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The Strenth of the Pack is the Wolf  
Resolutional Kritik by Mark Csoros



Most LDers view Resolutional Kritiks (or Critiques, if you don’t like Greek spelling) a lot like they would view a unicorn: rarely seen, super awesome, and possessing the capability to stab and trample you. The truth is that the RezK strategy is a more like a horse: powerful and helpful, but if you approach from the wrong side it’ll kick you. However, with proper care and feeding, a domesticated Kritik can be surprisingly effective. Let’s walk through it.

Most of the time, on negative, we argue that one side of the resolution is better than the other. We say that the private property side of the seesaw outweighs the public needs side of the seesaw. But we can also say that the seesaw should be evenly balanced, or that putting these ideas on a seesaw is wrong, and private property and public needs should go play on the swing set together. When we use the second strategy, we call it a Resolutional Kritik. We’re arguing that the fundamental assumption of the resolution is flawed, and that we can’t truly value one side above the other. Because we can’t value one side higher, the only option we have left is to vote negative, and reject the entire idea of the resolution.

In this particular instance, you’re going to argue that what the public needs are strong protections for private property rights, and that private property rights benefit the public. It’s a surprisingly obvious idea once you begin to think about it. China has very poor protections on private property. China’s public isn’t very well off. America has very strong protections on private property. Our public is pretty affluent. Try this with other countries, like Cuba vs. the U.K., or Mexico vs. Canada. With very few exceptions, the nations that value property rights are better at meeting the needs of their people.

Rather than just state that fact, we need to explain why that’s true. To do so, this case has 3 supporting contentions, all of which contain one key idea supported by a political theorist and/or philosopher. Contention 1 talks about the social contract, and how governments only exist because individual people voluntarily live under that government. Contention 2 discusses the foundation of property, and how our ownership of ourselves leads to the ownership of our things. Contention 3 shows how governments that care for the needs of the public must value private property rights, and presents the application of capitalist nations. Contention 4 serves as the impact and summary of all your argumentation.

As far as direct refutation goes, your goal should be to make aff refute you, not the other way around. For the sake of this idea, I didn’t include definitions, because this idea should work using aff’s terms. Operationally, this case defines “Needs of the Public” to be “Structures or rules that benefit the general populace” and “Private Property Rights” to be “Exclusive ownership and rights over physical or intangible objects.” If the aff definitions stray too far from those baselines, I would recommend redefining the terms.

The main strategy to disprove a RezK is to simply bring up examples of conflict. Expect your opponent’s 1AR to skip over your contentions, and try to overload you with counter-applications of conflict in the resolution. You can respond in two ways: First, just kill their applications, and re-stablish that private property rights and public needs are complementary, not conflicting. Secondly, fall back on the logic and support in your contentions. There aren’t many responses to Lockean, Madisonian, or Aristotelian government ethics. Madison, Locke, and Aristotle are counted among the great thinkers because what they say makes sense, and because it’s right. If there are still applications that you can’t counter, you can simply collapse and outweigh. Admit that just like in spelling, there may be rare “worst case scenario” instances of conflict, but the rules hold up despite exceptions.

Mainly, remember to stay logical. Everyone agrees that private property rights are usually a good thing, so that link is pretty much created for you. All that’s left is to prove how good things benefit the public. That isn’t a huge leap of logic, but it is a new way to think about the resolution. Keep reminding your judge that “we the people” make up “the public,” and so the strength of the pack really is the wolf.

The Strenth of the Pack is the Wolf  
Resolutional Kritik

Rudyard Kipling’s classic *The* *Jungle Book* is a great work of literature, and the latest movie adaptation was, too. When it’s read or watched allegorically, it has some great metaphors about how the world works. It asks questions about what exactly societies are, how they’re made up, and how individuals factor into the equation. In essence, *The Jungle Book* deals with the questions we have to ask ourselves in this debate round, and the conclusion Kipling comes to is the same one that we ought to come to:

“The strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

In other words, we can’t differentiate between the benefit of individuals and the benefit of societies. Because caring for the Needs of the Public requires that we protect Private Property Rights, I stand opposed to today’s resolution.

Most debaters, when they’re in my position, will oppose the resolution by saying that Private Property Rights are more valuable than Public Needs, but this round will be a little different. Today, we’ll see how it’s impossible to make a decision about whether or not the Needs of the Public should be valued above Private Property Rights, because those two things are both mutually dependent and non-exclusive.

We’ll see why that’s true as we go throughout my contentions, starting with…

# Contention 1: The public is made of individuals

Just like we saw in the opening, we can’t separate people from the government they live under and the society they live in. The social contract theory shows how people agree to join together for the purpose of better living. John Locke — the political philosopher responsible for developing the idea of the Social Contract — writes:

“Men being, as has been said, by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate and subjected to the political power of another without his own consent, which is done by agreeing with other men, to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living”.[[2]](#footnote-2)

This idea of the public being made up of people is further supported by the definition of Public. As defined by Oxford Dictionary, the Public is:

“Ordinary people in general; the community”[[3]](#footnote-3)

So there shouldn’t be a division or dichotomy between the public and individuals. Individuals make up the public, just like my eyes and my mouth and my nose make up my face. The second key thing we need to know about the resolution is found in…

# Contention 2: Property comes from People

Let’s hear from John Locke once more, as he writes about why property is something that we value. He says:

“that though the things of Nature are given in common, yet Man (by being Master of himself, and Proprietor of his own Person, and the actions or Labour of it) had still in himself the great Foundation of Property; and that which made up the great part of what he applied to the Support or Comfort of his being, when Invention and Arts had improved the conveniencies of Life, was perfectly his own, and did not belong in common to others.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

Because you and I own ourselves, we own the things that are created when we work. We also own things like our liberty (to create things), and our lives, (so we have the ability to create). As we’ll see in our third contention, protecting property is something that the public needs.

# Contention 3: Property protection is a public good

James Madison, in an article titled “Property” wrote:

“That is not a just government, nor is property secure under it, where arbitrary restrictions, exemptions, and monopolies deny to part of its citizens that free use of their faculties, and free choice of their occupations, which not only constitute their property in the general sense of the word; but are the means of acquiring property strictly so called. What must be the spirit of legislation where a manufacturer of linen cloth is forbidden to bury his own child in a linen shroud, in order to favour his eighbor who manufactures woolen cloth.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Madison is saying that a just government, one that is acting in the service of the people, is going to protect private property rights. Arbitrary restrictions on how people can use their property aren’t helpful to the public. What the public needs is strong protection for private property rights.

The philosopher Aristotle says the same thing when he writes:

Property should be in a certain sense common, but, as a general rule, private; for, when everyone has a distinct interest, men will not complain of one another, and they will make more progress, because every one will be attending to his own business.”*[[6]](#footnote-6)*

Let’s look at an example in our…

## Application: Capitalist Economics

Societies that value private property rights make more progress. That simple fact explains why capitalist countries like the United States, Australia, England, and Canada are better off than socialist nations like Russia and China. Western Democracies protect private property rights, and so they have high levels of productivity, per-capita income, and quality of life.[[7]](#footnote-7)

When societies value private property rights, they’re also valuing the needs of the public.

# Contention 4: No way to choose

Having to choose between public needs and private property rights is like having to choose between drinking liquids or staying hydrated. They’re the same thing. Drinking liquid hydrates you, and being hydrated means consuming liquid. When countries decide to value private property rights, the public is going to benefit. The public need isn’t filled by taking away the rights of individuals, because the public is made up of those individuals. The needs of the public are met when societies value the rights of people and choose to protect those rights.

Just governments provide for the needs of the public by protecting private property rights. Because affirming the resolution doesn’t make sense, I ask for a negative ballot.

Affirmative Response

Don’t worry. If you argue correctly, a Kritik won’t mean NEG gets all the fun, and it won’t mean your case gets forgotten. If you’re feeling up for it, try one or more of these steps:

* Step 1: In CX, ask your opponent what they run on aff.
* Step 2: Widen your eyes and look really curious.
* Step 3: Watch the intellectual gymnastics as they seek to explain how truth can be different things in different rounds.
* Step 4 (use only if you have an alumni judge or an experienced parent): Kritik them for lowering the educational value of debate through their failure to square up and debate like a gladiator like they do in other rounds.

For argumentation, I recommend making the most out of any example you can win. Even a hypothetical example of conflict that results in public needs being valued higher should be treasured like the pearl of great price. Argue that if even one example of conflict exists, we can choose one side over the other, and your side is the right one. Remember that you not only need to convince the judge that the resolution is debatable, but also that it should be affirmed.

In terms of refutation, you’re going to need to pick your battles wisely. Responses are always a struggle in 4 minute 1ARs, so economize on your words and minimize on your arguments. If you’re pressed for time (which you will be, unless you absolutely obliterate your opponent in CX) focus your attention on the third contention. Without it, Contention 4 falls, and Contentions 1 and 2 become dis-unified nuggets of wisdom without a clear persuasive purpose. Contention 3 is also the least intuitive of the four, so if there is a vulnerability in this case, it’s in 3.

Overall, maintain some semblance of your narrative. In order to Kritik the resolution, negative has to capitulate on most of your argumentation. Take advantage of those implicit concessions. Respond to the K, and then remind the judge of your killer value and rock solid contentions that neg conveniently ignored. If you can re-establish the relevancy of the resolution, your un-refuted arguments should carry the day, as long as you keep them on the flow. Have fun with this!

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2. John Locke, "Second Treatise on Government." Chapter 8. *Early Modern Texts*. Jonathan Bennet, 25 Jan. 2005. http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/locke1689a.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
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