Notes on the Creation of the United States:

When the “Framers” wrote the United States Constitution in the summer of 1787 and “the People” ratified it during the months that followed, they ended a long period of uncertainty about the fundamentals of public life. The crisis had begun more than two decades earlier, when Parliament tried to impose direct taxes on Britain’s “dominions” in North America. That simple dispute escalated to a fierce ten-year quarrel about what powers the government of Britain could wield over people who called themselves British but who lived outside Britain. Argument flamed into the War of Independence, which completely destroyed British authority and British identity on the winning side. With those gone, and with most local institutions shattered or in disarray, a major vacuum of power, belonging, obligation and belief needed to be filled.

Undoubtedly, there would be no new king to replace George III. In American’s eyes the whole principle of monarchy, not just one king, had failed. Americans would be citizens rather than subjects. But every other political and social question seemed open:

With the ancient, hallowed authority of monarchy gone, how could some people be justified in wielding power over others?

What kind of persons should the new rulers be?

How should they deal with the people they ruled?

How should the separate states related to one another and to what little central government there was?

Most fundamentally, if “all men” were “created equal,” as the Declaration of Independence said, what became of the old gradations of status, age, gender, and race that had made nobody equal to anybody else while a kind reigned over them all?

Every one of these questions was raised and disputed between independence (1783) and the adoption of the Constitution (1789)