



OPTION ONE: Strengthen the Current Partnership Among Equals

Main Arguments in Favor of This Option	Examples of What Might Be Done	Some Consequences and Trade-Offs to Consider
<p>The Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union need to be amended. The current one-vote-per-state Confederation Congress guarantees that we are a union of equal members. But the current central government lacks the power to raise funds or make binding decisions. It needs to have the power to hold states accountable without impinging on their rights. We must figure out a workable balance that gives the central government more power, and yet still respects each state's autonomy.</p> <p><i>But, giving the Confederation Congress the ability to hold states accountable would reduce each state's autonomy. Also, majority rule is not the same as equality. In some situations the loss of the one-state, one-vote agreement would mean that the wishes of one state would be overridden by the preferences of other states.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Congress should develop an attendance policy. Non-attendance will result in loss of a state's ability to vote in that session. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could penalize representatives who cannot attend due to the precarious state of travel, and there will be disagreements about where Congress should meet.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of amendments to the Articles of Confederation should require a two-thirds majority, not the current unanimous one. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dissenting state would be forced to go along with a decision it doesn't support.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give Congress limited rights to collect tariffs to support activities like a national militia, post office, and arbitration court. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National tariffs would compete for dollars with state legislatures; states involved in international trade would bear a heavier financial burden; and tariffs would increase the cost of imported goods.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a national militia of citizen soldiers to protect the territories and our merchants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This kind of military may not be able to stave off more experienced armies of professional soldiers.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congress should establish common exchange rates and a standard system of weights and measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and states may manipulate or disregard the standards, and centralized standards will undermine local citizens' ability to determine currency values for themselves, or to trade goods directly through barter.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a joint judicial system for arbitrating interstate commerce and border disputes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • States will have to submit to an external body, which undermines their sovereignty.

★ OPTION TWO: Create a Strong Central Government

Main Arguments in Favor of This Option	Examples of What Might Be Done	Some Consequences and Trade-Offs to Consider
<p>To maintain our independence, we must shore up our stability. Too much freedom at either the state or the personal level can be destructive. We need a strong central government to protect our liberty so we can realize our goal of being an independent nation with a sound economy and secure borders. A republican form of government with proportional representation from all of the states assures that individual citizens will still have a say. A stronger central government will have the authority to do what needs to be done to protect our economic stability and physical security. This would also increase our status in the eyes of other nations.</p> <p><i>But, a republican form of government based on proportional representation would reduce the authority of state governments. While we would be more secure as a nation, creating a powerful central authority would mean the unique needs and desires of individual communities would be secondary to the needs of the nation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a new federal constitution with a representative legislature proportional to each state's population, with slaves counted at three-fifths of their population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The smaller states will lose influence and power.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The legislature should appoint an executive for a seven-year term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having an appointed manager, rather than a leader selected by the people, may weaken citizens' loyalties. Also, long terms can lead to the misuse of power.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish national standards for citizenship and voting. • Give Congress the authority to create and direct a regular army and navy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White men without property, women, and free Africans in some states could lose their current voting rights if different national standards are adopted. • Soldiers would have a stronger allegiance to the central government than to the states. Soldiers will be stationed far from their homes, imposing the authority of strangers on local communities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the federal government assume all state and national war debts, establish a single national currency, prohibit states and other entities from issuing their own currencies, and give Congress the right to levy tariffs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may impose a heavier tax burden on citizens and would be unfair for states that have already paid their debts. A common currency would undermine the freedom of the states and private institutions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate our identity by establishing national holidays and a national anthem. This will honor the sacrifice of soldiers and their families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local and regional perspectives about historic events and traditions may be minimized or overlooked altogether. 	



OPTION THREE: Let States Govern Themselves

Main Arguments in Favor of This Option	Examples of What Might Be Done	Some Consequences and Trade-Offs to Consider
<p>Now that we have our liberty, dissolve the Confederation and let the states govern themselves. In an agricultural society such as ours, local governance works best. We are too economically, geographically, and culturally diverse to form one nation. Each state has its own traditions of self-governance, some going back a century or more. Each has its own way of determining citizenship. We've proven we can successfully unite in the face of a common threat, and we can do it again if need be.</p> <p><i>But, small countries face greater military and economic vulnerability than larger ones. Also, instead of an integrated system, many of the basic functions of government would be replicated. This would be more expensive and result in fragmentation. Finally, local rule can lead to insular thinking and distrust of outsiders.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disband the Congress of the Confederation. Make states responsible for their own defense, raising armies or navies as needed. Leaders from each state could meet regularly to consider national security. Each state will determine the legal rights and citizenship privileges of its individuals. Each state should determine what to do about its own war debt. Criminal and civil cases will only be arbitrated at the state or local level. All trade disputes should be resolved in the marketplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of a central government could result in greater economic and physical vulnerability, since no one will be attending to the collective interest of all of the states. Frontier and coastal states will incur a heavier burden, while some states would benefit without sharing the cost. Having multiple armies in close proximity increases the risk of violence between states. Individuals could be citizens in one state, yet lose those rights when traveling to another. Despite our fears of centralized governments, tyranny can also thrive at the local level. Debts incurred by Confederation Congress may not be fully repaid, which will hurt everyone's reputation and credit worthiness. States that contributed more than others to the fight for independence will bear a disproportionate burden. This fosters insular thinking and the tyranny of the majority. Anyone involved in interstate trade or travel will have to be well-versed in the laws of various states. Some individuals would inevitably be hurt by unfair business practices. With no central authority, interstate trade could be unpredictable, and states could interfere in people's private matters.