

The Formation of the Constitution: Debates of the Constitutional Convention

The Constitutional Convention, held in Philadelphia in 1787, was a pivotal moment in American history. It brought together delegates from 12 states to revise the Articles of Confederation, which had proven inadequate in governing the newly independent nation. Over the course of several months, the delegates engaged in intense debates and negotiations, ultimately producing the Constitution that established the framework for the United States government we know today.

The Articles of Confederation, adopted in 1781, created a weak central government with limited powers. Each state had its own currency, raised its own army, and set its own laws. This lack of coordination and authority led to economic instability, diplomatic challenges, and internal conflicts.

As a result, a movement grew to revise the Articles. In 1787, the Continental Congress called for a convention to "revise and amend" them. Delegates from all 13 states (except Rhode Island) were invited to attend.



U.S. Constitution: Foundation & Evolution (Including the Biographies of the Founding Fathers): The Formation of the Constitution, Debates of the Constitutional Convention of 1787... by Alida V. Merlo

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The Constitutional Convention was attended by some of the most notable figures in American history, including:

- **George Washington:** Presiding officer of the Convention and future first President of the United States.
- **James Madison:** "Father of the Constitution" and a key architect of the document's design.
- **Alexander Hamilton:** A prominent Federalist who advocated for a strong central government.
- **Benjamin Franklin:** A veteran statesman who played a key role in mediating debates and securing compromises.
- **Roger Sherman:** A delegate from Connecticut who proposed the "Great Compromise," which helped break the impasse between large and small states.

The delegates at the Constitutional Convention engaged in a wide range of debates, including:

- **Representation:** Should representation in Congress be based on population or on the number of states?
- **Legislative Powers:** What powers should be granted to the legislative branch and how should its authority be checked?

- **Executive Branch:** What role should the executive play in governing the nation?
- **Judiciary:** How should the judiciary be structured and what powers should it have?
- **Slavery:** Should slavery be permitted under the new Constitution?

The debates at the Constitutional Convention were often heated and contentious. However, the delegates were ultimately able to reach compromises and resolutions on the major issues, including:

- **The Great Compromise:** This compromise resolved the debate over representation by creating a bicameral legislature. The House of Representatives would be based on population, while the Senate would be based on equal representation for each state.
- **The Three-Fifths Compromise:** This compromise addressed the issue of slavery by counting three-fifths of slaves for purposes of representation and taxation.
- **The Electoral College:** This compromise created an indirect system for electing the President, which was designed to prevent the election from being controlled by popular opinion.
- **The Bill of Rights:** The Constitution initially included no protection for individual liberties. However, the delegates agreed to add a Bill of Rights to the document after it was ratified.

The Constitution was completed on September 17, 1787, and signed by 39 of the 55 delegates in attendance. It then went to the states for ratification.

Ratification was a difficult process, with strong opposition from Anti-Federalists who opposed the creation of a strong central government. However, supporters of the Constitution, known as Federalists, ultimately prevailed. The Constitution was ratified by 9 of the 13 states by June 21, 1788, and went into effect on March 4, 1789.

The Constitution of the United States has served as the bedrock of American government for over two centuries. It has weathered numerous challenges, including the Civil War, the Great Depression, and World War II. It remains the oldest written constitution in continuous use by any nation in the world.

The Constitution's enduring legacy is due to its flexibility and adaptability. The framers of the document recognized that the nation would face unforeseen challenges and that the Constitution would need to be able to accommodate them. As a result, the Constitution contains mechanisms for amendment and adaptation, which have allowed it to evolve over time and remain relevant to the needs of the American people.

The Constitutional Convention of 1787 was a watershed moment in American history. The delegates who gathered in Philadelphia faced a daunting task, but they ultimately succeeded in creating a document that has served as the foundation of the United States government for over two centuries. The Constitution is a testament to the wisdom, compromise, and foresight of its framers, and it remains a living document that continues to shape the destiny of the nation.

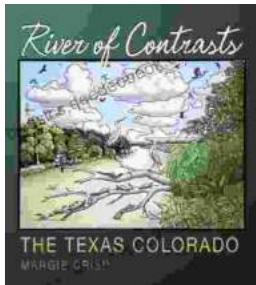
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