

Name _____

The Backbone of the Nation: How the Articles of Confederation Shaped the United States Government

Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. Answer: The deliberate decentralization of power under the Articles of Confederation was motivated by a desire to prevent the concentration of power, as the Founding Fathers had experienced under British colonial rule. They wanted to avoid creating another strong central authority. However, this decentralization had a significant impact on the early United States government. It resulted in a weak central government with limited authority and the inability to enforce laws, levy taxes, or raise a standing army effectively. While it aimed to prevent tyranny, it also created challenges in governing the nation efficiently.
2. Answer: The central government under the Articles of Confederation consisted of a unicameral legislature known as the Continental Congress. Each state had one vote in Congress, irrespective of its size or population. This structure reflected the Founding Fathers' vision of a nation where smaller states had an equal voice in government. They sought to balance power between states and prevent larger states from dominating the government.
3. Answer: Deliberate limitations under the Articles of Confederation included the central government's inability to levy taxes, raise a standing army, and regulate commerce. These limitations were motivated by a desire to prevent the concentration of power and potential tyranny. However, they created significant challenges for the government's effectiveness. The inability to raise revenue led to financial instability, making it difficult to fulfill essential responsibilities. The lack of an army hindered national defense, and the absence of commerce regulation affected trade between states.
4. Answer: The Articles of Confederation left a lasting legacy in shaping the United States government. Its weaknesses, such as the inability to raise revenue and financial instability, played a significant role in highlighting the need for a stronger government. The shortcomings of the Articles contributed to the dissatisfaction with the existing system of government and were a driving force behind the push for a more effective government structure. This ultimately led to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and the adoption of the United States Constitution, which addressed many of the deficiencies of the Articles of Confederation.

