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The Mathematical Logic of Blocking Power: From Thirteen to Forty-Four States

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ABSTRACT.
OCL explores the mathematical logic of blocking power, that is, the power to block organic change. In Constitution I (the Articles of Confederation) the formula was absurdly simple. Any state, no matter how geographically small, economically insignificant and revoltingly irrelevant could block organic change desired by all the other constituents. Hence, secession orchestrated (via Constitution II) so that the first nine states (willing to do so) could secede from Rhode Island.

KEY WORDS: federal convention, quorum

A. INTRODUCTION. Take a nation of thirteen constituent provinces, administrative units, or governments-by-another-name. Now consider how the power to block organic change may be assigned. Various supermajorities come to mind.

Now take three-quarters as the percentage of constituent support required for organic change: This means a ‘pure’ supermajority (=no fraction of an integer left behind) division at that value, such as eight of twelve constituents, thirty-three of forty-four and so forth.

Or a division with something greater than .75 by long division, no matter how negligible that remainder may be. 751 of 1000 would qualify as a supermajority by the value of 1/1000.

B. THE UNDERLYING CHALLENGE. Can anarchists get organized? Can rebels, insurrectionists, and traitors launch new government and, with straight face, demand obedience to the new and highly unpedigree’d regime? And more: can they disqualify would-be (future) rebels from doing to the new national government (organized by rebels) what the rebels did to the mother country?

In this article, OCL examines how a new government – more precisely a new central government, that is C manages a periphery P. A few assumptions. The periphery consists of 13 constituent unites. Each one of these has a inchoate blocking right, more correctly blocking power/option/tactical choice.

Now assume the mathematical logic of new state making. Add new states to a union (of 13) with C and P = 13, so that now P = 14, and so forth up to forty constituents.

What we really want to know when we have a periphery is what are the logical choices of their rebinding themselves to a center; of their own making, surely, but the logic is just as rigid and unyielding.

When rebels rebel they become their own periphery, that is, ‘tribeless, hearthless, homeless.’ [1] This is one of the ironies of the American revolution: When you rebel as a colony and claim independent nationhood, you become a nothing to anybody and everyone. But to become perhipery to (some) center, you yourself must fetter your limbs to the center.

Thereafter, you have no one to blame but yourself, a point that John C. Calhoun made in his ‘regrets, a few’ failure speech to southern dignity. March 4, 1850. “She has already surrendered so much that she has little left to surrender.”

If the “root of the evil” is that you made a bad deal in principio, then the remorselessness of the maths should have flagged anyone’s attention, that is, anyone with quill, ink, paper and a modest head for numbers. This carries us back to 1787, just as Calhoun noted.

He who is a “natural outcast” is to be condemned as a “lover of strife,” on the authority of Homer and Aristotle, as noted above. Calhoun should have noticed that the time for the southern states to go it alone was in 1781-1787. Only North Carolina paused at ratification. After that, ali a iacta est: Suetonius puts this into Latin for his readers; Plutarch into Greek.

Plutarch has the ‘die’ / ‘alia’ from ‘kubos’ from which we get cube; Aristotle compares the
‘natural outcast’ to a single ‘pessos’—a smooth stone for playing draughts – on the board, isolated and cut off from the course of play.

The spatial logic of the chessboard is also represented in the Table Annexed, which will be the subject of further study.

C. **TABLE ANNEXED.** For on-line access to Peter Aschenbrenner’s articles, tables and charts see purdue.academia.edu/PeterAschenbrenner or works.bepress.com/peter_aschenbrenner/

D. **LAST REVISED.** This file was last revised on May 1, 2013; it is version 007.

E. **FILE FORMAT.** The format of this file is MS Word 2010; the format of the associated table is also MS Word 2010.

F. **References.**