

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview– Short Film:
“Why the Articles of Confederation Were Actually a Success” (20–25 Minutes)
(TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY)

Goal

This medium-length film (15:08) explains (Surprise!) why the Articles of Confederation were a success.

Instructions

1. Play this film for students; tell them to take notes on main ideas/interesting facts:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5moJmW9OfRc>

2. Put students in pairs/groups and have them discuss for 3–5 minutes, then as a class (ask for main ideas).

Notes

- The Articles of Confederation (AOC) were written in 1776.
- They are often criticized as “weak and ineffectual,” a “failure.”
- When the Second Continental Congress met in 1775, they had to decide if the 13 states/nations were to become a government, an alliance, etc. (There was no document to bind them together.)
- Summer 1776: states declared independence, reached out for allies, created a form of government
- **KEY:** Revolutionaries who favored limited government and individual rights couldn’t imagine creating a government covering their entire giant geographic area (too much government power, too much potential to abuse people’s rights).
- The AOC saw states as separate nations (not the United **State** of America, but United **States**)—e.g., wording in the AOC included phrases like “Each state retains its freedom, sovereignty, and independence.”
- In many ways the AOC was not a government, but an alliance (“the said states...enter into a firm league of friendship”).
- Most people today incorrectly assume the AOC was an attempt to create an overarching government.
- Was it a failure/were they successful? (Americans won the revolution, successfully obtained foreign aid, so arguably yes.)
- The AOC bound states together without creating too much centralized power. (**KEY:** This is exactly why many today criticize the AOC, because they have been taught in government schools that all people “need” powerful, centralized governments.)
- Looking at states (correctly) as nations, Americans created a free trade zone among states.

Wrap-Up

Ask students:

- Do you remember discussing that many of the 13 states were of a similar geographical size and population as other European states?
- Do you remember that the states all had legislative, executive, and judicial branches, as well as sheriffs, constables, coroners, local judges, etc.?
- Repeat the question that was asked a few book sections back: Why did the 13 states “need” a powerful, centralized government ruling over them?