of the new national government after the American Revolution and the powers granted to it.

1. How many branches were there to the central government under the AOC? What are some of the reasons you believe the government took this structure?
2. Where did the greater share of power lie under the AOC, with the central government or with the state legislatures? Why do you believe this was the case?
3. What were the powers given to the central government under the AOC?
4. Whichever powers were not granted to the central government under the AOC were given to which bodies?
5. How many delegates could each state send to the Confederation Congress?
6. How many votes did each state have? What was the purpose of this rule?
7. How many states were needed to pass a law under the AOC?
8. How many states were needed to amend the AOC? What do you think was the purpose of the amendment provision? How likely do you think it would be that the structure of the government would be changed?

The US Constitution

The United States faced many challenges under the Articles of Confederation trying to establish itself as a sovereign nation. Eventually, many political leaders recognized that the national government either needed to be revised or completely restructured if the nation was to survive. Ultimately, leaders from each state decided to restructure the government, but they had not forgotten the abuses they had suffered at the hands of the British. Read the US Constitution closely in order to better understand the new form the national government took after the Articles of Confederation.

1. How many branches were there to the national government under the US Constitution? What are some of the reasons you believe the government took this structure?

2. What were the powers given to each branch of the central government under the US Constitution? Give an Article and Section number. What were some of the checks on those powers?
3. Where did the greater share of power lie under the US Constitution, with the national government or with the state legislatures? Why do you believe this was the case?
4. How were each state's representatives to the US Congress determined under the Constitution? Look at the Article dedicated to explaining congressional powers. What do you believe were the purposes behind these changes from the AOC?
5. How were laws passed under the US Constitution?
6. How many states were needed to amend the US Constitution?