Faction Role Sheet: Small Government

You are a member of the small government. You are a proponent of the ideas found in “Distributive Justice,” by Robert Nozick, as well as “Reasons and Evolution” and “Cosmos and Taxis” by Friedrich Hayek. These texts are the foundation of your beliefs, your thinking, and your behavior. Sometimes it may be obvious how Nozick’s and Hayek’s principles require you to speak and act. Other times, however, it may be unclear how to apply these principles to current political issues. In such cases, you’ll need to decide for yourself what the arguments advanced by Nozick and Hayek require you to say or do. So long as your speech and actions don’t contradict these principles, you will be living up to your role.

Nozick and Hayek endorse the notion that government intervention or ‘interference’ in individuals’ affairs should be quite limited. In Nozick’s case, this follows straightforwardly from his view that we each possess a robust set of rights. So, when the state infringes on those rights, it acts unjustly. To Nozick’s way of thinking, the proper role of the state is limited to protecting these individual rights, since a more expansive state will wind up systematically infringing on individual rights. Even familiar governmental interventions such as taxation and basic schemes of redistribution are objectionable on this view, since there is no route by which the state can require property or resources be redistributed without interfering with the free exercise of one’s rights to property or self-ownership.

While Hayek also endorses robust rights to property, he offers an additional line of argument against expansive government concerns the consequences of government interference. Specifically, he argues that since we do not, and cannot, know all that is required to properly predict the consequences of a given policy or governmental intervention, we cannot reasonably expect that governmental interventions will produce the results we desire. If Hayek is right, then even if (e.g.) there is nothing wrong *in principle* with the government redistributing resources to help the needy, specific schemes of redistribution to help the needy might nevertheless be objectionable given that we cannot reasonably expect both that the needy will be successfully helped and that others will not be unexpectedly made objectionably worse off in the process.

Both the uniform and the difference liberal factions can agree with you that individual rights are important and concede that it can be difficult to predict precisely what results a given governmental intervention will produce without its being the case that they agree with your primary conviction that limited government is best. Both factions explicitly endorse what are, to your way of thinking, highly intrusive and unjust impositions on the rights of individuals. Looking beyond the other factions to the indeterminates, you are unlikely to find others as strongly committed to limited government as you are, though you may find natural allies on specific issues likely to arise in play, including welfare expansion, immigration policy, and minority rights.

You are generally opposed to the redistribution of resources, and so object to increased welfare provisions, since they necessarily require government interference for the purposes of resource distribution. This form of interference imposes on the rights of individual citizens, but you are also skeptical that redistributing resources by interfering with the free market (broadly construed) will produce the benefits its proponents claim.

This position will put you at odds with uniform and difference liberals, who both support the redistribution of resources. So, defeating proposals to expand welfare programs will require you to ally with as many Indeterminates as you are able. While some may not agree with your views about individual liberties, they might be more amenable to your conviction that centrally-planned welfare programs are unlikely to succeed in the ways their supporters predict. While you are strongly opposed to measures that increase the magnitude or scope of welfare provisions, you might find them exceedingly difficult to defeat. If it appears that proposals expanding welfare benefits will pass, then your goal should be to ensure that the only benefits that pass are impartial, applying to all citizens equally—as opposed to benefits that selectively benefit particular disadvantaged groups.

On immigration, you are free to support open borders. As with welfare programs, closed borders impose on individual liberties. Specifically, closed border policies, and their enforcement, interfere not only with freedom of association, but also with exchanges of resources that would otherwise be free. So, to the extent that closed borders result in such interference, you find them objectionable.

While you are willing to accept open borders, the difference liberal faction will likely object to them, or at least will be willing to tolerate only modest increases in some specific forms of immigration. In contrast, the uniform liberals may be more sanguine about open borders. Even so, they are likely to object to levels of immigration that overtax the government’s capacity for guaranteeing the sort of basic liberties they value.

Just as you object to expanded welfare benefits, you oppose expanded minority rights. Like Nozick (\*\*and Hayek\*\*), you regard each person’s rights as equally important, and you reject any provision that would restrict the rights of some for the benefit of others. You likewise reject to provisions that would expand the rights of specific groups (minority or otherwise) and not others.

Your stance on the issue of minority rights will put you into conflict with the difference liberal faction, who will strongly advocate for expanded minority rights. You may find support for your position among the uniform liberals and Indeterminates, however, so the difference liberal’s enthusiasm for this cause need not win out over your strong objections to it. As with your approach to finding allies to oppose expanded welfare provisions, you might find that others are amenable to your sense that increasing minority rights may not deliver the social benefits that its advocates claim, even if those potential allies don’t share your particular views about rights.

It should be clear that when responding to these three issues (welfare programs, minority rights, and immigration policies) your overarching concern will be the degree to which autonomous individuals, citizen or not, are subjected to government interference. Generally, your aim is to eliminate government interference where possible, and to minimize it where eliminating it isn’t viable. With this in mind, a potential, if ambitious, goal would be to get the assembly to pass a proposal that enhances protections for the individual rights of all, protections of the sort that would preclude the sort of interference that you find fundamentally objectionable. Exactly what form these protections take is up to you, but it would be valuable for them to be very clearly articulated, such that any subsequent proposals passed by the assembly cannot threaten the individual rights you seek to protect. In deciding how to design this sort of proposal, you would do well to consider the primary concerns of both the uniform and difference liberals, and to acquaint yourself with some of the proposals or values various indeterminates endorse.

A fourth issue of concern to you concerns the role of speaker. The first thing the assembly will do, before even its first session, will be to hold a vote to determine who will occupy this role. As the speaker determines which resolutions are voted on and when, this is a position of power, and it will only benefit your faction if one of you becomes speaker. As soon as you finish reading this role sheet you should consult with your faction about which of you will stand to run for the role of speaker. That person should then prepare a short speech making the case for why he or she would be a fair-minded and benevolent speaker, which they will need to give in the last class before the first game session. Because other factions are likely to nominate their own candidates, the main goal of the speech should be to convince indeterminates of your case.  
  
Note that some roles may not know that the speaker will be elected, and you will be giving up an advantage if you publicize this in advance. You should therefore not discuss the election of the speaker

In general, you will need to feel out what type of proposals have the best chance of being passed and make their passage your goal. This is far from assured: other roles will have their own proposals that they will want to add to the agenda. You will need to build support for your initiative by forging alliances with indeterminates and, where possible, with members of the other factions. Victory in defending individual rights can be had through a sound strategy, if you take the time to understand the reasons other factions and roles in the game can accept.

Of course, topics other than immigration, minority rights, and social welfare may also come up in play. Many indeterminates, for example, have proposals they would like to see passed that might be acceptable to you. It is worth considering whether or not you can gain the support of those players by offering them your own. Lastly, remember that any resolution before the legislature can be amended or modified, which in some cases may allow you to support a motion that initially appears unacceptable.

**Victory Objectives**

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| **Points** | **Objective** |
| 1/right | The assembly passes a proposal enshrining an additional right consistent with your philosophy, after a member of your faction gives a speech demonstrating why the measure is consistent with your philosophy |
| 1 | The assembly reduces welfare programs |
| 2 | The assembly passes a resolution opening the borders |
| 1 | The assembly passes a resolution moderately increasing immigration (if borders are not opened) |
| -1 | Minority Protections increase |
| -1 | The assembly increases welfare provisions |

**Primary Texts**

Nozick, Robert. “Distributive Justice,” *Anarchy State and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974): 149-82.

Hayek, Friedrich (1974). “Reason and Evolution,” “Cosmos and Taxis,” *Law, Legislation and Liberty Volume I: Rules and Order* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 8-54.