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A Comparative Study of Libertarianism's Scale and Impact in Contemporary Democracies

Abstract: This article examines the role, scale, and ideological impact of explicitly libertarian political parties across five national contexts: the United States, Germany, Poland, Brazil, and Argentina. Even though libertarian parties remain electorally marginal in most countries, their contributions and 'added value' extends beyond vote shares or legislative representation. Through a comparative and multi-dimensional approach founded in both quantitative and qualitative analysis, the article analyses structural constraints, cultural narratives, electoral performances, media representations, and internal strategic tensions faced by these parties. The findings suggest that libertarian parties often operate more as ideological disruptors than as conventional electoral actors – shaping debates on taxation, state power, decentralisation, and personal autonomy, even when they fail to secure office. The paper argues that their influence lies less in institutional control and more in agenda-setting and discursive presence.

Key words: libertarianism, anarcho-capitalism, politics, democracy, freedom, political parties, electoral performance, ideological purity, party systems, comparative politics

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Article

In recent years, the global political landscape has undergone a series of realignments, with growing fragmentation, ideological recombination, and increased volatility across electoral systems. Amid these shifts, libertarian parties, which were long dismissed as marginal, fringe, or ideologically rigid, have begun to attract renewed scholarly and public attention. Despite their electoral presence remaining modest in most contexts, their influence as ideological actors, discursive challengers, and agenda-shaping forces is more complex and arguably more substantial than raw vote counts suggest.

This article offers a comparative analysis of multiple explicitly libertarian parties, each of which represents a different national context, degree of success, and strategic orientation. These cases have been selected not because they form a coherent typology, but precisely because they display the heterogeneity of libertarian political expression: from ideological consistency with near-zero reach, to ideological compromise in exchange for visibility, to electoral breakthrough under ‘populist conditions’.

1.2. A Definition of Libertarianism

A first necessary step when examining libertarian political parties is to define what “libertarianism” itself means in such context. Although often grouped with classical liberalism or simply alongside all other types of right-wing movements in popular discourse, libertarianism occupies a distinct ideological space – one that centres individual liberty (and the individual himself) as not solely a value, but as the foundation of nearly all political and economic principles. Therefore, it shall be comprehended that libertarianism does not merely cover reducing state interference; the ideological group is about challenging the very necessity of state action in many areas of life.

At its core, libertarianism upholds self-ownership, voluntary association, and strong property rights (the latter not necessarily in the tradi-

tional sense whereby the state would better guard one's property, but that one would have considerably more control in this matter). From this foundation flows a broad opposition to coercive authority, whether through taxation, state surveillance, conscription, or regulatory controls. Libertarians typically argue that individual agency is not only ethically primary, but also functionally optimal – that free individuals, operating in voluntary markets and associations, produce better outcomes than state-imposed systems. This view naturally aligns with limited government, but in more committed forms extends to minarchist or even anarcho-capitalist positions, where state functions are replaced by contractual, decentralized alternatives.

Despite this common philosophical core, the spectrum within libertarianism is wide. Some adherents prioritise personal freedoms (such as drug decriminalisation or freedom of speech) while others emphasise free-market economics and non-interventionist foreign policy. Most will include a combination of these aspects, but to different extents and in different orders. The emphasis may be adjusted based on historical context or cultural factors. For example, in the United States, libertarianism is often expressed as a combination of constitutional originalism and economic deregulation. Conversely, in parts of Europe or Latin America, libertarianism may present more as a critique of bureaucratic governance and centralised economic planning. A more in-depth analysis of the sub-types, as they'll be referred to, is provided in the below section.

Importantly, this article focuses not on individuals or movements that simply adopt libertarian rhetoric, but on political parties that are formally organised around libertarian ideology. These are parties whose manifestos, campaigns, and leadership openly identify as libertarian, and who generally align with primary tenets such as non-aggression, individual sovereignty, and the decentralisation of power. Ideological boundaries are not always clean (and politicians have incentive to vary ideals or plans in order to appeal to a larger audience – after all, they also gain monetarily from a larger voter

base), this definitional clarity allows for more consistent analysis throughout the article.

1.3. Sub-Types of Libertarianism in Political Ideology

Libertarianism, despite equal roots in a coherent philosophical commitment to individual liberty and limited government, is far from ideologically uniform. Within the broader libertarian tradition exist several sub-types, of which each reflect various emphases on personal freedom, economic order, and the legitimate scope of state power. These variations quite largely influence the orientation, strategy, and public reception of libertarian political parties across different systems.

A foundational division is between right-libertarianism and left-libertarianism, with the former being more prominent in political party formation. Right-libertarians argue that individual rights – particularly property rights – are morally prior and non-negotiable. The state's only legitimate function is to protect one's life, liberty, and property, often conceptualised through the model of a night-watchman state, as articulated by Robert Nozick (1974). From this perspective, taxation for redistributive purposes is seen as a form of coercion, and regulatory overreach is treated as a fundamental violation of personal sovereignty. The consistent message is that a free society must be one in which individuals are entitled to the fruits of their labor and can engage in voluntary exchange without state interference.

Objectivism, derived from the philosophy of Ayn Rand, falls within this broader category, though with its own distinct ethical and epistemological foundation. Randian libertarians place strong emphasis on rational egoism and view individual rights as objective moral truths. Some Objectivists do not identify as libertarians due to philosophical disagreements; though, the ideological overlap (particularly from an economic standpoint – advocating laissez-faire capitalism and opposing collectivism) is substantial enough that Objectivist influence remains visible in libertarian political platforms (Rand, 1964).

By contrast, left-libertarianism seeks to in some way connect libertarian principles to egalitarian goals. It retains a commitment to voluntary association and decentralised governance; on the other hand, it often rejects strong private property rights in favour of shared resources, anti-capitalist economic models, or critiques of hierarchy more generally. However, this orientation faces a fundamental tension: by diluting or relativising property rights, it undermines the very individual autonomy it claims to defend. As Walter Block (2013) has argued, robust property rights are not merely economic tools but direct conditions for personal freedom. Without secure control over one's body, possessions, and productive capacity, freedom becomes contingent and negotiable. In this sense, left-libertarianism can drift toward an ill-defined voluntarism that struggles to maintain the primacy of the individual. For the aforementioned reasons, it does not appear sensible to involve this ideology within the overall definition of libertarian systems, at the least for the purpose of this study.

Another axis of division lies between minarchists and anarcho-capitalists. Minarchism, often aligned with Nozickian theory, supports a minimal state restricted to the protection of individual rights via police, courts, and national defense. It accepts the state's existence as a necessary evil – a pragmatic compromise to maintain order. Anarcho-capitalists, however, as exemplified in the work of Murray Rothbard and David Friedman, reject the state entirely. They argue that all social services – including legal and security frameworks – can and should be provided through competitive, private means. Due to its long distance from the current political systems, and its quite radical methods of implementation, the values of anarcho-capitalism has rarely translated into electoral platforms. Nevertheless, its influence is substantial in libertarian intellectual circles, especially in the U.S., and informs the ideological purity debates within libertarian parties (Rothbard, 1973; Friedman, 1989).

There also exists a more hybrid, flexible tendency within libertarianism – sometimes called fusionism or liberaltarianism – which seeks

overlap with either classical liberal or conservative traditions. These approaches commonly downplay doctrinal purity in favour of coalition-building and practical policy engagement. For simplicity, an example might include the party accepting limited welfare systems or environmental regulation during continued advocacy for market-based solutions and civil liberties in order to come to an agreement for power alongside something like a center-right party. Though often criticised by purists, such tendencies can allow libertarian parties to better gain access to pluralistic systems.

1.4. Differentiating Libertarianism from Liberalism and Populism

In both popular discourse and academic literature, the term “libertarian” is frequently conflated with adjacent (but in ways hardly similar) ideological categories – most commonly liberalism and populism. It cannot be denied that there arise cases where these traditions may overlap with libertarianism on specific issues or rhetorical frames; nonetheless, they diverge in fundamental principles, extraordinarily regarding the moral status of state power, the scope of individual autonomy, and the source of political legitimacy.

Classical liberalism, mainly in its European form, shares with libertarianism a commitment to individual rights, the rule of law, and market-based economic systems. However, liberal parties (in the sense of those active in contemporary multiparty systems) typically endorse a more pragmatic view of state authority. They may support moderate welfare policies, advocate for regulatory frameworks to correct ‘market failures’ (a term that is not considered accurate and counted as a fallacy within libertarian economics, see Andreen, 2023), and embrace institutional cooperation at the supranational level (e.g., European Union integration). In contrast, libertarianism, as a political identity, views state power of any sort with deep suspicion. It treats intervention in voluntary exchange or personal decision-making not merely as inefficient, but as morally illegitimate unless directly preventing harm or protecting property (Nozick, 1974; Boaz, 2015).

While liberals may advocate for “positive freedom” – the capacity to act meaningfully, which often entails state-enabled opportunities – libertarians overwhelmingly defend “negative freedom”: the absence of coercion, including from the state. As a result, many parties that brand themselves as liberal (e.g., Germany’s FDP or the UK’s Liberal Democrats) fall outside the scope of this study, even where rhetorical overlaps exist.

Populism, on the other hand, is not a coherent ideology but a political logic centred on antagonism between a morally pure “people” and a corrupt “elite” (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017). Populist movements may adopt libertarian language – especially around anti-tax, anti-establishment, or anti-bureaucracy themes – yet it must be comprehended that their structural commitments are often incompatible with libertarianism. Right-wing populists may favour state-imposed social conservatism, immigration controls, or trade protectionism; left-wing populists frequently call for economic redistribution and increased state intervention. Both tendencies rely on majoritarian or plebiscitary forms of legitimacy that can subordinate individual rights to collective will – a dynamic that libertarianism explicitly rejects. The distinction is also strategic; populist parties often seek fast electoral gains through emotional appeals and broad (i.e., big-tent, catch-all) coalitions, whereas explicitly libertarian parties (must) prioritise ideological consistency, irrespective of the likely expense of short-term popularity. This difference frequently results in libertarians being viewed as politically marginal (but ideologically coherent), with populist movements, on the other hand, potentially attaining power with less efforts, though drifting ideologically depending on circumstance.

1.5. The Global Relevance of Libertarian Political Movements

Although it has been associated most strongly with the political landscape of the United States, its core ideas have found resonance far beyond any single national context. In recent decades, explicitly libertarian political movements have emerged, re-emerged, or transformed

in a range of countries across several continents. Many of these parties still remain electorally marginal, though this is most definitely not to say their presence isn't ideologically significant.

Multiple factors help explain the growing, if uneven, global interest in libertarian political platforms. One is the increasing disillusionment with traditional party systems, especially among younger voters and politically disengaged populations. In countries where established parties are viewed as corrupt, ineffective, or ideologically stagnant, libertarian parties are quite effectively capable of positioning themselves as principled outsiders. Their commitment to non-coercion and decentralised decision-making can appeal to those fatigued by both state socialism and crony capitalism. As political theorist Tom G. Palmer notes, libertarianism's emphasis on peaceful cooperation and spontaneous order offers an alternative to both technocratic elitism and populist authoritarianism (Palmer, 2008).

Another contributing force is the global diffusion of digital libertarian culture. The rise of cryptocurrencies, decentralised finance (DeFi), encrypted communication, and internet-based activism has accelerated the visibility and accessibility of libertarian ideas. Movements like the creation of Bitcoin, which embed libertarian principles into their very architecture, have created new pathways for libertarian outreach and legitimacy with little to no reliance on formal political channels (Berg et al., 2020). In turn, many libertarian parties have adopted or co-opted these innovations to display themselves as advocates of technological autonomy and digital self-sovereignty.

Moreover, economic crises have sharpened the ideological relevance of libertarian critiques. In regions facing persistent inflation, bloated public sectors, or unsustainable debt (such as Latin America or Southern Europe, coincidentally or not areas with large libertarian presence), libertarian parties frequently frame their economic message as a pragmatic response to fiscal mismanagement.

Despite this, libertarian parties also run into their own sets of issues around the globe. Most operate within electoral systems that favour larger, coalition-building entities, and their ideological consistency can make any sort of compromise difficult (but also expectedly decrease their attractiveness as coalition members to other parties). Other than that, in many political cultures, libertarian ideas are met with suspicion – either due to association with extreme individualism or due to perceived insensitivity to social welfare concerns, with many of these considerations being based on solely the lack of alternate experience, i.e., the fact that one does not experience solutions in areas (healthcare, pensions, etc.) by entities other than the state. Nonetheless, even when they fail to win seats, libertarian parties can exert influence by pulling debates toward civil liberties, economic freedom, and decentralised governance, frequently forcing mainstream parties to react, absorb, or at least engage with libertarian positions. In this sense, the global relevance of libertarian political movements is also measured their capacity to act as ideological vanguards – persistently reintroducing the language of personal freedom, voluntary association, and non-aggression into political arenas that may otherwise lack such frames.

1.6. Focus on Explicitly Libertarian Parties

In political science, categorising parties according to ideological typologies is a useful but often imprecise exercise. Many parties integrate libertarian ideas (e.g. advocating free markets, critiquing state overreach) into broader ideological platforms without identifying as libertarian per se. This article, however, intentionally limits its scope to parties that explicitly self-identify as libertarian through their name, founding documents, and/or consistent ideological messaging. Such distinction is necessary for several reasons. Primarily, it offers a degree of analytical clarity. Political formations such as Germany's Free Democratic Party (FDP) or groups within the U.S. Republican Party may espouse libertarian-aligned policies yet they often balance or dilute these positions within broader liberal, centrist, or conservative frameworks. For instance, the FDP's emphasis on market efficiency

and deregulation coexists with relatively conventional European commitments to institutional governance and integration. It does not position itself as fundamentally anti-statist, nor does it articulate a theory of liberty rooted in non-aggression or absolute property rights – key hallmarks of doctrinal libertarianism (Nozick, 1974; Rothbard, 1973).

By contrast, there are many global parties (elaborated upon later within the text) which define themselves openly and formally as libertarian. Their manifestos are structured around core libertarian tenets: individual sovereignty, minimal government, free-market economics, and the inviolability of personal choice and voluntary interaction. Many explicitly reference the non-aggression principle as an ethical foundation – the view that initiating force or coercion against others is illegitimate, regardless of intent or outcome (Boaz, 2015).

In addition, limiting the analysis to explicitly libertarian parties avoids the methodological dilution that would result from including actors whose libertarianism is incidental, strategic, or secondary. For example, populist movements may temporarily adopt libertarian rhetoric – especially around civil liberties or taxation – though their underlying commitments to hierarchy, nationalism, or authoritarian governance are frequently fundamentally incompatible with libertarian ideals. Including such cases would risk conflating libertarianism with a much broader, and at times contradictory, set of political impulses.

1.7. Research Questions

Having established the definitional parameters and ideological scope of libertarianism for the purposes of this study, the next step is to articulate the specific research questions that guide this inquiry. This article does not attempt to offer a comprehensive history of global libertarianism, nor does it focus on libertarian thought in abstract philosophical terms. The emergence of libertarian political parties in a range of democratic contexts raises many questions – about their ideological consistency, their practical role in contemporary politics, their internal affairs. Even though libertarianism itself is often discussed as a

philosophical position or economic theory, relatively little comparative research has focused on how it operates within the institutional framework of party competition, public policy, and democratic legitimacy.

This article takes libertarian parties as its object of study – not simply as expressions of abstract ideas, but as organised actors navigating real political systems. The analysis is built upon a structure of multiple important research questions:

- What constitutes an explicitly libertarian political party, and how do these parties distinguish themselves, both ideologically and structurally, from adjacent liberal or populist actors?
- How have libertarian parties performed electorally, and what do their successes or limitations reveal about the political environments in which they operate?
- In what ways have these parties exercised influence beyond electoral outcomes, including through agenda-setting, public discourse, and ideological diffusion?
- What internal tensions exist within libertarian parties, particularly between doctrinal commitment and political strategy?
- How do regional, historical, and institutional contexts shape the trajectory of libertarian political parties, and what can these differences tell us about the conditions under which ideological movements become politically viable?

It should be noted that despite individual opinions of both myself as the author and, later, the reader, the objective of this article is not to advocate for or critique libertarianism as such, but to evaluate how it functions when institutionalised, how it is received in different political systems, and what its trajectory suggests about the dynamics of ideology and representation in liberal democracies.

1.8. Analytical Criteria for Case Selection

The study of minor or ideologically distinct political parties across multiple national contexts demands a clear and consistent set of se-

lection criteria. In the case of libertarian parties, this is especially important given the ideological ambiguity surrounding terms like “libertarian,” “liberal,” and “free-market.” Many political actors invoke libertarian rhetoric opportunistically or combine it with fundamentally incompatible ideological positions. For this reason, this article limits its empirical focus to parties that meet a precise set of analytical criteria, which maintains the integrity of comparison and the coherence of conclusions.

First and foremost, selected parties must exhibit explicit ideological self-identification as libertarian. This is typically demonstrated through their official platforms, party literature, founding charters, or consistent public messaging. A party’s use of the term “libertarian” – either in name or in formal descriptions of its principles – is, as one can expect, a strong indicator, though not a sufficient condition on its own. What matters is the clear, consistent commitment to libertarian principles such as individual sovereignty, non-aggression, strong property rights, and a sharply limited role for the state.

Second, the party must display doctrinal coherence with core libertarian philosophy. This includes, at minimum:

- A commitment to voluntary exchange and free markets,
- Rejection of coercive redistribution or expansive welfare programs,
- Advocacy for civil liberties (e.g., freedom of speech, bodily autonomy),
- Opposition to foreign military interventionism and state surveillance.

This criterion helps exclude parties that might advocate economic liberalisation but combine it with authoritarianism, nationalism, or other illiberal positions incompatible with libertarian theory (Rothbard, 1973; Brennan, 2012).

Third, the party must demonstrate a degree of institutional development and political engagement beyond isolated protest or online activism. While size is not a requirement – indeed, many libertarian parties remain electorally marginal – there must be evidence of formal party structure, participation in elections, and some sustained public presence (e.g., fielding candidates, publishing policy documents, engaging in national debates). This rules out informal movements or temporary “libertarian factions” within larger parties, which may dilute or compromise the ideology in ways that are analytically unhelpful/ineffective.

Fourth, the comparative logic of the study requires some geographic and political diversity. Even though libertarianism has historically been most prominently articulated in Anglo-American contexts, this article includes parties from both established and emerging democracies, across Western and non-Western political systems. This helps to surface the varying constraints and opportunities faced by libertarian actors in different institutional and cultural environments.

Applying these criteria, the selected cases for this study are:

- The Libertarian Party (LP) in the United States,
- The Partei der Vernunft (PdV) in Germany,
- The Nowa Nadzieja (NN) in Poland,
- The Partido Novo in Brazil,
- The La Libertad Avanza (LLA) in Argentina.

These cases offer sufficient variation in electoral systems, party size, political culture, and public receptiveness to libertarian principles, allowing for both within-case and cross-case analysis. Crucially, each reflects an effort to institutionalise libertarian thought within a functioning party organisation, rather than merely influence from the margins.

1.9. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative comparative approach, grounded in structured case analysis, to explore the institutional, ideological, and practical dimensions of explicitly libertarian political parties in contemporary democratic contexts. Due to the small number of such parties worldwide and their significant variation in visibility and success, the chosen methodology balances within-case depth with cross-case insight.

The primary method is a comparative case study design, focusing on the five aforementioned parties that meet the analytical criteria previously established. These cases are examined across multiple dimensions: electoral performance, ideological coherence, policy influence, internal strategic dynamics, and external constraints such as media access, public perception, and institutional barriers. Three principal axes of analysis structure the methodology:

- Electoral analysis – each party’s performance in national and sub-national elections over the last 15–20 years is reviewed (of course, where possible, as these parties are in many cases younger, and/or products of merging and diverging from other existing parties), drawing on official electoral commission data, academic databases, and secondary literature. This includes vote share, representation, growth trends, and geographic strongholds where relevant. The analysis considers not only outcomes but also campaign strategies and the extent to which libertarian messaging resonates in different political cultures.
- Comparative ideological framing – party manifestos, official platforms, public speeches, and media statements are examined to assess the degree of doctrinal consistency with libertarian theory. Particular attention is paid to how parties frame issues such as taxation, personal freedoms, property rights, foreign policy, and the role of the state. Variations are noted and analysed in relation to national context, party leadership, and electoral incentives.
- Policy impact and influence – where possible, the study traces

the policy influence of each party – whether through direct governance (as in the case of *La Libertad Avanza*), participation in coalitions, or indirect agenda-setting. Influence is understood not only in terms of legislative outcomes but also in shaping public debate, normalising libertarian ideas, and pressuring mainstream parties to adopt libertarian positions on selected issues.

In line with comparative political methodology (Lijphart, 1971; George & Bennett, 2005), the cases have been selected to reflect both variation (in size, region, and political system) and similarity (in ideological identity). This design permits modest generalisation while maintaining sensitivity to local context. The findings do not aim at universal theory-building; though, it must be considered that they do contribute to understanding how a distinct ideological formation – libertarianism – behaves when formalised into party structures and subjected to the pressures of electoral democracy.

2. Case Study Selection and Analysis

2.1. The United States: The Libertarian Party (LP)

Founded in 1971, the Libertarian Party (LP) of the United States is not only the oldest explicitly libertarian political party in the world but also one of the most ideologically consistent and institutionally enduring. From its inception, the LP has positioned itself as a radical alternative to both major U.S. parties, with advocacy for a platform that combines strong civil libertarianism with uncompromising economic individualism. Its longevity, national infrastructure, and consistent ballot presence make it a foundational case for understanding the practical realities of libertarian party politics. The LP's platform is too grounded in core libertarian principles: the non-aggression principle, individual sovereignty, absolute property rights, and minimal government. Its official platform outlines opposition to income tax, foreign military interventions, drug prohibition, gun control, state surveillance, and most regulatory structures. Over the decades, the party has maintained ideological coherence; quite unlike the two leading parties

which drift between ideologies with little to no consistency (i.e., the Republican party having gone from Lincoln to free market beliefs with Reagan to large restrictions and government intervention in the latest times), it rejects compromise in favour of principled advocacy, a topic analysed quite intriguingly by G. Patrick Lynch (2024).

The LP has appeared on every presidential ballot since 1980 and is one of the few third parties in the U.S. to have achieved 50-state ballot access. Despite this, its electoral success has been modest. The party has never won a seat in Congress, and its vote share in presidential elections has generally remained below 4%. Its strongest national performance came in 2016, when the ticket of Gary Johnson and William Weld received over 4.4 million votes (3.3%), largely attributed to dissatisfaction with the two major-party candidates (Doherty, 2016).

At the state and local level, however, the LP has had limited success. As of the early 2020s, it has held dozens of minor elected positions – city councils, school boards, and local offices – primarily in states with more flexible ballot access laws such as Indiana, Colorado, and Texas. These local victories tend to be pragmatic in nature, with candidates running on decentralisation, fiscal responsibility, and civil liberties, often without a full national platform.

Structural factors pose major challenges to the LP's viability. The United States' first-past-the-post electoral system strongly disincentivises third-party voting, reinforced by restrictive ballot access laws, limited media coverage, and exclusion from national debates. Moreover, ideological purism within the party has often created internal conflict over messaging strategy – whether to appeal to broad libertarian-leaning voters or adhere strictly to philosophical consistency (Doherty, 2007).

Despite limited legislative influence, the LP has an important role in expanding the boundaries of acceptable political discourse. Its long-standing advocacy for drug legalisation, same-sex marriage, non-interventionist foreign policy, and cryptocurrency adoption re-

peatedly preceded mainstream party shifts on these issues. In this sense, the LP operates less as a vehicle for immediate electoral power than as a persistent ideological anchor, one that reinforces libertarian arguments within national debates, think tanks, and adjacent movements.

It has also contributed to the diffusion of libertarian ideas into the Republican Party, especially during periods of ideological flux. Figures like Ron Paul, who ran for president as the LP nominee in 1988 before returning to the Republican Party, exemplify this porous boundary. Though Paul was never formally affiliated with the LP in his later career, his campaigns helped popularise libertarian positions within broader conservative and libertarian-leaning audiences (Charles, 2012).

The LP's case is a practical example of both the durability and the limitations of an ideologically explicit libertarian party (or any sort of fixed-idea party, for that matter) in a rigid two-party system (not necessarily one that does not allow other parties, but where they lack much public recognition/media access). Its adherence to principle has ensured philosophical consistency but has constrained its capacity for mainstream political integration. Nevertheless, its continued existence, grassroots presence, and contributions to discourse retain it as an important actor in the global libertarian landscape – not as a governing force, but as a long-term ideological institution.

2.2. Germany: Partei der Vernunft (Party of Reason, PdV)

Germany's political landscape is characterised by proportional representation and multiparty governance – these are not mutually exclusive against libertarianism; however, its robust social state tradition is generally inhospitable to parties of this ideological type. Within this environment, the Partei der Vernunft (PdV) – translated as the Party of Reason – exists as a very minor party, though one that remains an ideologically coherent actor and openly identifies with the main liber-

tarian principles. Founded in 2009 by entrepreneur Oliver Janich, the PdV emerged explicitly as a response to what its founders perceived as growing statism, monetary interventionism, and erosion of individual freedoms in the Federal Republic.

From its inception, the PdV has presented itself as an advocate of radical decentralisation, Austrian economics, personal liberty, and non-aggression. Its platform references thinkers such as Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, and Murray Rothbard, and aligns itself with the traditions of minarchism and anarcho-capitalism. The party supports withdrawal from the euro, elimination of central banking, extensive deregulation, and near-complete privatisation of public services (including healthcare and education). In addition to economic policy, the PdV advocates for broad civil liberties: freedom of speech, unrestricted self-defence rights, and the abolition of mass surveillance. The party also rejects foreign military intervention, consistent with libertarian non-interventionist norms (Janich, 2010). Unlike Germany's economically liberal but pragmatically centrist Free Democratic Party (FDP), the PdV maintains a doctrinal purism that leaves little room for compromise or coalition-building.

Despite its ideological clarity, the PdV has remained electorally marginal. It has never passed the 5% electoral threshold required for representation in the Bundestag or most state parliaments. In federal elections, its vote share has consistently remained below 0.1%, with slightly higher results in some localities during municipal elections (Bundeswahlleiter, 2021). Its achievement in the 2024 European Parliamentary elections too did not even surpass 0.1%. The party has fielded candidates in various Länder (federal states), but its organisational capacity remains highly limited.

The post-war Basic Law in Germany entrenches quite a strong welfare state, and the public generally supports social market economic policies. Libertarian positions (in this case especially the rejection of public healthcare, state-funded education, or wealth redistribution) are

often perceived as politically radical or ethically suspect. Moreover, Germany's political culture tends to favour technocratic governance and coalition compromise, both of which are at odds with the PdV's anti-statist maximalism.

The PdV has received little mainstream media coverage, which further hinders its visibility. Much of its communication has historically relied on alternative media platforms, social media, and libertarian-adjacent online spaces. The party also lost some public trust near its founding due to the opinions of its founder, who is no longer present, but made controversial (and in cases unbacked) statements against the legitimacy of 9/11 and other historical scenarios (Afanasyev, 2011). While this has cultivated a small but loyal following, it has also associated the party with the broader "anti-establishment" and "alternative knowledge" subcultures – a space that overlaps, problematically, with conspiracy theorists and vaccine sceptics, e.g. during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This blurring of ideological lines has been a source of internal debate and reputational damage. As touched upon in the above paragraph, Oliver Janich later distanced himself from the party and became more associated with conspiracy-driven activism. Since then, the PdV has attempted to reassert a more disciplined and intellectually serious libertarian profile, but the reputational costs linger.

Although the PdV lacks institutional power or mass support, its significance and value of analysis lies in its ideological purity and its function as a reference point for German libertarians disillusioned with more centrist parties like the FDP or the CDU's market liberal wing. The party maintains its integrity and foundational values irrespective of political impact of results. Some other types of influence are more complex to measure – the party has played some role in popularising libertarian ideas in German-speaking libertarian circles, helped develop a libertarian publishing niche, and maintains connections with international libertarian movements.

However, its failure to break into broader political discourse illustrates multiple factors contributing to its ‘non-success’ – one cannot easily determine whether it is a lack of self-marketing on the side of the party, or solely the sharp cultural and institutional limitations facing libertarian parties in social-democratic political cultures. In Germany, where collective memory of economic instability and authoritarianism runs deep, radically individualistic platforms often meet structural resistance. The PdV thus remains a party of principle rather than power; in more metaphorical terms, it can be referred to as a repository of libertarian doctrine rather than a vehicle for policy change.

2.3. Poland: Nowa Nadzieja (New Hope, NN)

Among the most electorally visible libertarian-aligned efforts in Central and Eastern Europe, Nowa Nadzieja (New Hope, NN) occupies a curious yet telling position. Though the party openly claims libertarian credentials – particularly in economic matters – its trajectory has been shaped by a complex mix of ideological alignment, coalition necessity, and shifting leadership. Founded originally in 2015 as KORWiN by the polarising figure Janusz Korwin-Mikke, the party underwent a name change to Wolność (“Freedom”) and was finally rebranded Nowa Nadzieja in 2022 under the leadership of Sławomir Mentzen (Wikipedia, 2024).

At the level of official doctrine, the party draws heavily from right-libertarian and minarchist thought, advocating flat taxation (as well as the abolition of PIT and CIT, and the transition to voluntary pension contributions), economic deregulation, the protection of private property, and a dramatic reduction in state involvement in public services. Government, in the party’s framing, exists primarily to enforce contracts and defend the nation’s borders, but otherwise should refrain from intervening in either markets or social life. The party has also consistently and vehemently opposed EU federalism, framing Brussels-based governance as an external constraint on national and individual sovereignty.

In practice, however, NN's libertarianism has often been filtered through – or diluted by – its involvement in the *Konfederacja* (Confederation) alliance, a broader right-wing electoral coalition established in 2019 that also includes nationalist and traditionalist factions. It was through this coalition that NN secured parliamentary representation in the 2019 elections, with *Konfederacja* winning 6.8% of the vote and earning 11 seats in the *Sejm*.

This strategic coalition, while electorally effective (in fact, it is accepted as a primary challenger to the dualism of PiS and KO, *Szczerbiak, 2025*), has created persistent tensions. For a party claiming libertarian roots, proximity to elements with authoritarian or illiberal tendencies – including strong anti-LGBT rhetoric and nationalist ethno-politics – creates friction both internally and externally. In addition, *Mentzen* himself, and several other politicians within the party and/or coalition also do not support the legalization of abortions in Poland (*Ojewska, 2025*), which is a standpoint unaccepted by most libertarians. These contradictions have not gone unnoticed by analysts or segments of the electorate. Though *Mentzen* has worked to rebrand NN with more modern rhetoric and an emphasis on “economic sanity” rather than cultural provocation, the legacy of its origins under *Korwin-Mikke* continues to shadow the party's legitimacy among more doctrinaire libertarians.

Nonetheless, NN's messaging (especially under *Mentzen's* leadership) has become more disciplined. The party has heavily utilised digital platforms and short-form-content-driven outreach campaigns to appeal to younger Polish voters, especially among entrepreneurs, freelancers, and economically liberal university students. Among this demographic, the party's insistence on personal responsibility, low taxation, and state minimalism has a clear appeal. This digital-forward strategy, paired with Poland's high rates of economic disillusionment and distrust of state bureaucracy, has created space for a libertarian-in-flected populism that often eludes formal categorisation. After all, Po-

land is the world's most capitalist-loving country (the United States and Czechia followed, though both with quite a wide margin from Poland), so popularity and support of free market policies can only be considered natural (Zitelmann, 2024).

Still, it would be partly misleading to describe Nowa Nadzieja as a purely libertarian project. Its participation in Konfederacja makes it subject to ideological compromises that cloud its identity – particularly on civil liberties and migration. At times, its electoral relevance has depended more on its populist tone than its libertarian substance.

That said, few other parties in the region or Europe as a whole have succeeded in placing libertarian ideas – those related to taxation, state scope, and individual economic agency – so firmly into national debate. From that view, NN is more than an electoral experiment; it is also a case study in how libertarianism is both enabled and constrained by coalition politics in parliamentary democracies.

2.4. Brazil: Partido Novo (New Party, NOVO)

Brazil's Partido Novo (New Party, NOVO) offers one of the most structurally coherent examples of an explicitly market-liberal party in Latin America – a region where, to its detriment, state-driven development and populist interventionism have long dominated the political mainstream. Founded in 2011 by a group of private citizens largely from the financial and entrepreneurial sectors, NOVO was designed from the outset not as a populist reaction or ideological rebrand, but as a technocratic-liberal project grounded in classical liberal values and economic orthodoxy (Wikipedia, 2024).

The party defines itself through a relatively consistent commitment to limited government, free-market capitalism, decentralisation, and the inviolability of private property. It supports the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, fiscal responsibility, and a downsizing of the state to a set of core functions – usually listed as education, security, justice, and basic infrastructure. More than any other party in the Brazilian

context, NOVO has built its political brand around a rejection of what it calls “the political caste,” pledging to professionalise governance, reduce privileges for elected officials, and implement meritocratic principles in the public sector.

Be that as it may, NOVO’s libertarianism is qualified both in theory and in execution. The party does not consistently take positions on contentious civil liberty issues such as abortion or drug decriminalisation (in most cases framing these matters as private choices beyond its institutional scope). Though it supports same-sex marriage and the right to self-defence, these are presented more as extensions of personal autonomy than as elements of a broader civil liberties campaign. In this respect, NOVO’s platform sits at a crossroads between market libertarianism and pragmatic liberal managerialism (Intercept Brasil, 2017).

Electoral performance has been modest but notable. In the 2018 general elections, NOVO won eight seats in the Chamber of Deputies and placed João Amoêdo – the party’s founding figure – in the presidential race, where he received 2.5% of the national vote. This was a meaningful outcome for a party competing in its first national election and without coalition support. In the 2022 elections, however, NOVO’s presidential candidate, Luiz Felipe d’Avila, performed poorly, garnering less than 0.5% of the vote, and the party failed to expand its legislative footprint in any significant way (Statista, 2022). Its seats in the chamber of deputies too declined in this year, from 8 to 3. This electoral stagnation coincided with increasing internal tension. João Amoêdo, after stepping back from formal leadership, was later suspended from the party in 2022 for publicly endorsing Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in the presidential run-off – a position directly at odds with the party’s neutral stance. The episode exposed fractures within NOVO regarding political positioning, institutional independence, and the tension between ideological discipline and pragmatic opposition to Bolsonaro’s administration (Wikipedia, 2024).

Public perception of NOVO remains ambivalent. On one hand, it is praised for professionalism, fiscal clarity, and transparency – qualities ‘in short supply’, so to speak, within Brazil’s broader party system. On the other, critics argue that NOVO’s strict economic framing often neglects the country’s social inequities, with its platform seen by some as detached from the realities of widespread poverty, regional inequality, and institutional fragility. Its refusal to position clearly on social rights, combined with its focus on budget cuts and deregulation, has led some to characterise it not as a libertarian party per se, but as a “neoliberal technocratic club” primarily concerned with governance reform, not civil emancipation (Intercept Brasil, 2017).

Regardless, NOVO remains one of the most electorally viable libertarian-adjacent parties in Latin America. It has succeeded in building a national structure, gaining parliamentary representation, and inserting market-liberal discourse into a political culture often defined by clientelism and dirigisme. Its future relevance, however, will likely depend on its ability to clarify its ideological identity – particularly whether it will double down on its technocratic liberalism, or more fully embrace the broader civil and economic liberties traditionally associated with libertarianism.

2.5. Argentina: La Libertad Avanza (Liberty Advances, LLA)

Part of the most abrupt and dramatic entries into national government by an ideologically libertarian actor anywhere in the world, La Libertad Avanza (LLA) in Argentina presents a case that is at once anomalous and instructive. Founded in 2021 around the public profile of libertarian economist and television personality Javier Milei, LLA began as a self-styled “outsider movement” pushing against Argentina’s long-standing Peronist dominance. Within just two years, it would become the central political vehicle for Milei’s successful 2023 presidential campaign – a rise that is both unprecedented in Argentine history and deeply disruptive to its institutional norms.

At the level of public discourse, LLA has styled itself as an unflinching opponent of what Milei refers to as “la casta política” – the political caste. This framing, however rhetorical, is backed by a platform rooted in hardline economic libertarianism: drastic spending cuts, the abolition of most government ministries, the dollarisation of the economy, the elimination of Argentina’s central bank, and an end to virtually all forms of state intervention in the productive sector. These proposals are not only radical by Argentine standards, but among the most sweeping libertarian economic reforms proposed by any major party in Latin America in the last several decades (Wikipedia, 2024).

In the 2021 legislative elections, LLA made an unexpectedly strong showing in Buenos Aires, securing 17% of the vote in its first contest. Just two years later, Milei reached the presidency, winning 55.65% of the national vote in the second round of the 2023 elections. His campaign focused heavily on mass disillusionment with inflation, economic decline, and entrenched political elites – issues that resonated with younger, urban, and economically insecure voters. That he ran without traditional party structures or coalition support makes the feat all the more remarkable. Having said that, LLA’s rapid ascent has also made it vulnerable to contradictions and volatility. Milei’s self-identification with some global right-wing populists – including Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro – has earned him praise from conservative circles abroad, but domestically it has entrenched fears that his project substitutes theatricality for governability (Lorca, 2024). In policy terms, his sweeping austerity measures – implemented through what he calls a “chainsaw plan” (which was also a major part of his marketing strategy) – have already triggered labour protests, backlash from unions, and pushback from parts of civil society, who accuse the administration of dismantling the state without addressing Argentina’s underlying structural vulnerabilities (Rebollo, 2024).

For the first time in recent memory, a libertarian-aligned party has captured executive power in a major Latin American state and not by moderating its message, but by amplifying it. LLA’s case marks

a threshold moment for the global libertarian movement: a test of what happens when radical anti-statism exits the seminar room and enters the presidency. On a positive note, very positive results have already been witnessed (from an objective point of view). Despite an increase in poverty rates when Milei came into power, they have now declined to 38.7% according to latest INDEC data, a drop from the 41.7% when he started, and with an anticipated further downward trajectory (Buenos Aires Times, 2025). Year-on-year inflation declined from 211.4% to 66.9%, and month-on-month from 25.5% down to 2.4%, which is an immense feat with a time period of just over one year in power (Trading Economics, 2025).

2.6. Other Relevant Mentions

The preceding case studies focus on a select group of explicitly libertarian parties with either sustained institutional development or high-impact political moments; on the other hand, several other formations also warrant brief mention. Though these parties may not meet the thresholds of electoral visibility or internal coherence required for more in-depth analysis, they nonetheless contribute to the global diffusion of libertarian discourse – either as ideological reference points, marginal actors within their respective systems, or, in worse cases, as cautionary examples of the fragility and/or inattractiveness faced by libertarian movements.

One such example is the Libertarian Party of Canada, which has existed since 1973 and remains ideologically consistent, but electorally irrelevant. The party has never come close to winning a federal seat and remains almost entirely unknown outside niche circles. Despite this, its platform – built around voluntary taxation, decentralised governance, and market solutions to public services – represents one of the purest articulations of minarchist libertarianism in the Anglosphere. Yet, its long-standing lack of visibility also illustrates the challenges posed by majoritarian electoral systems and low issue salience around libertarian themes in the Canadian context.

In the United Kingdom, the Libertarian Party UK presents a similarly marginal case. Founded in 2008, the party has failed to achieve any notable electoral success and has undergone repeated internal restructurings. It does continue to field candidates in select constituencies, but its ideological messaging is often indistinguishable from that of more prominent right-populist actors – particularly given the overlap on issues such as tax resistance, Euroscepticism, and deregulation. The party has struggled to distinguish itself meaningfully from the UK Independence Party (UKIP) or post-Brexit iterations of the Conservative right, often appearing less as a serious political organisation and more as a philosophical hobby project.

A somewhat different case is found in the Czech Republic's Svobodní [The Free Citizens' Party], which has consistently promoted a right-libertarian platform with some success at the local and European Parliament levels. Founded in 2009, the party initially gained traction by opposing EU federalism and advocating for minimal state intervention, though it never managed to secure a major breakthrough in national elections. In recent years, however, the party's trajectory has taken a more contentious turn. In early 2025, Svobodní entered into a coalition with PRO (Právo Respekt Odbornost) [Law, Respect, Expertise], Trikolóra [Tricolour], and SPD [Freedom and Direct Democracy] – a decision that has sparked immediate backlash from parts of its own electorate. These allied parties, particularly SPD, are widely seen as national-conservative or outright illiberal, with positions that include restrictive migration policies, Euroscepticism with ethnonationalist overtones, and state-inclined economic proposals. Many long-time Svobodní supporters now feel betrayed, viewing the coalition as a political convenience that abandons core commitments to individual liberty and limited government in favour of populist pragmatism (Štěpán, 2025). Its more recent decline may be attributed not just to the absorption of its market-liberal message by larger formations, but to this very perceived ideological betrayal – an abandonment of principled libertarianism in exchange for vague anti-establishment alignment. What once appeared to be a promising libertarian platform

now risks dilution by association. This case is an example of the persistent tension between ideological purity and political expediency even in a proportional system.

It is also worth briefly noting various short-lived or rebranded initiatives that have appeared across Europe and Latin America. In Spain, the Partido Libertario (P-LIB) remains active but entirely marginal. Its ideological commitment is relatively clear, but it has failed to translate this into even minimal electoral relevance. Meanwhile, in countries such as Italy, France, and Colombia, libertarian parties or platforms occasionally appear as electoral novelties – often linked to business leaders or anti-tax advocacy groups – but rarely persist beyond a single cycle.

What unites many of these efforts is not just their shared ideology, but also their frequent isolation from mainstream institutional politics, their frequently amateur organisational structure, and their reliance on social media or individual figureheads to reach public attention. In many cases, they operate more as ideological signals than as political vehicles capable of institutional traction.

These examples serve a dual analytical purpose. They act as an illumination of the fragility and fragmentation that many libertarian parties experience, even more so in systems unfavourable to small or non-coalitional actors. Other than that, they show off the spread and elasticity of libertarian ideas across borders – even when those ideas fail to produce lasting political power. As such, they function as part of a wider ecology of libertarian activism: at times feeding into larger parties, at times receding into online communities or think-tank circuits, but always present as reminders of the unresolved tension between individual liberty and state centralisation in modern democracies.

3. Electoral Performance

3.1. Electoral Results and Surveys

If there is one immediate and unavoidable observation that arises from examining libertarian parties around the globe, it is this: electoral success is not their default condition. Even when these parties are well-organised, ideologically coherent, and active across multiple electoral cycles, they tend to remain numerically marginal – particularly in national legislatures or executive races. The exceptions, as noted earlier, are precisely that: exceptions, often tied to specific contexts, personalities, or political vacuums. Yet this does not mean the picture is uninformative. In fact, when taken together, both formal election results and public opinion surveys begin to sketch out a set of recurring conditions under which libertarian actors do (and do not) gain traction.

In terms of raw vote share, none of the five primary parties analysed in this study has consistently surpassed the 10% mark in national-level contests, with the sole exception of Argentina's *La Libertad Avanza*, whose trajectory has been nothing short of extraordinary. LLA's presidential victory in 2023, with over 55% in the runoff, is not only unprecedented for a libertarian-aligned candidate globally – it is an electoral event that occurred in direct contradiction to the typical constraints libertarian parties face: namely, the need to moderate, coalesce, or dilute. LLA did none of these. That this approach succeeded is less a testament to libertarianism's mainstream appeal and more a reflection of Argentina's unique political moment: mass disillusionment, economic collapse, and an electorate conditioned to swing between extremes. Nevertheless, it is a case displaying the possibilities unlocked via competency, and already inspires governments in other jurisdictions.

Elsewhere, the numbers are far more modest. Brazil's *Partido Novo* peaked in 2018 with 8 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and a presidential candidate polling at 2.5%. In 2022, it fell back sharply, with only 3 deputies returned and a negligible presidential vote share. In

Poland, Nowa Nadzieja has no independent national breakthrough to speak of, but via its role in Konfederacja has helped secure around 6–7% of the vote in two consecutive cycles – numbers that put it at the margins of kingmaker status but do not guarantee independent longevity. The Libertarian Party in the United States has appeared on every presidential ballot since 1980, but its national vote share has never exceeded 3.3% – with its local-level officeholders scattered and symbolic. The PdV in Germany polls consistently below 0.2% and is invisible at every level of government.

Beyond electoral tallies, survey data adds further texture. In many countries, libertarian-leaning attitudes are far more widespread than libertarian voting behaviour. For example, in the United States, polling data from Pew and Gallup routinely shows broad support for fiscal conservatism and civil liberties – yet this rarely translates into Libertarian Party votes (potentially due to a lack of knowledge about this party's existence in the first place). A similar disconnect appears in Brazil, where market-friendly sentiment among the urban middle class does not necessarily produce votes for Novo. A similar disconnect appears in Poland, where economic liberalism remains popular among younger, urban voters, even though explicit libertarian identification remains limited. A 2023 report by Notes from Poland found that approximately one-third of first-time voters intended to support Konfederacja, and that over 80% of young respondents expressed deep frustration with the existing political landscape. While this doesn't translate directly into doctrinaire libertarian support, it clearly reflects a rejection of statism (at least the sort that had been implemented by PiS and KO), political stagnation, and redistributive paternalism – attitudes that create an opening for parties like Nowa Nadzieja. Still, the numbers must be interpreted carefully. The appeal often lies more in anti-system positioning than in policy detail, and Konfederacja's internal heterogeneity (with strong nationalist and traditionalist currents) means that even its younger support base is ideologically fractured – open to market messages, but not necessarily aligned with a full libertarian program (Notes from Poland, 2023). That is not to say interest from

young people was not evidenced – the same article and polls saw 31% of surveyed young people (46% of men and 16% of women) found Konfederacja as their preferred party.

Part of these discrepancies may lie in the “credibility gap” that often surrounds libertarian parties: while voters may agree with many of their ideas in principle, they do not see them as capable of governing, or even of passing legislation. This perception is often self-reinforcing, especially in first-past-the-post systems or presidential races, where a “wasted vote” narrative further dampens turnout for third parties. In contrast, where proportional representation exists (Germany, Poland, Czechia), libertarian parties still struggle, but are at least structurally enabled – meaning their failure to convert support into votes is more often attributable to messaging, alliances, or internal coherence than to system design alone.

Public trust in libertarian parties also tends to oscillate with the economic cycle. In contexts of high inflation, institutional failure, or debt crises – such as in Argentina today – the appeal of radical market reform increases. But this window is narrow, and often temporary. As survey data from multiple Latin American countries shows, even voters open to libertarian economics are rarely interested in its more radical implications for social security, healthcare, or education – meaning libertarian parties risk winning rhetorical battles while losing policy mandates.

The electoral and attitudinal landscape is neither wholly discouraging nor accidentally hostile. There is appetite for libertarian ideas in many places – sometimes even surprisingly strong. But parties built around those ideas continue to struggle with translation: from theory to message, from message to trust, and from trust to votes.

3.2. Structural and Institutional Barriers to Success

The modest electoral presence of libertarian parties around the globe is not simply the result of limited public interest or weak campaign strat-

egies (although, of course, these attributes cannot be ignored either). Rather, it is affected in large part by a set of structural and institutional barriers that are recurrent across democratic systems and often unforgiving toward parties that place ideological consistency above electoral flexibility. These barriers manifest differently depending on national context, but the constraints themselves are remarkably stable.

First and foremost is the electoral system itself. In majoritarian or plurality systems, such as the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom (the latter having developed ‘strategic voting’ into a tradition in recent times) has even, the prospects for small parties of any kind are already slim. The logic of “wasted votes” discourages experimentation and punishes ideological purism. Voters may be sympathetic to libertarian ideals – and survey data in many of these countries suggests that they often are – but they are rarely willing to “spend” their vote on a party that cannot realistically win, so their voting is focused mainly on ‘the lesser of two evils’. In the case of the U.S. Libertarian Party, this effect has become almost canonical: a large pool of latent support, matched with near-zero electoral breakthrough, generation after generation.

Even in proportional systems, where libertarian parties have somewhat greater breathing room, the institutional challenges are far from absent. Media exposure, quite expectedly, is heavily skewed toward established parties, and smaller actors – especially those lacking sensationalist rhetoric or populist appeal – struggle time and again to gain visibility. In Germany, for example, the PdV has never managed to build a platform large enough to be considered relevant, not because it lacks legal opportunity, but because the ideological field is already saturated by parties with more organisational strength and cultural legitimacy.

Coalition dynamics pose another kind of barrier. In systems that rely heavily on coalitional governance (Poland, Israel, the Netherlands), libertarian parties frequently find themselves excluded (not just based

on their size but also their inflexibility – after all, it is quite difficult to compromise on freedom, which can even be considered binary). Their ideological insistence on limiting the state often leaves them out of step with potential partners. And when libertarian actors do enter coalitions, they can face internal backlash or ideological dilution, as the cases of *Nowa Nadzieja* and *Svobodní* have made clear. Their participation comes at the price of programmatic coherence – which may in turn erode trust among core supporters.

There is also a deeper institutional-cultural barrier to consider. Libertarian parties tend to flourish discursively in environments of economic crisis, inflation, or disillusionment with state institutions – but they often fall flat when it comes to building narratives of stability or governance competence. Many explicitly libertarian platforms prioritise critique (of taxation, regulation, bureaucracy) over construction (of ideas for solutions, social cohesion). This asymmetry can make them appear intellectually sharp but politically unfit; parties protesting instead of proposing. As a result, even voters who admire their principles may hesitate to trust them with executive power or day-to-day governance.

In some countries, legal restrictions and state practices further reinforce these constraints. In Brazil, for example, public campaign financing is heavily tilted toward established parties. In the United States, presidential debate rules all but exclude third-party candidates. In many Eastern European democracies, party registration laws or media licensing requirements subtly disadvantage non-traditional actors, especially those without access to institutional resources or wealthy backers.

Taken together, these factors do not amount to a conspiracy against libertarian parties – but they do constitute a consistent pattern of structural hostility toward ideological outliers. Parties that reject clientelism, redistribution, and expansive state presence are, by design, poorly equipped to manage party systems that reward exactly those

capacities. The result is a paradox: the more libertarian parties attempt to remain ideologically pure, the less institutionally viable they become. And when they attempt to adapt to the system, they risk becoming unrecognisable to their own base. These are not necessarily fatal conditions, but they are very defining ones. Any analysis of libertarian electoral performance that does not account for structural and institutional constraints risks mistaking electoral marginality for lack of interest. The evidence suggests something more complicated – namely, that the ideas may be more popular than the parties themselves, and that the real challenge lies more in systemic translation than only building demand.

3.3. Voter Demographics and Regional Support Patterns

Compared to vote share or legislative success, voter demographics are even more difficult to track and interpret systematically in the case of libertarian parties. In most countries, parties of this type operate on the margins of formal politics, e.g. with too small a sample size to appear in public opinion cross-tabs or too inconsistent a presence to be targeted in national polling. Moreover, the ideological fuzziness that sometimes accompanies party coalitions or rebrandings (as with Poland's *Nowa Nadzieja*, or the Czech *Svobodní* after 2025) makes it even more difficult to isolate distinct libertarian voter bases for quantitative analysis.

As a result, this section focuses primarily on the most consistently studied libertarian party – the Libertarian Party (LP) of the United States – which has been the subject of multiple demographic studies, including detailed analyses from institutions such as the Public Religion Research Institute.

What these studies suggest is a voter profile that is surprisingly stable, despite the party's marginal legislative presence. Supporters of the LP in the United States are disproportionately young, white, and male. According to PRRI data, over two-thirds of self-identified libertarians

are men, and approximately 94% identify as non-Hispanic white. In terms of age, the demographic skews significantly younger than the general electorate, with around 62% under 50 and a substantial number under 30 (PRRI, 2013).

Educationally, libertarian-leaning voters in the U.S. tend to be more educated than average, though not overwhelmingly so. They are also less religiously affiliated, more urbanised, and more likely to work in professional or technical fields than in public sector roles. On the ideological spectrum, many lean toward fiscal conservatism and social liberalism, though a significant number resist these labels entirely, preferring to self-describe in terms of “personal responsibility,” “self-ownership,” or “non-aggression”, which further reflects the philosophy-first identity of the movement.

Outside the United States, data is either fragmentary or altogether absent. Most European and Latin American polling does not track libertarian alignment as a formal category, and even when libertarian-aligned parties appear on the ballot, the nature of their coalitions often prevents any clear demographic breakdown. For example, while *Konfederacja* in Poland receives strong youth support, it is not clear which proportion of those voters are drawn by the libertarian wing, and which by its national-conservative or religious components. Such lack of reliable comparative data presents an analytical challenge and brings up an important point: many libertarian parties still exist primarily as ideological projects, not mass political vehicles. Their voter bases tend to be more consistent philosophically than demographically, and their appeal – when it exists – is usually shaped more by structural dissatisfaction than by identity-based voting blocs. In most countries, there is no single libertarian “constituency” in the sociological sense. As such, comparative demographic work on libertarian parties remains a future task – one that will depend heavily on either the growth of these parties or more focused polling methodologies willing to treat them as meaningful actors in the political field. Until then, analysis must remain qualitative, inference-based, and cautious in generalisation.

4. Ideological Purity vs. Strategic Compromise

4.1. Internal Debates on Ideological Purity

Perhaps no challenge has appeared for these libertarian parties more consistently than the question of ideological purity: whether to remain doctrinally faithful to libertarian principles in their most unyielding form, or to compromise in the name of visibility, viability, or tactical relevance. This debate is not only theoretical; it cuts directly into organisational strategy, party messaging, coalition-building, and ultimately, long-term survival. The roots of this tension are structural. Unlike traditional left or right parties, which often evolve through broad-based social movements or trade-offs with institutional power, libertarian parties are frequently founded on philosophical conviction first and political ambition second. Many begin life as intellectual communities or activist spaces, and this shapes the expectations of their early members – who often treat political participation as an extension of ethical principle, surely not as a separate domain requiring negotiation. The result is a party base that is often more interested in being right than in winning.

This pattern has appeared repeatedly. In the United States, the Libertarian Party has long experienced internal factionalism between so-called “radical” and “pragmatist” wings. One faction insists on philosophical consistency (such as the abolition of all taxation, drug legalisation, full non-interventionism), while the other pushes for issue framing that could attract broader support without compromising too many core values. Debates over presidential nominees, especially in 2008, 2016, and 2020, have reflected this split clearly – with some candidates seen as too centrist, or worse, as “Republicans in disguise.”

Similar fractures have emerged elsewhere. In Poland, Nowa Nadzieja’s [New Hope] participation in the Konfederacja coalition has repeatedly triggered criticisms from libertarian circles, especially when coalition rhetoric veers into ethnonationalism, religious traditionalism, or outright illiberalism. The party’s leadership has argued that such alliances

are necessary for legislative access and cultural influence, but the cost has been ongoing reputational ambiguity: to what extent can one partner with the anti-liberal right without ceasing to be libertarian? The case of Svobodní in the Czech Republic illustrates the same question with even sharper edges, especially after its 2025 coalition alignment with SPD and Trikolóra (but also their coalition with Trikolóra in the previous elections, for which they had apologised, and yet repeated), both of which openly support policy agendas that contradict core tenets of individual liberty and minimal government. What began as a party of principle is now viewed by many of its original supporters as one more casualty of political expediency.

In some cases, the opposite dynamic occurs: rather than compromise, libertarian parties refuse to adapt at all and suffer accordingly. Germany's Partei der Vernunft, for instance, has preserved a relatively rigid ideological stance rooted in Austrian economics and minimal-state principles. But this purity has come at the cost of reach: the party is largely invisible in German politics, unable or unwilling to participate in any rhetorical compromises needed for wider appeal. The result is a clean message, but no audience.

These internal debates often surface in strategic questions such as:

- Should the party run candidates who do not fully endorse the platform, but who can draw media attention?
- Is it acceptable to support partial reforms (e.g., tax decreases rather than abolition) if they move in the right direction?
- Can coalitions with non-libertarian actors be justified as tactical steps, or do they constitute ideological surrender?

There are no universally accepted answers to these questions within the movement. What is clear, however, is that these debates are not minor or occasional; in fact, they are absolutely foundational in defining the program plans and marketing methodologies of the parties. In the absence of strong institutional anchors (like unions, mass member-

ship, or historical momentum), ideological coherence becomes both the party's identity and its burden. To compromise is to risk disintegration. But to refuse compromise is to risk irrelevance.

4.2. Role of Decentralization and Local Activism

If libertarian parties struggle to make significant impact at the national level, it is not simply because of electoral thresholds or limited visibility – it is also because many of their core principles resist centralisation by design. In this sense, decentralisation is not just a policy goal of libertarian movements; it is often reflected in their organisational structure and in their preferred modes of political engagement. Many of these parties (particularly the older or more ideologically consistent ones) favour a bottom-up approach, one rooted in community presence, local governance, and individual initiative over centralised control or top-down planning. While this orientation aligns with their philosophical commitments, it also produces a strategic ambiguity: is the goal to build from the ground up, or to remain on the ground indefinitely?

In the United States, for instance, the Libertarian Party's local chapters often operate with high levels of autonomy, both in candidate selection and in issue prioritisation. This has allowed them to remain nimble in municipal races and occasionally secure positions such as city council seats, school boards, or small administrative roles. But the decentralised structure also hinders the party's national coherence. Messaging varies wildly by region, and attempts at national coordination are frequently undermined by infighting, ideological purity tests, or simple logistical fragmentation. What is gained in flexibility is often lost in consistency – and visibility.

The Partei der Vernunft in Germany similarly exhibits strong decentralist instincts. While its national presence is negligible, some of its local candidates have used municipal elections as a way to promote libertarian ideas in town councils or civic forums. Yet, again, this tends to reinforce the perception of the party as a talking-shop for local

activists instead of a serious electoral force. Local activism may preserve ideological energy, but it rarely translates into legislative pressure, even more so in systems where local governance is structurally weak or heavily dependent on national frameworks.

There is, however, a more optimistic reading of decentralisation when considered not as an electoral workaround but as an intentional strategy. In countries where national politics is deeply entrenched or hostile to libertarian ideas, some parties have chosen to embed themselves in specific geographic or issue-based niches, for example, property rights disputes, digital privacy campaigns, or educational choice initiatives and use these as platforms for community-level mobilisation. In Brazil, some early support for Partido Novo came from precisely this kind of local credibility among technocratic professionals and private-sector reformers.

Another example is Nowa Nadzieja's online activism, which – although often focused on national issues – is deeply decentralised in its actual operation. Content creation, meme-driven outreach, and issue advocacy are frequently managed by local organisers or party sympathisers, rather than by any formal campaign apparatus. This kind of digital activism mirrors the party's broader scepticism of hierarchical structures, and allows for a more agile (if less disciplined) form of mobilisation, especially among younger, more technologically embedded demographics.

Irrespective of the above, decentralisation brings with it a familiar risk: the fragmentation of focus. Without clear structures for coordination and message control, libertarian parties can easily fall into a kind of strategic drift – in metaphorical terms, where no one seems quite sure whether the aim is to build a national project or simply to keep the local fires burning. For parties already operating on the margins, this ambiguity can be politically fatal.

4.2.1. Digital Decentralisation and Network-Based Activism

Beyond physical localism, many libertarian parties and movements have increasingly come to rely on digitally decentralised structures as both a practical necessity and an ideological fit. In fact, if the traditional party apparatus emphasises vertical control and central messaging, digital activism can resemble, in a more abstract sense, a federation of micro-nodes, each responsible for its own outreach, interpretation, and dissemination of ideas. Via avoidance of a single media strategy coordinated from headquarters, one can instead witness the emergence of a meshwork of unaffiliated influencers, meme pages, blog collectives, livestreams, and digital forums – each loosely orbiting around a libertarian centre of gravity but with little formal alignment. This is not an accident (well, in theory, it could be, but the approach can also be purposeful in cases). Digital decentralisation mirrors some of the movement’s most deeply held commitments: autonomy, voluntary association, pluralism, and a strong aversion to forced top-down communication models. It also reflects a broader libertarian reading of the internet itself as a decentralised, peer-to-peer environment where gatekeepers are bypassed and individual voice is not dependent on institutional status.

Examples of this dynamic abound. In Poland, Nowa Nadzieja’s digital presence is disproportionately driven by individual actors rather than official campaign accounts. Sławomir Mentzen, for instance, gained considerable popularity via short-form videos and joke-style economic critiques circulated on TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Telegram channels. This allowed for rapid proliferation of content and low-cost voter engagement, advanced among demographics traditionally unreached by institutional politics. But it also created the usual risks: inconsistent messaging, a vulnerability to misinformation, and moments where the informal wing of the movement moves ahead (or off-course) from the party’s formal line. In Argentina, Milei has also amassed millions of followers on YouTube, TikTok, and X.

This presents a paradox: libertarian parties are often outperformed by their own discourse. They exist as the smallest institutional element in

a much larger ideological constellation. In turn, this decentralised digital success can make it even harder to justify hierarchical structures or traditional party-building efforts. Why fundraise for flyers or canvassing when a single organic short (that can be prepared in a matter of minutes and at a cost of dollars, not tens, hundreds, or thousands) can reach more people overnight? Why discipline rogue spokespeople when their virality outpaces official statements?

Of course, this model is undeniably not without limits. Digital activism can scale ideas rapidly, but it cannot substitute for ballots, party programs, factual quantitative financial plans, budgets, or laws. Nor can it resolve strategic conflicts about messaging, alliances, or program design. If anything, it might exacerbate those conflicts by creating multiple, overlapping audiences with differing expectations. Regardless, in a political environment where institutional distrust is high and centralised narratives are increasingly contested, the libertarian movement's comfort with decentralisation may prove to be less a liability and more of a long-term advantage.

4.3. External Perceptions and Media Framing

For parties that often struggle with electoral access, coalition inclusion, and institutional credibility, external perception becomes disproportionately important. In many cases, libertarian parties do not define themselves in the public imagination – they are defined by others. Whether through media coverage, political adversaries, or cultural shorthand, these parties are often assigned roles they neither requested nor recognise: as anti-tax eccentrics, dangerous radicals, ideologically naïve utopians, or in some cases, populists in disguise. These framings matter not just because they shape public understanding, but because they strongly affect the conditions of possibility under which libertarian parties are allowed to operate.

One of the most common patterns is the reduction of libertarianism to economic caricature. In many contexts libertarian parties are framed almost exclusively as free-market fundamentalists, divorced from any

broader philosophical framework. Their focus on deregulation, privatisation, and budgetary discipline is treated not as part of a coherent ethical-political vision, but as an expression of cold technocracy or elite detachment. In media outlets aligned with social democratic or nationalist leanings, these portrayals are often wrapped in dismissive labels: “anti-welfare zealots,” “neoliberal nostalgics,” or “enemies of the poor.” Such framings are deeply misleading and misinformative in scope – they flatten complex ideologies into single-issue economics (and sometimes even fail at that, e.g. with descriptions of only supporting the rich, wanting to hurt those reliant on the state, etc.).

In other cases, particularly where libertarian parties intersect with populist rhetoric or coalitions (as in Argentina or Poland), they are portrayed as Trojan horses for the far-right. Javier Milei’s association with Donald Trump, or *Konfederacja*’s coalition messaging around cultural nationalism, has led to sustained attempts by media and political opponents to discredit libertarian components of these projects by linking them to authoritarian or reactionary tendencies. While in some cases this critique is fair (like when libertarian branding masks socially illiberal practice) it can also erase real ideological distinctions. The result is that libertarian ideas, even when distinct from the populist right, become collateral damage in broader culture wars.

The opposite effect occurs in the Anglosphere, where libertarian parties are often ignored entirely. In countries like the UK, Canada, or Australia, media ecosystems rarely cover libertarian parties as serious actors, and when they do, it is often in the form of curiosity or ridicule. The LP in the U.S. is sometimes treated as an ideological novelty – not dangerous, but unserious; not threatening, but irrelevant. This framing can be as harmful as overt hostility. Media institutions effectively gatekeep legitimacy by denying their seriousness in comparison with alternate political formation, deciding in advance who counts as “real” politics.

Social media, by contrast, provides libertarian movements with a partial workaround. As discussed in the previous section, decentralised

digital strategies allow parties and movements to bypass traditional gatekeepers and cultivate their own public spheres. But this too has its risks. The same virality that boosts visibility can also attract backlash, misrepresentation, or selective outrage. A single meme, misstep, or quote taken out of context can quickly become emblematic – turning the entire party into a punchline or scapegoat. And when public understanding of libertarianism is already shallow or distorted, these moments can indubitably land without corrective nuance.

Part of the difficulty lies in the ideological nonconformity of libertarian parties themselves. In a political landscape dominated by left-right polarisation, libertarian parties tend to cut diagonally: pro-market and anti-authoritarian, pro-individual liberty and anti-welfarist, critical of state power whether it comes from the left or the right. This makes them hard to categorise and thus easy to misrepresent. They are often too economically radical for progressives, too socially permissive for conservatives, and too intellectually structured for populists – a ‘permanent outsider’.

5. Policy Impact and Public Discourse

5.1. Libertarian Contributions to National Policy Debates

Even when libertarian parties fail to achieve impressive electoral results, their influence can extend well beyond the ballot box, mainly in the domain of policy debate. In some national contexts, their presence in the political ecosystem has forced larger parties to respond, reposition, or at least publicly engage with libertarian arguments, even if only to reject them.

This influence is clearest in areas where libertarianism has issue-specific clarity and where its critiques resonate with broader public discontent. Economic freedom, bureaucratic excess, tax policy, digital privacy, and overreach in law enforcement are some of the most obvious examples. In Brazil, for instance, Partido Novo’s advocacy for administrative reform, public spending audits, and the depoliticisation

of public service has helped cement certain fiscal themes as part of mainstream political discourse – even when other parties reject the party itself. The rhetoric of “efficiency” and “technocratic professionalism” now appears across multiple platforms, including those that once had little interest in administrative rationalisation.

In Poland, the libertarian wing of *Konfederacja* (i.e., primarily *Nowa Nadzieja*) has pushed issues such as flat and/or abolition of income tax, voluntary pensions, and personal entrepreneurship into the political spotlight. Its broader insistence on economic freedom as a moral value (not just a technical one) has forced other parties, particularly in the centre-right space, to position themselves with greater clarity on these fronts. While these ideas rarely make it into law, they increasingly structure the symbolic economy of campaign platforms, interviews, and televised debate.

In Argentina, *La Libertad Avanza*’s entrance into executive office has turned what were once fringe slogans into actual policy battles. Milei’s shock-therapy proposals, including ministry eliminations (as well as the fixed ratio of one new hire per three firings, and so on) and budgetary restructuring, have not only become part of the legislative process, but have also forced other parties to articulate responses to questions they had long deferred: What is the legitimate scope of the state? How should inflation actually be addressed? What counts as essential public spending?

5.2. Agenda-Setting and Media Impact

Above formal policy proposals and parliamentary discourse, libertarian parties can and do influence politics through the more diffuse mechanism of agenda-setting. Even in the absence of legislative power, these parties are often able to direct attention toward previously neglected themes: state overreach, coercive taxation, the sanctity of private property, digital autonomy, or the moral logic of decentralisation. From such a standpoint, they can act as narrative disruptors.

Much of this influence operates through media impact, even when the coverage is unfavourable. In many cases, it is precisely the provocativeness or ideological distinctiveness of libertarian parties that forces their entry into public discourse. Javier Milei's campaign in Argentina is the clearest example: while many early media portrayals cast him as an eccentric, the sheer volume of coverage around his proposals – the plans for abolition of the central bank, dollarisation, and radical public sector cuts – pushed these themes from the margins to the centre of national debate. Even critics were forced to engage with the specifics, and in doing so, the ideological framework behind them was indirectly legitimised. In Poland, a similar pattern has emerged around Nowa Nadzieja's economic messaging. Though the party itself holds limited formal power, media attention around Konfederacja has repeatedly forced centrist parties to clarify or defend their own fiscal models. Coverage has often been hostile or cynical, but in doing so, it has given consistent public airtime to libertarian critiques of the welfare state and state-run education, which would otherwise remain buried.

This kind of reactive media exposure is of course a double-edged sword. It raises visibility but can easily distort substance through the compression of complex ideological structures into clickable caricature. Proposals for voluntary pensions or non-state schooling are rendered as “abolish retirement” or “end public education”; a call for decentralised health insurance becomes “scrap healthcare entirely.” In many cases, libertarian parties lack the institutional capacity or media relationships to correct these simplifications. And yet, even in their distorted form, such framings introduce libertarian vocabulary into circulation – “voluntarism,” “personal choice,” “non-coercion,” “market alternatives”.

Thus, while libertarian parties are often denied influence in legislative chambers, they have still gained a kind of outsider leverage in the politics of attention. They challenge what is assumed to be natural or inevitable in public policy, and even when their positions are rejected, they change the rhythm of the debate.

6. Sociopolitical Context and Viability

6.1. Cultural and Historical Factors Shaping Libertarian Appeal

The success or marginality of libertarian parties cannot be understood solely through institutional or strategic lenses. Beneath the surface of electoral systems, party structures, and media exposure lie deeper cultural and historical forces that either predispose societies toward libertarian ideas or render them alien, even threatening. These forces build not only voter preferences, but also the symbolic resonance of libertarian concepts like property, autonomy, and limited government. In other words, libertarianism does not enter into a culturally neutral field – it arrives into landscapes that are already coded by historical memory, ideological habit, and some sort of collective expectations about the role of the state, not to say that these cannot be mended and changed with time (and the correct approach).

In the United States, libertarianism finds its most natural ideological terrain. The country's founding mythology – individual liberty, limited government, rebellion against taxation without representation – lends libertarian rhetoric a kind of built-in cultural legitimacy. Even when the Libertarian Party fails electorally, its ideas are recognisable and often echoed by factions within the Republican Party or by cultural currents in American life (gun rights, home-schooling, crypto advocacy, etc.). In this context, libertarianism is not outside the system – it is part of the ideological heritage, even if only selectively remembered or unevenly applied.

Contrast this with continental Europe, where the state has historically been conceived not as an oppressor to be restrained, but as a guarantor of order, protection, and national continuity. In countries like Germany, France, or even the Nordic states, the idea of radically limiting state functions clashes with deeply held beliefs about social solidarity and institutional competence. Here, libertarianism, to its detriment, quite commonly appears as naive marketism or Anglo-American eccentricity. Even when individual liberty is valued, it is typically under-

stood as existing within, rather than in opposition to, a structured and active state. This makes libertarian messages both counter-intuitive and politically risky.

In post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, the story is more complicated. Decades of state authoritarianism, surveillance, and enforced collectivism created a cultural allergy to central planning (Zitelmann, 2024) – but also a lingering dependence on state structures for employment, security, and pensions. As a result, libertarian parties in the region (like *Nowa Nadzieja* or *Svobodní*) speak into a conflicted historical space: one that is simultaneously suspicious of state power and deeply entangled with it. In Poland, for example, economic liberalism resonates strongly among entrepreneurial youth, but proposals to privatise education or eliminate welfare can still trigger memories of economic insecurity and institutional problems from the 1990s. Libertarianism can thus appear both as a promise of emancipation and as a return to volatility depending entirely on the social group or historical reference point.

In Latin America, cultural and historical dynamics bring yet another varied terrain. The state is often seen as both the source of dysfunction and the last line of defence against poverty. In countries like Brazil and Argentina, libertarian messages around government inefficiency, corruption, or inflationary irresponsibility strike a real chord particularly with the middle classes and business communities. But there is also deep scepticism of market fundamentalism, born out of the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s and early 2000s, which in many cases failed to deliver widespread prosperity or social mobility. In this context, libertarianism faces the challenge of distinguishing itself from discredited technocracy, even when its economic messages are more principled or coherent than past reform agendas.

Religious, familial, and communitarian traditions also play their own role. In societies with strong collective identities (based on religion, ethnicity, nationhood, etc.), the libertarian emphasis on radical indi-

vidualism may clash with prevailing moral codes. A party proposing decentralised education or the end of government involvement in marriage may appear culturally dissonant (other than also politically provocative). On the other hand, in highly secular or urbanised environments, these same proposals may be welcomed as long-overdue liberalisation.

6.2. Case Comparisons

When considered side by side, the five core cases analysed in this article reveal a diverse set of interactions between libertarian ideology and national political culture. Structural conditions (such as electoral systems) do explain much of the variation in party performance, though the more decisive differentiators often lie in how libertarianism fits (or doesn't) within the deeper cultural narratives and institutional traditions of each country.

In the United States, the Libertarian Party operates within a uniquely receptive cultural context. The ideological grammar of limited government and personal liberty is woven into the country's political mythology, and even when the LP fails electorally, its principles are echoed across both Republican and independent discourse. The party may be institutionally marginal, but it is philosophically legible. What limits it most is not cultural rejection, but systemic structure (first-past-the-post voting and the popularisation of solely the two main parties) and internal fragmentation.

In Germany, the PdV exists in a political culture where the state is (interestingly, despite its history) broadly trusted, and where solidarity and institutional stability are deeply valued. Its Austrian-school framing and libertarian minimalism come across to many as anti-social abstraction. Even with a proportional system, the party fails to build traction, not necessarily because its structure is defective (though, of course, it can also not be denied that the party lacks marketing or budgets to scale), but because it lacks cultural resonance. Here, the ideological starting point is fundamentally foreign to the political imag-

ination of most voters – especially in a postwar context that equates strong state institutions with peace and order, and with a much more socialist-oriented youth (in support of parties like *Die Linke* and *Die Grünen*).

Poland sits between these two poles. *Nowa Nadzieja* operates in a context that is both historically suspicious of state control and socially dependent on it. Such tension that opens space for libertarian rhetoric, but complicates its translation into broad policy mandates. What makes Poland distinct is the generational divide: younger voters in urban centres, digital-native and entrepreneurial, are far more receptive to libertarian messaging, even if inconsistently so. This creates potential, but it also means the party must constantly navigate identity ambiguity – trying to appeal to disaffected youth while cohabiting with traditionalist and nationalist allies.

Brazil's *Partido Novo* offers a different challenge. The party's technocratic liberalism has allowed it to build a national presence, but its appeal is sharply class-bound – largely limited to urban, educated, middle- and upper-class voters. In a political environment where inequality is stark and where the memory of failed reforms lingers, *Novo*'s messaging can seem aloof or elitist. At the same time, Brazil's chronic institutional dysfunction gives the party a legitimising foil: it can present itself as the solution to cronyism and inefficiency.

Finally, Argentina presents the most extreme case – and, paradoxically, the most successful one. *La Libertad Avanza*, under Milei's leadership, has turned libertarian rhetoric into executive power by intensifying its ideological message. This success is arguably less about the spread of libertarian values than about the collapse of establishment credibility (but this is not to say that libertarian values were not also intriguing to voters). In a context of economic despair and systemic failure, libertarianism has been rebranded as a revolt against political parasitism, which allowed it to reach audiences that would otherwise reject free-market messaging outright but wanted to try an alternate

solution – a replacement to systems that were visibly dysfunctional. Argentina shows that cultural friction can be overcome (but best only when the centre collapses).

6.3. Economic Systems and Libertarian Narratives

Any ideological project that touches on the nature of taxation, regulation, public spending, or property inevitably confronts the underlying logic of a country's economic system, i.e., how it operates, is narrated, is understood, and is symbolically legitimised. Libertarianism is no exception. If anything, it is especially dependent on its ability to recode economic arrangements in moral and political terms: taxation becomes coercion, inflation becomes theft, central planning becomes a violation of voluntary exchange. These narratives unquestionably do not emerge in some sort of a vacuum; they either align with or challenge the dominant structure of the economy, and their viability depends greatly on how that structure is experienced by the population.

In contexts where economic systems are perceived as exploitative, corrupt, or inefficient, libertarian narratives can gain traction quickly, with extra points, so to speak, if they are framed not just as technically competent but as morally redemptive. This is one of the central reasons *La Libertad Avanza* succeeded in Argentina. The country's prolonged economic crisis – marked by triple-digit inflation, debt cycles, and political gridlock – created a perfect storm of disillusionment. Within this climate, libertarian critiques of monetary irresponsibility and parasitic bureaucracy did not require complex theoretical justification; they matched people's everyday experience. Milei's calls to abolish the central bank or slash state spending may have seemed radical in other systems, but in Argentina, they resonated as long-overdue interventions into a failing economic order. In Brazil, a similar logic exists, but the outcome has been more limited. The country's complex state-capitalist structure – where public services are often poor and clientelism endemic – lends itself to libertarian critiques. *Partido Novo* has positioned itself effectively as a party of fiscal responsibility and governance reform, advocating for reduced state foot-

print and merit-based public service. But here, the party's message has remained mostly confined to professional classes, and has struggled to scale into broader electoral momentum. This is partly because Brazil's economic memory includes both neoliberal trauma and social investment gains. In the end, the result is an electorate split between scepticism toward the state and fear of abandonment by it.

In post-communist countries like Poland and the Czech Republic, economic transformation was swift and often brutal. The shift from planned to market economies in the 1990s left legacies of both entrepreneurial opportunity and systemic insecurity. For many older voters, libertarianism is seen not as liberation, but as a euphemism for instability with memories covering the dismantling of safety nets, the dominance of foreign capital, and the loss of social guarantees (yet none of these were overall negatives to the countries). Nevertheless, this is not an extraordinary belief from a sociological standpoint and solely a product of the negativity bias (Williams, 2022) – one more vividly and in greater detail recalls experiences when they are negative, with this being considered a part of human evolution that made us more receptive to potential threats. But among younger voters, primarily those raised in a more globalised, digital economy, libertarian narratives can resonate far more positively: as empowerment, innovation, and the moral legitimacy of ownership and competition. This generational economic divide directly mirrors the political divide seen in *Nowa Nadzieja*'s support base: pro-market youth, more anti-market elder bloc.

Germany's highly structured, export-oriented social market economy has long been one of Europe's most stable. The state's economic role is mostly celebrated: as a regulator of fair competition, a buffer against volatility, and a guarantor of welfare provision. In such a context, libertarian economic narratives struggle to find a foothold. Proposals to "get government out of the way" or "shrink the bureaucracy" appear out of sync with an economy where government is apparently beneficial (although such a fact is not proven). Even when government

inefficiencies exist, the proposed libertarian remedy is often perceived as disproportionate.

The United States, as mentioned earlier, have an economic system in which libertarian narratives have a long-standing foothold. The country's market-oriented model aligns in many ways with libertarian principles, but its deep entanglement of public and private sectors, especially in areas like defence, healthcare, and education, complicates the purity of those narratives. More importantly, economic populism (both left and right) has increasingly challenged libertarian framing by reintroducing class-based narratives of exploitation and inequality. Libertarian messaging that once had cultural currency ("you earned it, you keep it") now competes with resurgent calls for redistribution and collective guarantees.

7. Conclusion

7.1. A Final Evaluation of Real-World Political Influence

Across five primary case studies and a wider spectrum of global examples, one pattern is clear: libertarian parties are not major political actors in terms of vote share, parliamentary weight, or policy execution (at least not in any consistent or systematic fashion). But this observation, while numerically accurate, does not settle the question of their real-world political influence. Influence is not reducible to seats won or offices held; it also operates symbolically, discursively, and structurally. In the case of ideological movements that exist more as intellectual challenges to the status quo, it is even more so.

On the most pragmatic level, the record of electoral success is uneven at best. Only one of the examined parties – La Libertad Avanza in Argentina – has successfully translated libertarian rhetoric into executive office. Elsewhere, the picture is more modest. Partido Novo has secured parliamentary representation but failed to scale nationally. Nowa Nadzieja's electoral presence is real, but heavily dependent on coalition politics (after all, even its name is not too famous in the coun-

try, rather the Konfederacja coalition is prioritised in all marketing and media material). The U.S. Libertarian Party remains institutionally entrenched but electorally stalled. PdV in Germany, despite years of ideological consistency, has yet to escape near-total marginality.

It shall be considered that influence is not synonymous with control. When viewed through a broader lens – policy framing, agenda-setting, bringing up new ideas – libertarian parties have had a more substantial and arguably more enduring impact. Many of their core principles have entered the political bloodstream of their respective countries, whether or not they are attributed correctly. Arguments for decentralisation, fiscal discipline, voluntary association, and property rights are now part of the policy lexicon in ways that would have been unthinkable in previous decades. This is not only because of libertarian parties, but they have served – at times – as accelerants.

Their clearest successes lie in agenda influence and issue insertion. In multiple contexts, libertarian actors have forced mainstream parties to position themselves on questions they might otherwise avoid: the scope of the state, the ethics of taxation, the relationship between personal freedom and collective responsibility. They have changed what can be said (and in some cases, what must be said) in political debate. When Konfederacja forces a televised defence of income tax, or when Partido Novo compels centre-left politicians to speak the language of efficiency, or when Milei's slogans echo across Latin American media, we are not witnessing electoral conquest, but discursive leverage. At the same time, libertarian parties remain fundamentally limited by the tension between ideological consistency and political viability. Their refusal to compromise often becomes their badge of honour and also their strategic ceiling. Those that do compromise (as in coalition contexts) risk reputational dilution. We can infer that libertarian parties rarely fail due to a single moment of collapse; rather, they erode at the edge of contradiction: between principle and reach, visibility and coherence, rhetoric and realism.

Finally, libertarian parties continue to function as early indicators of public disillusionment. Where they rise, it is often because trust in mainstream governance has collapsed – not necessarily because libertarianism has gained mass popularity, but because it offers a structured and honest language of rejection. In this way, one can cynically state they serve a diagnostic function. They reveal where the current institutional model is most vulnerable.

7.2. Directions for Future Research

As this article has sought to show, the political relevance of libertarian parties cannot be measured solely in terms of electoral performance. Their influence is far more complicated, and often distributed across different arenas: symbolic, discursive, ideological. At the same time, some of the conclusions drawn here are provisional, limited by available data, case-specific variability, and the uneven visibility of these parties across regions. As such, there remains a strong case for further research.

One immediate area concerns comparative political culture. This article has explored the cultural receptivity to libertarian ideas in broad national terms, much more could be said at the subnational level. What explains, for instance, the varying degrees of libertarian support across U.S. states, Brazilian urban zones, or Polish generational strata? A more fine-grained analysis could reveal important insights about local political economies of liberty and decentralisation.

A second promising direction involves the internal governance and strategic dynamics of libertarian parties themselves. As noted throughout, these parties often struggle with the tension between ideological purity and political compromise – yet the internal mechanics of these debates remain underexplored. Detailed organisational studies could shed light on how these parties manage disagreement, structure their leadership, and adapt (or fail to adapt) to electoral incentives. How is doctrine maintained or stretched? How is strategy decided when the base is split between principle and pragmatism?

A third area is digital political infrastructure. While this article touched on the decentralised and often internet-native nature of libertarian activism, a full analysis of their (or other parties'/ideologies') digital ecosystems (e.g., platforms, influencers, and media strategies) would greatly enrich understanding. Especially in contexts where institutional reach is weak, digital influence may prove to be the main arena of libertarian presence. Yet there is still a lack of robust empirical work on how digital-native libertarian discourse travels, scales, or converts into real-world support.

Last, there remains space for longitudinal work. The libertarian movement both in its party-political and broader ideological form is still in flux. Several of the parties discussed here are young, and their trajectories uncertain. Long-term tracking of public attitudes, party evolution, and electoral strategies could help determine whether their current marginality is a permanent structural feature or a transitional phase toward broader cultural embedment.

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