

A Democratic Right to Political Strikes

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A Democratic Right to Political Strikes

- a rationale for political strikes

A Democratic Right to Political Strikes

- a rationale for political strikes
- and a moral defense

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- a rationale for political strikes
- and a moral defense
- and some considerations for regulation

Realist Democracy

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- general lack of influence for ordinary citizens
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- this can be shown in empirical studies
 - policy generally is only weakly responsive to public opinion
 - rich people wield disproportionate influence
- in the extreme: objectionable rule!

Realist Democracy II

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- not more participation!
- not less formal rules!
- better ways for regular people to exercise influence
- in order to defend themselves against infringements on their democratic rights

One Possibility: Political Strikes



Figure 1: The 2017 General Strike in Catalunya

What's a Political Strike?

- collective refusal to work

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What's a Political Strike?

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- “quitting work but not the job” (Gourevitch)
- with political demands
- in a direct conflict with the state, not the employers

Arguing for a Right to Political Strikes

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 - a right to political strikes has a valuable function

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- two strands of argument
- ① political strikes as a permissible defense of democratic rights
 - because rights conventionally come with permission to defend them
- ② political strikes as a valuable democratic institution
 - a right to political strikes has a valuable function
 - put a limit on elite capture

Arguing for a Right to Political Strikes II

- defensive means have to be:

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 - effective

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 - necessary

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- defensive means have to be:
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Effectiveness

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Effectiveness

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- does it achieve the goal?
- withholding labour exercises pressure on politicians
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 - makes politicians unpopular
 - limits politicians' options
- empirically we find some effectiveness

Necessity

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Necessity

- necessary to defend democratic rights?
 - are there any less invasive means available?
- the realist assessment puts conventional means in doubt
- elite capture blocks democratic paths
- but, still, some other means should have been tried first

Proportionality

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- depends on what we think about the threat

Proportionality

- proportional to the threat to democratic rights?
- does it involve harms of similar gravity?
- depends on what we think about the threat
- and thus the risk of undue escalation

Undue escalation?



Figure 2: Cooperative ants

Undue escalation?



Too Antagonistic an Institution?

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- but be realistic about the point of comparison
 - its efficiency
 - in how far it realizes democratic values
- then the more antagonistic version is not unattractive!

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Liability

- target those liable for the threat?
- the wrong people seem to bear the costs of resistance in this instance
- employers are harmed by the political strike
- but they are not the addressees of the demands
- isn't this unjustifiable?

Liability: the Defensive Ethics View

- in some cases, employers might be liable!

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Liability: the Defensive Ethics View

- in some cases, employers might be liable!
- and then it's justifiable to harm them
- otherwise it seems impermissible

Liability: a Comparative View

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- think about the distribution of harms in a democratic system
- capture burdens those who are not well-resourced and organized
- but that is burdening those who are already worse-off!
- political strikes largely burden the better off
- it seems justifiable to let strong shoulders bear democratic burdens

Regulating Political Strikes

- ensure *ultima ratio* status

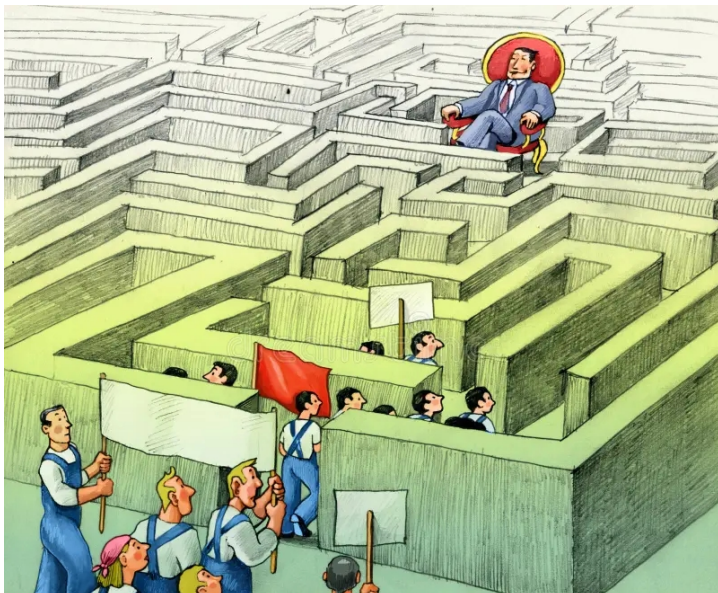
Regulating Political Strikes

- ensure *ultima ratio* status
- ensure proportionality

Regulating Political Strikes

- ensure *ultima ratio* status
- ensure proportionality
- distribute harms properly

Regulating Political Strikes II



Recap

- there is evidence that democratic politics has severe flaws

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- a way for regular people to exercise influence: political strike

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- but difficult to properly regulate

Recap

- there is evidence that democratic politics has severe flaws
- a way for regular people to exercise influence: political strike
- a defensive mechanism
- should follow proportionality and necessity
- but difficult to properly regulate
- a fair distribution of the costs of democracy

The end

Thank you for your attention.