



# What led to the U.S. Constitution?

Why did delegates meet in Philadelphia in 1787, and why did they decide to write a new constitution?



# The First Constitution: the Articles of Confederation

- Complete Authority in Legislature
- Delegates: 2-7 from each state
  - Paid by each state
- Quorum: 2 delegates from 7 states
  - Quorum = number needed to conduct official business
- Voting: One Vote Per State
  - Regardless of number of delegates (therefore, equality of states)
- Passing Legislation: 9 states (a supermajority: 2/3 vote)
- Amending Articles: 13 states (unanimous)



# Some Problems Under Articles

## 1. Finance

1. Congress could request taxes but not enforce payment
2. Could borrow, but not guarantee repayment

## 2. Commerce

1. States could impose tariffs on other states' goods (interstate tariffs)
2. Trade disputes

## 3. Currency

1. States issued their own currency
2. Inflation

## 4. Military/Defense

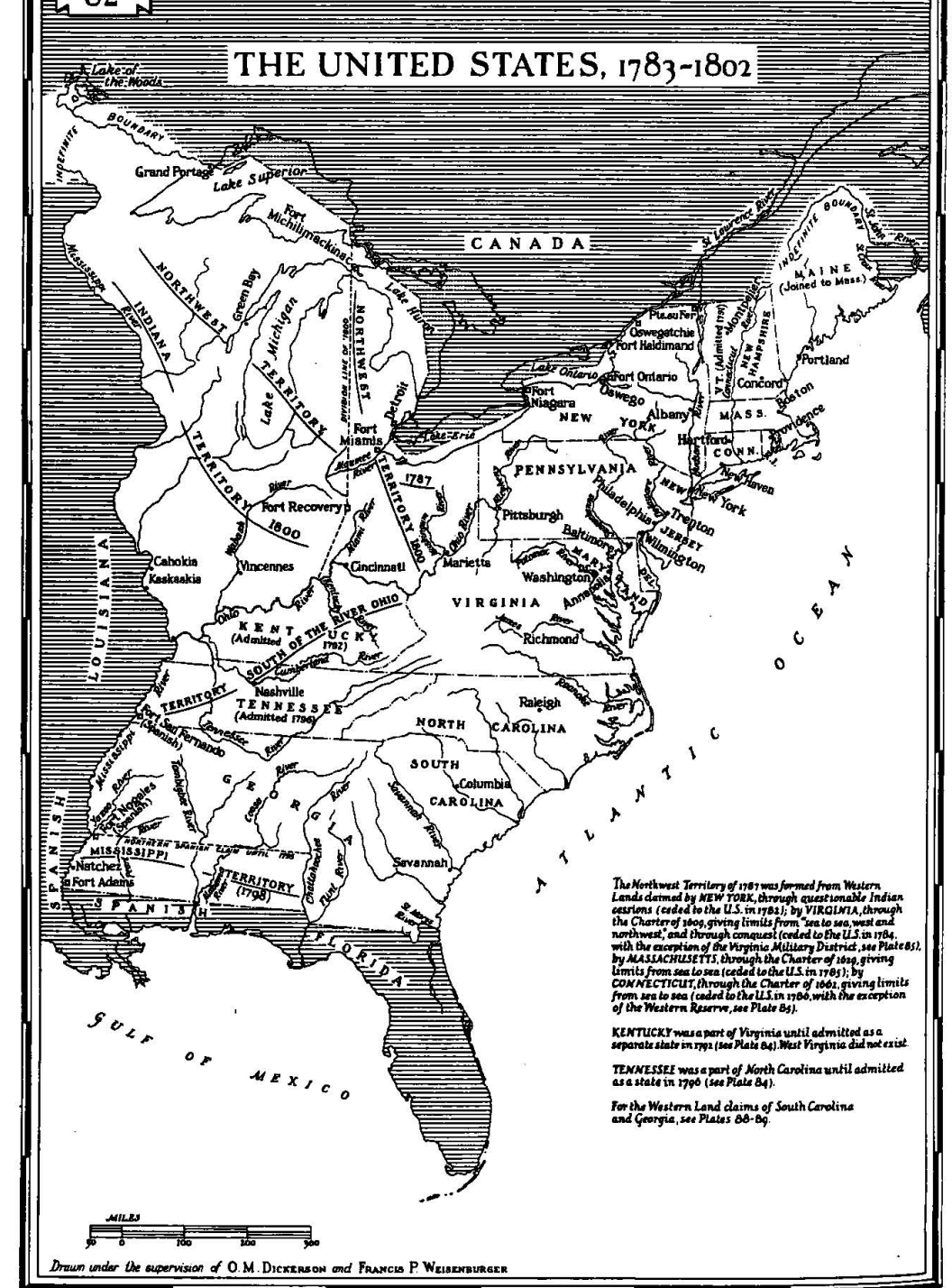
1. States could make their own treaties with other countries
2. National government had difficulty raising an army

# The Northwest Ordinance, 1787

- Helped prepare the way for the U.S. Constitution
  - Organized Northwest Territory
  - Virginia (and others) relinquished claims to the Northwest Territory
    - Virginia was still a large state, but not as overwhelmingly large as it would have been
  - Established open and equal federal principle
    - Similar to that of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)
- Slavery forbidden

# Map of the US 1783-1802

- Shows the Northwest Territory
- Indicates that Virginia and other states gave up territorial claims





# Influences: the Founding Fathers Were Familiar With:

- English institutions and practices (bicameral legislature, representative government)
- Colonial institutions and practices (state constitutions, governors, assemblies)
- Social Contract theory
- Separation of powers and checks and balances (Montesquieu)
- Practice and philosophy of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois Confederacy)
  - Federal system founded on principles of peace, equity, openness,

# US Senate resolution in 1988

- “...The confederation of the original 13 colonies into one republic was influenced by the political system developed by the Iroquois Confederacy and other Indian nations, as were many of the democratic principles which were incorporated into the constitution itself...”
  - Con. Res. 126 – 102 STAT 4932

# Back to the problems...

- Difference of opinion about the Articles of Confederation
- Many thought the problems were serious enough to need revision
- Agreement to call a meeting of delegates from the states to meet in Philadelphia in 1787 to revise the Articles of Confederation
- Instead, they wrote an entirely new constitution, the constitution still in force today