ARCHITECTS OF POLITICAL CHANGE

This work offers a set of extended interpretations of Madison’s argument in Federalist X of 1787, using ideas from social choice theory and from the work of Douglass North, Mancur Olson, and William Riker. Its focus is not on social choice theory itself, but on the use of this theory as a heuristic device to better understand democratic institutions. The treatment adapts a formal model of elections to consider rapid constitutional change at periods when societies face social quandaries. The topics explored in the book include Britain’s reorganization of its fiscal system in the eighteenth century to prosecute its wars with France; the Colonies’ decision to declare independence in 1776; Madison’s argument about the “probability of fit choice” during the Ratification period of 1787-8; the argument between Hamilton and Jefferson in 1798-1800 over the long-run organization of the U.S. economy; the Dred Scott decision of 1857 and the election of Lincoln in 1860; Lyndon Johnson and the “critical realignment” of 1964; and Keynes’s rejection of the equilibrium thesis in 1937 and the creation of the Bretton Woods institutions after 1944.

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Constitutional Quandaries and Social Choice Theory

NORMAN SCHOFIELD
Washington University in Saint Louis
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6.4 Policy shifts by Republicans and Democrats, 1896–1932 188
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Four decades ago, William H. Riker published *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Maintenance* (1964). Riker’s motivation in writing this book came from a question that he had raised in his earlier book, *Democracy in the United States* (1953) about the origins of Federalism in the United States. His argument was that only an outside threat could provide the motivation to politicians to give up power by joining the Federal apparatus. His later book, *The Theory of Political Coalitions* (1962), also attempted to answer the question why plurality rule in the U.S. electoral system seemed to be the reason for both minimal winning coalitions and the two-party system. A further book, *Positive Political Theory* (with Peter Ordeshook, 1973), attempted to develop the theory, available at that time, on two-party elections. The convergence result presented in that volume was later shown to depend on unrealistic assumptions about the dimension of the space of political decisions. Later, using the so-called “chaos theorems,” Riker returned to the historical questions that had earlier intrigued him and suggested that manipulability and contingency were features of democratic systems (Riker, 1982, 1986, 1996).

Riker’s work provides the motivation for this book and for a companion volume (Schofield and Sened, 2006). The formal theory of elections and coalitions, together with empirical analyses of elections in Britain, the United States, Israel, the Netherlands, and Italy, makes up that coauthored volume. This present volume addresses many of the historical questions raised by Riker, using as a conceptual basis the formal electoral model presented in the companion book. This model is only briefly described in the Introduction, and somewhat more extensively in Chapter 8. However, the focus here is not on “social choice theory” itself, but rather on the use of this theory as a heuristic device to better understand democratic institutions.
Preface

The essays included in this book were written over a number of years. Obviously, I owe a great debt to William Riker. I considered it a great honor to be the recipient of the Riker prize from Rochester University, in acknowledgment perhaps of some of the earlier versions of this work. Douglass North pressed me to apply the formal reasoning to more general topics than elections. I hope he finds the result of interest.

I received very helpful comments on the versions of these essays presented at the Hoover Institution, Harvard, Yale, MIT, and ICER, Turin. The notions of quandary, of the Atlantic Constitution, and of a “factor coalition” came about from discussion with Andy Rutten. The idea of “dynamic stability” developed out of long conversations with Gary Miller. Chapter 6 is adapted from work (Miller and Schofield, 2003) coauthored with Gary. Chapter 5 is partly based on work with Kim Dixon, and material used in that chapter was collected by Alexander Fak. Imke Kohler kindly made available her research on Truman and McCloy, and this I found helpful in the discussion in Chapter 7, on the founding of the World Bank and of the Marshall plan. I am indebted to Alexander, Andy, Gary, Imke, and Kim, and to my colleagues at Washington University in St. Louis, particularly Andrew Martin, John Nachbar, Douglass North, John Nye, Robert Parks, and Andrew Rehfeld. Iain McLean, who has written extensively on Condorcet and on applying “rational choice theory” to British politics, kindly listened to earlier versions of aspects of the argument. I thank James Alt, Keith Dowding, Robert Goodin, Manfred Holler, Margaret Levi, Carole Pateman, Maurice Salles, and Albert Weale, who were editors associated with earlier versions of these essays. The original versions of the chapters were typed by Alexandra Shankster, and many of the diagrams were drawn by her and by Diana Ivanov. Cherie Moore, Robert Holahan, Ekaterina Rashkova, and Tsvetan Tsvetkov provided further assistance.

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—Norman Schofield, December 27, 2005, Saint Louis, Missouri