# NC

#### I negate the Resolved: A just government ought to recognize an unconditional right of workers to strike. First, a few definitions to clarify the round:

#### The right to strike is defined by Gourevitch 16:

Alex Gourevitch (Assistant Professor of Political Science at Brown University). “Quitting Work but Not the Job: Liberty and the Right to Strike.” American Political Science Association Vol. 14, No. 2. June 2016. JDN. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/perspectives-on-politics/article/abs/quitting-work-but-not-the-job-liberty-and-the-right-to-strike/27B690FEDDBCF002FB20FB50E852D6A3>

The right to strike is peculiar. It is not a right to quit. The right to quit is part of freedom of contract and the mirror of employment-at-will. Workers may quit when they no longer wish to work for an employer; employers may fire their employees when they no longer want to employ them. Either of those acts severs the contractual relationship and the two parties are no longer assumed to be in any relationship at all. The right to strike, however, assumes the continuity of the very relationship that is suspended. Workers on strike refuse to work but do not claim to have left the job. After all, the whole point of a strike is that it is a collective work stoppage, not a collective quitting of the job. This is the feature of the strike that has marked it out from other forms of social action.

#### Unconditional is defined by Merriam-Webster as:

“Unconditional.” Merriam-Webster Dictionary. No Date. URL: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/unconditional

un·​con·​di·​tion·​al | \ ˌən-kən-ˈdish-nəl  , -ˈdi-shə-nᵊl \ Definition of unconditional: 1: not conditional or limited : ABSOLUTE, UNQUALIFIED unconditional surrender unconditional love; 2: UNCONDITIONED sense 2

## Framing

#### I value upholding governmental obligations. A just government has several obligations to its citizens, as Wenar explains in 2021:

Wenar, Leif, "John Rawls", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/rawls/>.

Because there are many reasonable interpretations of “free,” “equal” and “fair,” there will be many liberal political conceptions of justice. Since all the members of this family interpret the same three fundamental ideas, however, all liberal political conceptions of justice will share certain basic features: 1. A liberal political conception of justice will ascribe to all citizens familiar individual rights and liberties, such as rights of free expression, liberty of conscience, and free choice of occupation; 2. A political conception will give special priority to these rights and liberties, especially over demands to further the general good (e.g., to increase national wealth) or perfectionist values (e.g., to promote a particular view of human flourishing); 3. A political conception will assure for all citizens sufficient all-purpose means to make effective use of their freedoms. These abstract features must, Rawls says, be realized in certain kinds of institutions. He mentions several demands that all liberal conceptions of justice will make on institutions: a decent distribution of income and wealth; fair opportunities for all citizens, especially in education and training; government as the employer of last resort; basic health care for all citizens; and public financing of elections.

#### To best satisfy governmental obligations, governments must look to consequences that best promote the common good. Tuckness 2020:

Tuckness, Alex, "Locke’s Political Philosophy", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/locke-political/>.

A second part of the debate focuses on ends rather than institutions. Locke states in the Two Treatises that the power of the Government is limited to the public good. It is a power “that hath no other end but preservation” and therefore cannot justify killing, enslaving, or plundering the citizens (2.135). Libertarians like Nozick (1974) read this as stating that governments exist only to protect people from infringements on their rights. An alternate interpretation, advanced by Tuckness (2002b, 2008a), draws attention to the fact that in the following sentences the formulation of natural law that Locke focuses on is a positive one, that “as much as possible” mankind is to be preserved. On this second reading, government is limited to fulfilling the purposes of natural law, but these include positive goals as well as negative rights. On this view, the power to promote the common good extends to actions designed to increase population, improve the military, strengthen the economy and infrastructure, and so on, provided these steps are indirectly useful to the goal of preserving the society. This would explain why Locke, in the *Letter*, describes government promotion of “arms, riches, and multitude of citizens” as the proper remedy for the danger of foreign attack (*Works* 6: 42).

#### Thus, my criterion is maximized societal welfare. Prefer for 2 reasons:

#### Actor Specificity – the actor of the resolution is a just government ought to do, so the criterion that best measures the obligations of a just government should be used. Just governments have an obligation to first and foremost preserve societal welfare for 3 reasons:

#### Trade-offs – governments must consider trade-offs between policies based on the consequences

#### States lack individual wills and intentions because their policies are representative of collective action amongst citizens.

#### No act omission distinction – people can individually choose to act or not act, but governments cannot because by choosing to not act to stop something, then implicitly approve its continuation

#### Weighing– consequences are necessary to explain the degrees of wrongness of actions. It is worse to break a promise to take someone to the hospital than it is to break a promise to have lunch with a friend because of the consequences.

#### I have 2 additional observations:

#### Rights inherently cannot be unconditional. All rights in a just society are conditioned on whether the right contributes to societal welfare. For example, one’s right to free speech is limited when that free speech has dangerous consequences for others, such as shouting fire in a crowded theater, speech inciting violence, or hate speech. The same is true of ALL rights – they must at some point trade off with each other.

#### There are no empirical examples of the aff because there is no nation in the world that currently recognizes an unconditional right to strike. Thus, you should be skeptical of any empirical claims made by the aff because they are unlikely to be grounded in solid, experimental research.

## Contention 1 – A Right to Strike Shouldn’t be Unconditional

#### An unconditional right to strike is detrimental to societal welfare because it allows workers crucial to public safety to strike, such as health workers. Gruber and Kleiner 12:

(Gruber, Jonathan and Kleiner, Samule A,. February 2012.” Do Strikes Kill? Evidence from New York State.” American Economic Journal: Economic Policy 2012, https://dspace.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.1/71824/Gruber\_Do%20Strikes.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y)

Hospitals now represent one of the largest union sectors of the US economy, and there is particular concern about the impact of strikes on patient welfare. We analyze the effects of nurses’ strikes in hospitals on patient outcomes in New York State. Controlling for hospital specific heterogeneity, the results show that nurses’ strikes increase in-hospital mortality by 18.3 percent and 30-day readmission by 5.7 percent for patients admitted during a strike, with little change in patient demographics, disease severity or treatment intensity. The results suggest that hospitals functioning during nurses’ strikes do so at a lower quality of patient care.

**The impacts of hospital strikes aren’t avoidable on the part of the employer. Gruber and Kleiner 12:**

(Gruber, Jonathan and Kleiner, Samule A,. February 2012.” Do Strikes Kill? Evidence from New York State.” American Economic Journal: Economic Policy 2012, https://dspace.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.1/71824/Gruber\_Do%20Strikes.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y)

We find that patients with particularly nursing-intensive conditions are more susceptible to these strike effects, and that hospitals hiring replacement workers perform no better during these strikes than those that do not hire substitute employees

#### Some conditions on a right to strike are necessary to ensure societal welfare – remember that NO RIGHT is unconditional, and that currently, all rights are conditioned on their benefit to society. Thus, a just government shouldn’t recognize an unconditional right to strike, but rather some form of a conditional right to strike to ensure that all citizens will not be without essential services, Malebye 14:

Cynthia Dithato Malebye (Department of Mercantile Law, University of Pretoria). “The Right to Strike in Respect of Employment Relationships and Collective Bargaining.” Dissertation. University of Pretoria, April 2014. JDN. <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/43163/Malebye_Right_2014.pdf?sequence=1>

Although the right to strike is enshrined in section 23(2)(c) of the Constitution, that right is not absolute and may be limited in terms of a law of general application to the extent that such limitation may be reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society. It is widely recognised, both in this country and abroad, that in certain circumstances, it will be reasonable and justifiable to limit the right to strike, particularly in times of national emergency or in services where a strike is likely to harm the public. In some countries like Canada, France and Italy, limitations on strikes in essential services are confined to the public sector, based on the notion that it is only the government which provides services, whose absence will endanger the community’s safety. The differentiation of workers should be made according to the functions they perform and not according to the nature of their employer’s legal status. This is so because a service provided by a worker in a private sector may be more harmful to the public compared to a service provided by a public sector worker.

## Contention 2 – A Right to Strike Harms Workers

#### Strikes alone do not change worker conditions - even with a recent increase in worker leverage, strikes still aren’t always effective. Semuels 21:

Semuels, Alana. October 8, 2021. “U.S. Workers Are Realizing It’s the Perfect Time to Go on Strike.” *Time Magazine.* URL: <https://time.com/6105109/workers-strike-unemployment/> accessed on 11/5/21 by bws kat

Carolyn Jackson, the CEO of St. Vincent’s, where Deyo and hundreds of other nurses are striking, says that the nurses are trying to push a 1:4 nurse to patient ratio that Massachusetts voters rejected by a large margin in 2018. The hospital has done research and decided its staffing is appropriate, and that its staffing ratios are in fact better than most other hospitals in the state, she says. Ryan says the hospital announced it was hiring 100 permanent replacement nurses in May during a COVID-19 surge, and that the striking nurses are insisting on getting their old positions back. That the hospital is not budging speaks to the fact that despite this increase in worker activism, workers may not gain much more power in the long run. Over the last 40 years, the government has made it much more difficult for workers to both form unions and to strike, says Heidi Shierholz, the president of the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank. Amazon was able to effectively interfere in a union vote among its workers this spring, she says, preventing the union from succeeding. Of course, a hearing officer at the National Labor Relations Board has recommended that the board throw out the results of the Amazon election and do it over, which speaks to a resurgence of government support for labor. President Joe Biden said he wanted to be “the most pro-union President leading the most pro-union administration in American history.” Labor has support at the state and local levels too: California Gov. Gavin Newsom recently signed a packet of pro-worker bills, including one that prohibits companies from imposing quotas on warehouse workers that prevent them from following health and safety law, and another that prohibits employers from paying workers with disabilities less than the state’s minimum wage. And in January, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio signed a bill that forbids fast food restaurants from firing workers unless the employer has just cause, making New York City the first jurisdiction in the country that essentially ended at-will employment. But even that support may not be enough to force a widespread change of working conditions in an economy where employees haven’t had much leverage since before the Great Recession, or earlier. Even some of the recent strikes haven’t led to workers’ desired outcomes. A five-week Nabisco strike recently ended with many of workers’ demands met, for instance, but the company still won the ability to pay weekend workers less than they do currently.

#### Additionally, strikes are financially harmful to workers because they are forced to go without pay all together or to rely on insufficient union funds. Refresh Financial 21:

2021. “What Happens To Your Pay When Your Workplace Goes On Strike?” *Refresh Financial.* URL: <https://refreshfinancial.ca/blog/financial-news-and-advice/happens-pay-workplace-goes-on-strike/> accessed on 11/5/21 by bws kat

So what happens to your income when you go on strike? Well, to put it bluntly, it stops. It stops until the strike is called off, that is. As long as you are away from your workplace for while your union is on strike, you will not be paid by your employer. Now, for many of you working hard at credit building, this can be a scary thing. It's very difficult to continue to learn how to rebuild credit when your income source has dried up. Before you lose any sleep over that, it’s important to note that most union members on strike will not go without having their basic financial needs met. Many unions have “strike funds” or “war funds” into which union members pay their dues. Depending on which union you belong to, you may get a specific strike pay amount per day or per week, or you could simply be allotted emergency funds based on need. Strike pay can be quite low compared to your regular pay with some unions paying between $200-$300 per week. For those at home counting, that’s just $800 - $1200 per month.

#### A just government should not force workers to strike, foregoing pay and often benefits, for a chance at having better working conditions. Rather, a just government should pass other policies to ensure quality working conditions for all without a requirement to strike – particularly in the cases on fair payment for work and cracking down on safety violations. Sonn and Walker 18:

Sonn, Paul and Walker, Naomi. December 3, 2018. “A State Agenda for America’s Workers.” *Economic Policy Institute.* URL: <https://www.epi.org/publication/state-agenda-for-americas-workers/> accessed on 11.5.21 by bws kat

2. Get States Back in the Business of Fighting Wage Theft and Enforcing Other Worker Protections - Every week millions of workers are cheated when employers short their paychecks, force them to work off the clock, fail to pay even the minimum wage, or skirt employment laws by denying that they are employees. This type of wage theft is a national epidemic that robs U.S. workers and our economy of billions of dollars a year and hurts law-abiding employers that can’t compete with wage chiselers. But in many states, the agencies responsible for cracking down on employers that cheat their workers have been neglected and defunded. Governors and legislatures need to get their states back in the business of fighting wage theft and enforcing other worker protections, ranging from combatting independent contractor misclassification to preventing employers from defrauding the workers’ compensation system. Key best practices for restoring effective enforcement include: First and foremost, increasing labor agency budgets to [ensure adequate staffing and enforcement capacity](https://www.politico.com/story/2018/02/18/minimum-wage-not-enforced-investigation-409644); Developing [strategic enforcement](https://www.dol.gov/whd/resources/strategicEnforcement.pdf) priorities, in [partnership](https://s27147.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Enforcement-of-15-dollar-minimum-wage-in-Minneapolis-requires-strategic-partnerships.pdf) with [worker organizations](https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1594&context=uclf); Cracking down on [retaliation](https://s27147.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/WinningWageJustice2011.pdf) against workers who speak up; Reviewing and updating regulations and administrative guidance—for example, to provide clear guidance on business’s responsibilities for contract workers, as detailed below.

#### Sonn and Walker 2 continues:

Sonn, Paul and Walker, Naomi. December 3, 2018. “A State Agenda for America’s Workers.” *Economic Policy Institute.* URL: <https://www.epi.org/publication/state-agenda-for-americas-workers/> accessed on 11.5.21 by bws kat

10. Protect Workers’ Health and Safety Nearly 50 years after Congress adopted the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) requiring employers to provide safe workplaces, more than 5,000 U.S. workers are killed on the job every year, and nearly three million are seriously injured. Many low-wage jobs are dangerous jobs, including jobs in the poultry and meat industries, agriculture, construction, and home care, where workers suffer much higher rates of serious job injuries. Yet the Trump Administration is rolling back workplace health and safety protections, leaving workers even more vulnerable. Adopt Responsible State Health and Safety Contracting. Governors and state legislatures should fight these rollbacks by promoting model protections for workers. For example, Massachusetts is considering a model responsible contracting law for health and safety. It requires contractors and subcontractors bidding on state-funded projects to submit their health and safety violations histories—and bars contracting with companies with poor records. Legislatures and governors using their executive authority over contracting should adopt this model. Stronger State Workplace Protections on Heat Exposure. With climate change, heat exposure is emerging as a very serious workplace health hazard in sectors from agriculture to day labor. But currently there are few standards or protections. Governors and legislatures should adopt new standards and programs to provide stronger protections for workers exposed to dangerous levels of heat, especially farm workers but also workers in construction, manufacturing, and warehousing—all sectors where workers of color and immigrants are concentrated. Strengthen Workers’ Compensation Laws. Over the past two decades, state legislatures have engaged in a race to the bottom by hollowing out their workers’ compensation laws, resulting in unfair, weak, or nonexistent benefits for injured workers. Governors and legislatures should work together to prevent any further weakening of benefits and coverage–especially since workers’ compensation premiums and benefits are now at a 30 year low. Key workers’ compensation reforms that are needed in most states include: (1) strong anti-retaliation protections for injured workers; (2) insurance coverage for prompt medical care in contested cases; (3) extending coverage to all workers, including domestic workers, farm workers, and temporary workers; and (4) ensuring that workers have the right to choose their own doctor.

#### For all of these reasons, I am proud to negate. Now, let’s go over my opponent’s case.

# Blocks

### Inequality

#### Unions don’t solve inequality – they’re too weak and tons of alt causes

Epstein 20 [Richard A. Epstein Peter and Kirsten Bedford Senior Fellow @ the Hoover Institution. "The Decline Of Unions Is Good News." https://www.hoover.org/research/decline-unions-good-news]

So what then could justify this inefficient provision? One common argument is that unions help reduce the level of income inequality by offering union members a high living wage, as seen in the golden age of the 1950s. But that argument misfires on several fronts. Those high union wages could not survive in the face of foreign competition or new nonunionized firms. The only way a union can provide gains for its members is to extract some fraction of the profits that firms enjoy when they hold monopoly positions.

When tariff barriers are lowered and domestic markets are deregulated, as with the airlines and telecommunications industries, the size of union gains go down. Thus the sharp decline in union membership from 35 percent in both 1945 and 1954 to about 15 percent in 1985 led to no substantial increase in the fraction of wealth earned by the top 10 percent of the economy during that period. However, the income share of the top ten percent rose to about 40 percent over the next 15 years as union membership fell to below 10 percent by 2000.

But don’t be fooled—that 5 percent change in union membership cannot drive widespread inequality for the entire population, which is also affected by a rise in the knowledge economy as well as a general aging of the population. The far more powerful distributive effects are likely to be those from nonunion workers whose job prospects within a given firm have been compromised by higher wages to union workers.

It is even less clear that the proposals of progressives like Sanders, Warren, and Buttigieg to revamp the labor rules would reverse the decline of unions. Not only is the American labor market more competitive, but the work place is no longer dominated by large industrial assembly lines where workers remain in their same position for years. Today, workforces are far more heterogeneous and labor turnover is far higher. It is therefore much more difficult for a union to organize a common front among workers with divergent interests.

Employers, too, have become much more adept at resisting unionization in ways that no set of labor laws can capture. It is no accident that plants are built in states like Tennessee and Mississippi, and that facilities are designed in ways to make it more difficult to picket or shut down. None of these defensive maneuvers would be necessary if, as I have long advocated, firms could post notices announcing that they will not hire union members, as they could do before the passage of the NLRA.

## War

#### NO MAJOR POWER WAR --- INTERDEPENDENCE AND APPEASMENT PREVENT ESCALATION

Mueller, 21

(John; February 17; Adjunct Professor of Political Science and Senior Research Scientist at the Mershon Center for International Security Studies; The Stupidity of War: American Foreign Policy and the Case for Complacency, “The Rise of China, the Assertiveness of Russia, and the Antics of Iran,” Ch. 6)

Complacency, Appeasement, Self-destruction, and the New Cold War It could be argued that the policies proposed here to deal with the international problems, whether real or imagined, presented by China, Russia, and Iran constitute exercises not only in complacency, but also in appeasement. That argument would be correct. As discussed in the Prologue to this book, appeasement can work to avoid military conflict as can be seen in the case of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. As also discussed there, appeasement has been given a bad name by the experience with Hitler in 1938. Hitlers are very rare, but there are some resonances today in Russia’s Vladimir Putin and China’s Xi Jinping. Both are shrewd, determined, authoritarian, and seem to be quite intelligent, and both are fully in charge, are surrounded by sychophants, and appear to have essentially unlimited tenure in office. Moreover, both, like Hitler in the 1930s, are appreciated domestically for maintaining a stable political and economic environment. However, unlike Hitler, both run trading states and need a stable and essentially congenial international environment to flourish.128 Most importantly, except for China’s claim to Taiwan, neither seems to harbor Hitler-like dreams of extensive expansion by military means. Both are leading their countries in an illiberal direction which will hamper economic growth while maintaining a kleptocratic system. But this may be acceptable to populations enjoying historically high living standards and fearful of less stable alternatives. Both do seem to want to overcome what they view as past humiliations – ones going back to the opium war of 1839 in the case of China and to the collapse of the Soviet empire and then of the Soviet Union in 1989–91 in the case of Russia. Primarily, both seem to want to be treated with respect and deference. Unlike Hitler’s Germany, however, both seem to be entirely appeasable. That scarcely seems to present or represent a threat. The United States, after all, continually declares itself to be the indispensable nation. If the United States is allowed to wallow in such self-important, childish, essentially meaningless, and decidedly fatuous proclamations, why should other nations be denied the opportunity to emit similar inconsequential rattlings? If that constitutes appeasement, so be it. If the two countries want to be able to say they now preside over a “sphere of influence,” it scarcely seems worth risking world war to somehow keep them from doing so – and if the United States were substantially disarmed, it would not have the capacity to even try. If China and Russia get off on self-absorbed pretensions about being big players, that should be of little concern – and their success rate is unlikely to be any better than that of the United States. Charap and Colton observe that “The Kremlin’s idee fixe that Russia needs to be the leader of a pack of post-Soviet states in order to be taken seriously as a global power broker is more of a feel-good mantra than a fact-based strategy, and it irks even the closest of allies.” And they further suggest that The towel should also be thrown in on the geo-ideational shadow-boxing over the Russian assertion of a sphere of influence in post-Soviet Eurasia and the Western opposition to it. Would either side be able to specify what precisely they mean by a regional sphere of influence? How would it differ from, say, US relations with the western-hemisphere states or from Germany’s with its EU neighbors?129 Applying the Gingrich gospel, then, it certainly seems that, although China, Russia, and Iran may present some “challenges” to US policy, there is little or nothing to suggest a need to maintain a large US military force-in-being to keep these countries in line. Indeed, all three monsters seem to be in some stage of self-destruction or descent into stagnation – not, perhaps, unlike the Communist “threat” during the Cold War. Complacency thus seems to be a viable policy. However, it may be useful to look specifically at a couple of worst-case scenarios: an invasion of Taiwan by China (after it builds up its navy more) and an invasion o f the Baltic states of Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia by Russia. It is wildly unlikely that China or Russia would carry out such economically self-destructive acts: the economic lessons from Putin’s comparatively minor Ukraine gambit are clear, and these are unlikely to be lost on the Chinese. Moreover, the analyses of Michael Beckley certainly suggest that Taiwan has the conventional military capacity to concentrate the mind of, if not necessarily fully to deter, any Chinese attackers. It has “spent decades preparing for this exact contingency,” has an advanced early warning system, can call into action massed forces to defend “fortified positions on home soil with precision-guided munitions,” and has supply dumps, booby traps, an wide array of mobile missile launchers, artillery, and minelayers. In addition, there are only 14 locations that can support amphibious landing and these are, not surprisingly, well-fortified by the defenders.130 The United States may not necessarily be able to deter or stop military attacks on Taiwan or on the Baltics under its current force levels.131 And if it cannot credibly do so with military forces currently in being, it would not be able to do so, obviously, if its forces were much reduced. However, the most likely response in either eventuality would be for the United States to wage a campaign of economic and military (including naval) harassment and to support local – or partisan – resistance as it did in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion there in 1979. 132 Such a response does not require the United States to have, and perpetually to maintain, huge forces in place and at the ready to deal with such improbable eventualities. The current wariness about, and hostility toward, Russia and China is sometimes said to constitute “a new Cold War.”133 There are, of course, considerable differences. In particular, during the Cold War, the Soviet Union – indeed the whole international Communist movement – was under the sway of a Marxist theory that explicitly and determinedly advocated the destruction of capitalism and probably of democracy, and by violence to the degree required. Neither Russia nor China today sports such cosmic goals or is enamored of such destructive methods. However, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the United States was strongly inclined during the Cold War massively to inflate the threat that it imagined the Communist adversary to present. The current “new Cold War” is thus in an important respect quite a bit like the old one: it is an expensive, substantially militarized, and often hysterical campaign to deal with threats that do not exist or are likely to selfdestruct.134 It may also be useful to evaluate terms that are often bandied about in considerations within foreign policy circles about the rise of China, the assertiveness of Russia, and the antics of Iran. High among these is “hegemony.” Sorting through various definitions, Simon Reich and Richard Ned Lebow array several that seem to capture the essence of the concept: domination, controlling leadership, or the ability to shape international rules according to the hegemon’s own interests. Hegemony, then, is an extreme word suggesting supremacy, mastery, preponderant influence, and full control. Hegemons force others to bend to their will whether they like it or not. Reich and Lebow also include a mellower designation applied by John Ikenberry and Charles Kupchan in which a hegemon is defined as an entity that has the ability to establish a set of norms that others willingly embrace.135 But this really seems to constitute an extreme watering-down of the word and suggests opinion leadership or entrepreneurship and success at persuasion, not hegemony. Moreover, insofar as they carry meaning, the militarized application of American primacy and hegemony to order the world has often been a fiasco.136 Indeed, it is impressive that the hegemon, endowed by definition by what Reich and Lebow aptly call a grossly disproportionate military capacity, has had such a miserable record of military achievement since 1945 – an issue discussed frequently in this book.137 Reich and Lebow argue that it is incumbent on IR scholars to cut themselves loose from the concept of hegemony.138 It seems even more important for the foreign policy establishment to do so. There is also absurdity in getting up tight over something as vacuous as the venerable “sphere of influence” concept (or conceit). The notion that world affairs are a process in which countries scamper around the world seeking to establish spheres of influence is at best decidedly unhelpful and at worst utterly misguided. But the concept continues to be embraced in some quarters as if it had some palpable meaning. For example, in early 2017, the august National Intelligence Council opined that “Geopolitical competition is on the rise as China and Russia seek to exert more sway over their neighboring regions and promote an order in which US influence does not dominate.”139 Setting aside the issue of the degree to which American “influence” could be said to “dominate” anywhere (we still wait, for example, for dominated Mexico supinely to pay for a wall to seal off its self-infatuated neighbor’s southern border), it doesn’t bloody well matter whether China or Russia has, or seems to have, a “sphere of influence” someplace or other. More importantly, the whole notion is vapid and essentially meaningless. Except perhaps in Gilbert and Sullivan’s Iolanthe. When members of the House of Lords fail to pay sufficient respect to a group of women they take to be members of a ladies’ seminary who are actually fairies, their queen, outraged at the Lords’ collected effrontery, steps forward, proclaims that she happens to be an “influential fairy,” and then, with a few passes of her wand, brushes past the Lords’ pleas (“no!” “mercy!” “spare us!” and “horror!”), and summarily issues several edicts: a young man of her acquaintance shall be inducted into their House, every bill that gratifies his pleasure shall be passed, members shall be required to sit through the grouse and salmon season, and high office shall be obtainable by competitive examination. Now, that’s influence. In contrast, on December 21, 2017, when the United States sought to alter the status of Jerusalem, the United Nations General Assembly voted to repudiate the US stand in a nearly unanimous vote that included many US allies. Now, that’s not influence. In fact, to push this point perhaps to an extreme, if we are entering an era in which economic motivations became paramount and in which military force is not deemed a sensible method for pursuing wealth, the idea of “influence” would become obsolete because, in principle, pure economic actors do not care much about influence. They care about getting rich. (As Japan and Germany have found, however, influence, status, and prestige tend to accompany the accumulation of wealth, but this is just an ancillary effect.) Suppose the president of a company could choose between two stories to tell the stockholders. One message would be, “We enjoy great influence in the industry. When we talk everybody listens. Our profits are nil.” The other would be, “No one in the industry pays the slightest attention to us or ever asks our advice. We are, in fact, the butt of jokes in the trade. We are making money hand over fist.” There is no doubt about which story would most thoroughly warm the stockholders’ hearts.