

What is properly meant by "the Union"?

By "the Union" is properly meant the whole American nation, which is to say, the people of all the American colonies/states bound together as, in the words of the Declaration of Independence, "one people"—*e pluibus unum*—first uniting as such and then formally constituting and governing themselves under their constitution

As such, the Union in due course, but only in due course, acquired a formal constitutional structure—namely, that set forth, first, in the Articles of Confederation and then, presently—"in order to form a more perfect union"—the Constitution. The formal structure of the Union, according to the Constitution, is that of a compound republic—more exactly, an extended compound republic—whose principal institution, in addition to its twofold system of federal and state government, is the division of powers—legislative, executive, and judicial—at both levels of governance.

The Union as such, however, was before the Constitution, being the sovereign constituent authority that ordained and established the Constitution as well as the Articles prior to it. In fact, the Union as such was even before the Declaration of Independence, in that it was precisely the "one people" of all the thirteen colonies who, by means of the Declaration and the vote of the Continental Congress on 2 July 1776, dissolved "the political bands" that had connected them to Great Britain.

More than that, it was the same sovereign authority of the Union as such, acting by the identical means, that also constituted the united colonies "free and independent states." This is why Lincoln was exactly right when he said in his message to Congress of 4 July 1861, "The Union is older than any of the States, and, in fact, it created them as States."

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