

Chapter 7 Outline - Forging a National Republic, 1776–1789

- I. Introduction

Americans sought to establish a republic based on the concepts of a representative government and a virtuous citizenry. Problems existed, however, because people understood the fragility of republics and they realized many problems needed resolution to ensure the survival of the nation.

- II. Creating a Virtuous Republic

- A. Varieties of Republicanism

Three definitions of republicanism emerged in the United States: one based on classical political thinking, one that emphasized individuals' pursuit of rational self-interest, and one that called for broad popular political participation.

- B. Virtue and the Arts

Americans expected the republic to replace the corruption of Europe with the virtues associated with republicanism. They believed that the painting, literature, drama, and architecture should convey messages of nationalism and virtue to the public.

However, to many the fine arts themselves were a corrupting influence. As artists attempted to embody moral values in their works, some Americans began to detect signs of luxury and corruption by the mid-1780s. Some were especially concerned about the establishment of the Society of the Cincinnati in 1783.

- C. Educational Reform

Education served to inculcate virtue. In the North, public schools emerged, and, throughout the nation, educational opportunities for girls improved.

- D. Judith Sargent Murray

Judith Sargent Murray argued that women and men had the same intellectual capabilities. Her contentions reflected a postrevolutionary rethinking of traditional gender roles.

- E. Women and the Republic

Abigail Adams advocated legal reform to protect the rights of married women. Others wanted female suffrage.

In the young republic, women assumed great responsibility for the welfare of the community. This role allowed men to pursue more individualistic goals. Therefore, the ideal republican man was seen as an individualist seeking advancement for himself and his family. The ideal republican woman always put the welfare of others ahead of her own.

- III. The First Emancipation and the Growth of Racism

- A. Emancipation and Manumission

In the North, states outlawed slavery, but representatives favored gradual emancipation. In the South, legislators approved some reforms in the legal status of slaves, but slavery remained entrenched.

- B. Growth of Free Black Population

Before the Revolution, there had been few free blacks, but by 1800, nearly 108,000 lived in the United States. Several factors led to an increase in manumissions in the Chesapeake.

- C. Freed People's Lives

In the 1780s, freed blacks from rural areas often moved to port cities in the North. Probably as a result of discrimination, they began to occupy distinct neighborhoods.

Laws discriminated against free African Americans and whites seldom accepted them as equals.

Because they faced pervasive discrimination, free blacks created their own economic, religious, and social institutions.

- D. Development of Racist Theory

To defend slavery in light of the Revolutionary idea that all men were equal, southerners developed theories on the inherent inferiority of Africans and African Americans.

African Americans such as Benjamin Banneker challenged developing racist notions.

- E. A White Men's Republic

Some scholars believe that racism emerged in the new republic because discrimination against blacks enhanced the sense of equality for whites.

- IV. Designing Republican Governments

- A. State Constitutions

Reflecting their colonial experience, writers of state constitutions were primarily concerned with the distribution of and limitations on government power.

Most state constitutions limited the power of the governor and expanded the power of the legislature. In addition, most state constitutions broadened the base of American government by lowering property qualifications for voting.

- B. Limiting State Governments

Framers of state constitutions put deliberate and clear limits on the powers of government, with some having formal bills of rights. More

emphasis was placed on preventing tyranny than on making state governments effective wielders of political authority.

- C. Revising State Constitutions

In the mid-1780s, some political leaders began to embody the theory of checks and balances as the primary means of controlling government power.

- D. Articles of Confederation

The Articles of Confederation established a weak, unwieldy, sometimes inefficient national government.

- V. Trials of the Confederation

- A. Financial Affairs

Finances provided great difficulty for governments. Paper money retained its value until 1776, but suffered severe devaluation by the end of the war.

- B. Foreign Affairs

The Confederation Congress was denied the power to establish a national commercial policy. As a result, members of Congress watched helplessly as other nations restricted American trade with their colonies and as British manufactured goods flooded the United States.

When Spain closed the Mississippi to American navigation, U.S. leaders failed to agree on a national reaction.

- C. Peace Treaty Provisions

Congress could not enforce total compliance by Great Britain with the Treaty of Paris.

Refusal by state and local government to comply with Articles Four and Five of the Treaty of Paris gave Great Britain an excuse to maintain military posts on the Great Lakes.

- VI. Order and Disorder in the West

- A. Indian Relations

The United States signed a series of treaties with the Indians in order to validate government claims to tribal lands. Many tribes accepted these agreements only in the face of America's overwhelming power.

- B. Ordinance of 1785

The Northwest Ordinances of 1784, 1785, and 1787 outlined the process through which land in the Northwest Territory could be sold and formal governments organized.

The Northwest Ordinance of 1785 specified the specific way in which land was to be surveyed and sold. Proceeds from the sale of western lands provided revenue for the national government.

- C. Northwest Ordinance

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 was the most important of the three land policies passed by the Confederation Congress. It contained a bill of rights, nominally prohibited slavery, and specified the process by which residents could organize state governments and seek admission to the Union.

- VII. From Crisis to the Constitution

- A. Taxation and the Economy

The inability of Congress to deal with economic concerns led Virginia and Maryland to call a convention to discuss trade policy. This successful meeting resulted in an invitation to other states to meet in Annapolis, MD in 1786. Delegates from only five states attended,

however, forcing a call for a new convention to be held in Philadelphia the following year.

- B. Shays's Rebellion

This armed rebellion in Massachusetts in 1787 convinced doubters that reform was necessary.

- C. Constitutional Convention

Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, held in Philadelphia, were generally reform-minded property owners who wanted a more powerful central government.

- D. Madison and the Constitution

James Madison gained recognition as the Father of the Constitution. Well-prepared when he arrived in Philadelphia, he set forth the principle of checks and balances.

- E. Virginia and New Jersey Plans

Virginians wanted a powerful central government. The New Jersey delegation advocated limited national authority. The convention spent much of its time reconciling these positions.

- F. Debates Over Congress

The issue of representation and election complicated debate over a bicameral legislature.

- G. Slavery and the Constitution

Delegates accepted a "three-fifths clause" to define the place of slaves in regards to taxation and representation.

This compromise, and other provisions, implicitly recognized the

institution of slavery.

- H. Congressional and Presidential Powers

The framers agreed that Congress should have the power to tax and to regulate commerce. Congress was granted all authority “necessary and proper” to carry out its enumerated powers.

Foreign affairs, the military, and federal appointments became the domain of a chief executive, the President. To ensure the independence of the president from the national legislature, the chief executive was to be elected by the electoral college.

The key to the Constitution was the distribution of political authority by a separation of powers among three co-equal branches of government and a division of powers between states and the nation.

- VIII. Opposition and Ratification

- A. Federalists and Antifederalists

Ratification required the approval of special conventions in at least nine states. Those who favored the Constitution called themselves Federalists—the opposition became Antifederalists.

Opponents of the Constitution feared the threat it posed to the states and to the people.

- B. Bill of Rights

Opponents of the Constitution believed the document needed guarantees of certain rights and advocated a bill of rights to protect individual liberties.

- C. Ratification

The arguments presented in *The Federalist* and the promise of a bill of rights led to ratification of the Constitution with New York's approval

on July 26, 1788.

- D. Celebrating Ratification

Parades in many cities to celebrate ratification of the Constitution also served as political lessons for both literate and illiterate Americans.