**Northern Ordinance of 1787**

Student Name

Institution Affiliation

Instructor

Course

Date

**I. Introduction**

From the very beginning of the United States' history as a nation, slavery has been a contentious issue. When the institution of slavery was finally abolished, there were many people who disagreed with the concept and its results. The passing of the Northern Ordinance in 1787 was a momentous occasion that led to the establishment of various forward-thinking policies, including those that abolished slavery and democratized government. The ordinance limited the power of the United States government while at the same time establishing a transparent procedure for the acquisition, settlement, and organization of Western lands. But it is possible that the Northern Ordinance of 1787 did not completely stop the trade of slaves in the Northwest Territory because it led to competing claims, stopped smaller states from growing, sparked many debates, and contributed to the deep racism that existed in American society at the time.

**II. Background**

**A. Northern Ordinance of 1787**

The Northern Ordinance of 1787, also called the Northwest Ordinance, was a law passed by the Confederation Congress. It created the Northwest Territory, which included modern-day states like Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Arthur St. Clair, who was the Confederation Congress's president at the time, signed the ordinance into law on July 13, 1787. The Northwest Territory was the first territory to be set up under the ordinance. It served as a model for how other territories in the United States would be set up in the future.

**B. The Confederation Congress/ Thomas Jefferson**

The Confederation Congress, also known as the Continental Congress, was the governing body of the United States from 1774 to 1789. The Congress was made up of delegates from the 13 colonies and was responsible for managing the affairs of the country during the American Revolution. Thomas Jefferson was one of the key figures involved in the drafting of the ordinance. He did a lot to make sure that the ordinance had parts that supported democratic government and got rid of slavery in the new territories.

**C. Reasons**

**Competing for claims to western lands**

At the time of the passage of the ordinance, there were several competing claims to western lands, including claims made by states such as Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The ordinance sought to establish a clear process for the settlement of these lands and the creation of new territories.

**Smaller states blocked from expanding west**

Smaller states such as Rhode Island and Delaware were concerned that they would be left out of the process of westward expansion. The ordinance sought to address these concerns by providing for the creation of new states out of the Northwest Territory and ensuring that all states had equal representation in the federal government.

**Rejected claims to western lands**

The ordinance also rejected claims to western lands made by Native American tribes. This set the stage for future conflicts over land rights and was a major factor in the displacement and mistreatment of Native American communities in the new territories.

**Debated over frontier territories was a key point of discussion at the constitutional convention**

The question of how to govern the new territories was a major point of debate at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. The Northern Ordinance was seen as a compromise between those who wanted to establish a strong central government and those who favored states' rights.

**Established a clear process for acquiring, setting, and organizing Western lands while limiting the power of the US government**

One of the key provisions of the ordinance was the establishment of a clear process for the settlement of western lands. This process involved the surveying of land, the creation of townships, and the eventual creation of new states. The ordinance also sought to limit the power of the federal government in the new territories by providing for the establishment of a territorial government that would have limited powers and be subject to the authority of the federal government.

**III. Obstacles**

The Northern Ordinance of 1787 was up against a number of challenges, all of which stopped it from completely fulfilling its objectives. The slow expansion of slavery into the western regions was one of the key challenges that had to be overcome. The fact that the legislation did not permit slavery to grow beyond the Ohio River angered the states that still practiced the institution. Another big problem with enforcing the law was that American Indians didn't like having European settlers in the area. The indigenous peoples of the region had the impression that their way of life was in danger as a result of the increasing number of white settlers in the area. The region's indigenous peoples felt threatened by the influx of Europeans. As a direct consequence of this, various conflicts broke out, one of which was the Northwest Indian War, which raged from 1785 until 1795.

The issue of religious liberty and other civil liberties posed another substantial barrier to the execution of the decree. The ordinance did not make it abundantly apparent to what extent these rights would be guaranteed in the territory. This resulted in a number of debates and discussions on the subject, with some individuals believing that the government ought to have full authority over the many religious practices. This was the case as a result of inadequate resources hindering enforcement. Lack of sufficient resources—including money, people, and political will—complicated its implementation. This was the case because enforcement was hampered by a lack of adequate resources.

**IV. Impacts**

The Northern Ordinance of 1787 had substantial effects on the United States, despite the fact that it had a number of drawbacks. The Annapolis Convention was one of the factors that had a considerable impact. The goal of this meeting was to look at some of the problems that were slowing down the implementation of the ordinance and come up with ways to fix them. These issues included competing claims to western territories and the impossibility for smaller states to expand westward. At the end of the conference, the Virginia Plan was made, which called for a three-part federal government and a system of checks and balances. The Virginia Plan, on the other hand, recommended the use of a bicameral legislature, which was ultimately chosen to implement.

**Advantages**

The Northern Ordinance of 1787 featured a number of positive aspects as well. It did this to encourage education inside the region by reserving land for the creation of educational institutions like schools and universities. Also, it gave a clear plan for acquiring, settling, and organizing western territories while putting limits on the power of the United States government. Also, as a direct result of the ordinance, the United States bought a large amount of land from Canada. This helped the country get more land and expand its territory. Last but not least, the ordinance included a listing of a bill of rights that were guaranteed throughout the area. These rights included the right to trial by jury as well as the right to habeas corpus. Most crucially, the decree made it illegal to practice slavery in any capacity whatsoever in the Northwest Territory, which was a significant step in abolishing the practice throughout the United States.

**Disadvantages**

However, a number of significant flaws marred the Northern Ordinance of 1787. The minimum land purchase requirement, which meant that settlers had to buy a lot of land, was one of the biggest problems. This made it difficult for smaller landowners to expand their holdings and was one of the major reasons why settlers were forced to buy land in large quantities. Because the ordinance did not give Congress the power to coin money or oversee interstate or foreign commerce, the government's capacity to manage the economy was restricted as a result. In conclusion, the ordinance did not include provisions for an executive branch to be responsible for the enforcement of the laws, which left the government open to the possibility of power abuse and corruption.

**V. Conclusion**

The Northern Ordinance of 1787 was a major step towards the abolition of slavery in the United States and the establishment of democratic governance in the country. But it ran into problems, such as competing claims to western lands, the slow spread of slavery in the western territories, and not enough money to fully enforce its rules. Even though there were problems, the ordinance had a lot of effects on the country. For example, it led to the Annapolis Convention, improved education, created land and territory, gave the U.S. land from Canada, and listed a bill of rights that was guaranteed in the territory. However, the ordinance also had several disadvantages, including the minimum land purchase requirement, Congress's lack of power to coin money or control interstate, and did not provide for an executive branch to enforce the laws.

**References**

Hickey, J. (2018). Northwest Ordinance. In The American Revolution: The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia. https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/northwest-ordinance/.

Mariotti, A. (2017). Slavery and the Northern Ordinance of 1787. Journal of the Early Republic, 37(3), 451–482. https://doi.org/10.1353/jer.2017.0043

<http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3407704289/WHIC?u=plopacplus&sid=bookmark-WHIC&xid=61f2f>

<http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2831200389/WHIC?u=pnlopacplus&sid=bookmark-WHIC&xid=gadac>

<http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2830902177/WHIC?u=pnlopacplus&sid=bookmark-WHIC&xid=b9b3>

<http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587300030/WHIC?u=pnlopacplus&sid=bookmark-WHIC&xid=0e96>

<http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/BT2350051297/WHIC?u=pnlopacplus&sid=bookmark-WHIC&xid=31967>