

Atlas Network's review of the worldwide freedom movement

FREEDOM'S CHAMPION

CRASH

SUMMER 2024



Will Argentina Achieve A Freer Future?

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On the Cover: Self-described libertarian Javier Milei, elected last year as president of Argentina, has myriad challenges to overcome if he is to return the country to prosperity. Atlas Network partners have been instrumental in making it possible for free-market ideas like Milei's to be politically feasible, and they have remained at the forefront of ongoing policy reform discussions. Find out more on page 12. Cover image: Steven Green

MISSION

Atlas Network increases global prosperity by strengthening a network of independent partner organizations that promote individual freedom and are committed to identifying and removing barriers to human flourishing.

VISION

Our vision is of a free, prosperous, and peaceful world where the principles of individual liberty, property rights, limited government, and free markets are secured by the rule of law.

STRATEGY

Atlas Network cultivates a network of partners that share this vision. To accelerate the pace of achievement by our partners in their local communities, Atlas Network's unique Coach, Compete, Celebrate™ strategic model inspires our partners to improve performance and achieve extraordinary outcomes.

Coach

Atlas Network provides world-class seminars, workshops, mentoring, and other learning opportunities that inspire professionalism and build community among our independent partners.

Compete

Atlas Network offers grant and prize competitions that fuel our partners' efforts to develop, innovate, and succeed.

Celebrate

Atlas Network fosters camaraderie and stokes ambitions among our partners by celebrating their greatest accomplishments through events and media outreach.

Atlas Network has been a four-star Charity Navigator member since 2008.

Platinum Transparency 2024
Candid.

Atlas Network is a GuideStar Exchange Platinum-Level Participant.

Atlas Network's donation payment processor is certified to PCI Service Provider Level 1, the most stringent level of certification available.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Different Perspectives to Advance Freedom



Just before this issue of *Freedom's Champion* headed to press, my ten-year-old son P.D. and I were looking at a set of optical illusions, including this famous one. You might see it as either “the mother-in-law” or “the wife,” depending on your vantage point. P.D. smiled broadly when the secondary image came to him. It’s a great lesson that there is always more than one way to look at a situation, and that same idea came to me when I thumbed through the pages now in your hands.



Do you see what I see? I see an abundance of inspiring work that’s being done to advance the core values that you and I care about. The stories themselves show how similar challenges to freedom require different strategies around the world.

In the United States, Pelican Institute is rolling back licensing requirements that keep qualified people out of jobs, while in Tanzania, Liberty Sparks has reformed business registration procedures to help entrepreneurs enter the formal marketplace.

Years of work by Bulgaria’s Institute for Market Economics is undoing the legacy of Soviet influence—and shoring up the rule of law—by helping create an independent judiciary. In Argentina, our partners are in for the long haul to chip away at the problems left by Peronism.

In one article, you’ll hear from a passionate young woman who is dedicated to bringing freedom to Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa. In another, we celebrate the recipient of our 2024 Sir Antony Fisher Achievement Award, Parth Shah,

who played a pioneering role in growing the liberty movement in what is now the world’s most populous country.

A quarter century ago, Parth presented at an Atlas Network conference we held in Dallas as “the new think tank leader in the network—our first partner in India.” Now that think-tank, Centre for Civil Society, stands as one of our

most accomplished allies and has served as a role model for many others in the growing liberty movement.

This is what your investment in Atlas Network empowers: a community of organizations with similar visions, confronting different problems. Even when their contexts and stories look a little different, they can take lessons and inspiration from one another. This brings progress and freedom to the world.

Brad Lips
Chief Executive Officer,
Atlas Network

BULGARIA AMENDS CONSTITUTION

Removing Soviet-Era Remnants in Judiciary

Bulgaria revised its constitution to reduce the excessive powers of the prosecutor general, a legacy from its communist past, enhancing legal fairness and economic prospects.

Imagine spending years of your life and untold amounts of money to build a small business and pursue your dreams only to have it all torn down through an “investigation” launched by an unelected and unaccountable government official. Imagine your local government, or another independent government body, suddenly begins suffering institutional harassment and disruption by the same official. For almost a century, this has been the reality for millions of Bulgarians, even after they broke the chains of one-party communist rule in 1989.

From the time Bulgaria entered the Warsaw Pact in 1947 until 2023, prosecutor generals in the country operated as “watchdogs,” above the rule of law and immune to discipline or criminal liability. The country’s first prosecutor general in the period immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union summarized his power by boasting: “Only God is above me.”

Entrepreneurs in the country faced constant uncertainty about what might happen if they were at the mercy of unscrupulous prosecutors dispatched by this office, earning Bulgaria a widespread reputation for corruption among European Union countries.

For years, the Institute for Market Economics (IME), an Atlas Network partner based in the nation’s capital of Sofia, demanded accountability and oversight for Bulgaria’s judicial officials. IME worked with Bulgarian policymakers on this dys-

functional vestige of their formerly socialist system, proposing solutions that would ensure a role for prosecutors that was limited only to criminal issues, taking away their unrestricted ability to meddle in the lives and businesses of law-abiding citizens.

None of this would have been possible without the steadfast support of Atlas Network

IME’s campaign bore fruit in December 2023, when the Bulgarian National Assembly voted to amend the constitution to curtail the powers of the prosecutor general and reduce the length of their term from seven years to five. IME’s proposal, first introduced in 2019, laid the groundwork for ending unchecked corruption in the judicial system, limiting the power of unelected officials, and creating a stable economic environment for entrepreneurs and investors.

Ivan Bregov, the head of IME’s legal program, said this reform is just the beginning of the organization’s efforts to ensure Bulgaria’s justice system has a strong commitment to the rule of law.

IME has also been formally invited by the Bulgarian Ministry of Justice to participate in a newly formed working group to consult on legislative amendments needed to bring the country’s laws in line with the constitutional change.

“The constitutional reform is a key milestone in the development of justice in our country, but our endeavors did not commence, nor will end with it,” he said. “Our consistent efforts over time have yielded results that surpass personal satisfaction. I am proud that our personal efforts feel socially significant.”

“None of this would have been possible without the steadfast support of Atlas Network,” IME Executive Director Svetla Kostadinova said.

“Two grants in 2018 and 2020 empowered the IME Legal Program to work independently, systematically, and effectively. These grants, cou-



↑ The Bulgarian National Assembly prepares to vote on the constitutional amendment limiting the powers of the prosecutor general

pled with small donations from Bulgarian supporters, played a pivotal role in shaping the first proposals for constitutional reform in 2019. Atlas Network believed in our efforts, backed us when few others did, and played an instrumental role in reshaping a nation’s Constitution. The support was not just financial; it was a beacon of hope and possibility when many doubted change.”

↓ Ivan Bregov (right, head of IME’s Legal Program) and Ekaterina Baksanova (left, legal expert), both of whom played important roles in IME’s pivotal win



ATLAS NETWORK DONORS

Supporter Spotlight

J. Brian Huber

FISHER LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBER

“In 2023, I had the opportunity to join Atlas Network for my first-ever Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner in New York City. Not only did I get to revisit a city that holds many great memories for me, but I also had the opportunity to make new ones, such as the one captured here. After previously connecting online with Lithuanian Free Market Institute President Elena and Vice President Aneta, I was excited to meet them in person at the forum!”



Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner 2023



Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner 2023

Jean-Claude Gruffat

ATLAS NETWORK BOARD MEMBER

“I’m always eager to expand our message of civil liberties, limited government, and free markets to a larger and newer audience.”

Nikos Monoyios

ATLAS CLUB MEMBER, BOARD MEMBER 2019–2023



Europe Liberty Forum 2019 (Athens, Greece)

Joe and Alice DiFiglia

ATLAS CLUB MEMBERS

“My wife, Alice, and I were able to join Atlas Network’s Donor Tour in Mexico City in 2022. The trip not only gave us new friends within the liberty movement but also gave us a reason to ‘cheers’ with them on the success of Atlas Network’s Latin America partners!”



Mexico City Donor Tour after Latin America Liberty Forum 2022

Supporter Spotlight highlights some of our most generous and engaged donors and why they stay involved with Atlas Network. Membership in Atlas Club offers special opportunities to donors who invest at least \$1,000 per year, while Fisher Legacy Society provides planned giving options to ensure a strong future for the freedom movement.

Scan the code to access Atlas Network donation page:





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gather to connect, collaborate on overcoming
challenges, and celebrate their achievements.



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ALUMNI IN FOCUS

Ayemen Fatima

Atlas Network partners in their own words

Ayemen Fatima's path took her from a pharmacy school graduate to a leading advocate for liberty. Through her work with Students For Liberty and Ladies of Liberty Alliance, she has mentored over 1,000 students while promoted libertarian principles globally.

My journey to becoming a voice for freedom began with a spark ignited on a college campus in Hyderabad, India. Fresh out of Osmania University with a doctor of pharmacy in hand, my world revolved around understanding and learning how to comply with healthcare regulations. Then, I encountered Students For Liberty (SFL) and with it a new idea: individual liberty. It challenged everything I thought I knew, especially about healthcare decision-making. The concept resonated deeply with me, standing in stark contrast to the ever-increasing regulations I'd been studying.

SUMMER 2024



W E B I N A R

FREEDOM WORLD WIDE

with Tom G. Palmer

Join the legendary freedom promoter
Tom G. Palmer and Atlas Network
for live conversations and firsthand
intel on the biggest issues impacting
liberty in the world today.



After becoming more acquainted with the ideas and philosophy of freedom, I felt that I had an opportunity to have a greater positive impact on the world by combining it with my pursuit of a medical career.

SFL's Local Coordinator Program provided training on economics, politics, and classical liberal philosophy, and an opportunity to serve in a leadership role. I was especially intrigued by the deep compatibility I found between my faith as a Muslim and the ideas of liberty.

My newfound passion propelled me through the ranks of SFL. As events chair and later chairwoman for South Asia, I spearheaded efforts to spread libertarian ideals across the region. From troubled Afghanistan to the idyllic Maldives, a concerning lack of awareness about fundamental rights became tragically clear. It was a wake-up call—and an indication that my work with SFL was accomplishing something essential.

One of the best rewards of being in the ideas business has been seeing those ideas be actualized.

My mission expanded beyond borders. With Ladies of Liberty Alliance (LOLA), I helped establish chapters across the globe, empowering women to embrace individual liberty.

A turning point came with Atlas Network Academy's training on think-tank leadership in Sri Lanka. Here, I grasped the immense power and potential of non-profits in promoting liberty. To date, I still recall how intensive the program was, the nights we spent brainstorming and the joy of seeing our ideas transform. I was especially affected by the idea that think tanks could act like businesses—competing to have a greater impact on the world rather than to create more val-

ue for customers. I have found that most non-profits are stuck because they don't know how impact works, and Atlas Network Academy helped me figure out how we can deliver and measure it.

Fueled by this experience, I returned to SFL, supporting student programs across 64 countries and multiple continents.

Witnessing the impact is humbling. In Africa, our alumni are building their own think tanks, fighting for liberty at the grassroots level. The team's dedication even earned them the prestigious 2023 Africa Liberty Award!

Asia presents a unique challenge with its deeply entrenched societal divisions. But that's where SFL's educational programs come in. We offer a glimpse of a freer society, fostering critical thinking and individual agency.

The Middle East is perhaps the toughest nut to crack, and I want to take a moment to call attention to the region. Pioneering programs there have been a source of immense pride. But liberty can do more than improve the lives of people within a given country. I truly believe libertarian principles of individual and property rights, at their core, will pave the way for lasting peace and dignity. SFL chapters in the region are working toward this vision.

One of the best rewards of being in the ideas business has been seeing those ideas be actualized. I saw this happen during the opportunity I had to mentor multiple projects in SFL and with Atlas Network



↑ Ayemen speaks at an Atlas Network Academy workshop in Malaysia on effective messaging.



↑ Ayemen speaks at the capstone in-person training of She Leads, a six-month program by Students For Liberty focused on helping women from 13 countries develop and execute local pro-liberty projects.



↑ Ayemen (back row, fourth from left) at a Students For Liberty regional conference in Morocco focused on individual liberty and free speech. The two-day event saw 84 attendees from four countries across the Middle East & North Africa.

Academy's project mentorship program where I was matched to a local European project. The experience was enriching and made me realize the similarities between our shared end goal and how collaboration will get us there faster.

In 2023, I had yet another incredible opportunity to further hone my leadership skills through Atlas Network Academy's prestigious Executive Accelerator program. This week-long intensive experience with new leaders in the movement equipped me with invaluable skills and fostered enduring friendships with like-minded individuals.

Over the past seven years, I have directly mentored over 1,000 students worldwide. Witnessing their transformation into advocates for liberty has been my greatest reward. This experience has helped me find a passion for the principles of project leadership and the culture around mentorship. These two tools can make a strong impact around the globe.

When I take a moment to reflect on how far I've come, I am filled with gratitude to Atlas Network,

My unwavering optimism lies in the ability of individual empowerment to create a better world.

Students For Liberty, and LOLA. It feels unreal to be part of the change, but much still must be done. I am especially hopeful that my work with these organizations will create a meaningful impact to increase individuals'

freedom of movement and immigration, protect religious freedom, and reform healthcare regulations. I also want to turn back the legacy of colonialism by restoring classical liberal ideas to their place in political thinking throughout Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa. These are issues I deeply care about, and by finding my niche I can do my bit in helping to create a freer and more empowered society.

My unwavering optimism lies in the ability of individual empowerment to create a better world.

My journey in the liberty movement as I have found my niche has been extraordinary. It's a constant reminder that even the smallest spark can ignite a firestorm for freedom.



Who Moved the Overton Window in Argentina?

By Editor-in-Chief **Clint Pagurko**

The election of President Javier Milei in Argentina proved that the Overton Window has shifted, so that free-market ideas can be tried to repair the nation's repressed economy.

On June 11, Argentines will be able to look back on six months under President Javier Milei. Agustín Etchebarne leaned forward in the midst of a video call to emphasize: “It will be the perfect time to evaluate progress under Milei and to explore what more can be done to revitalize a broken economy.”

Etchebarne leads Libertad y Progreso (LyP), a think tank based in Buenos Aires that received a grant from Atlas Network in January 2024. The grant powered new research and enabled plans for a major international summit to bolster a pro-liberty reform agenda the likes of which Argentina has lacked for more than a century. Those plans blossomed into a major event, in partnership with the Cato Institute, set to take place on the six-month anniversary of Milei’s inauguration.

If the reforms President Milei has proposed thus far are fully implemented, Argentina could ascend by 90 positions in The Heritage Foundation’s *Index of Economic Freedom*.

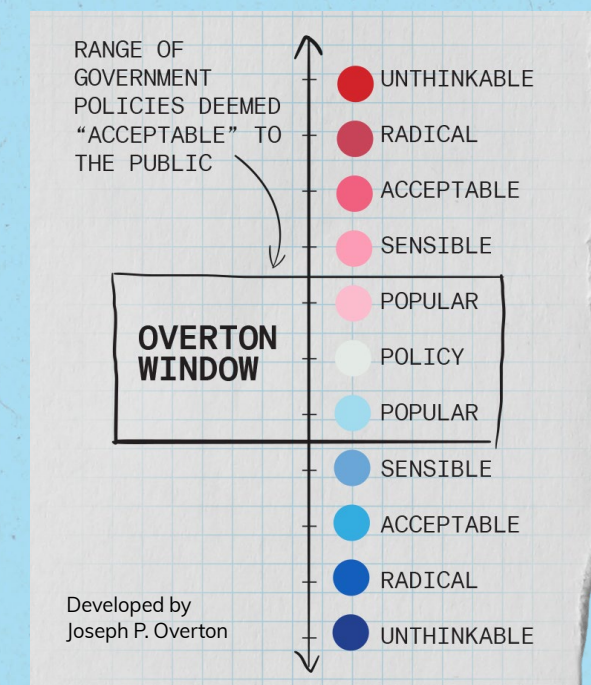
Etchebarne pointed out, “If the reforms President Milei has proposed thus far are fully implemented, Argentina could ascend by 90 positions in The Heritage Foundation’s *Index of Economic Freedom* into the ‘moderately free’ category from our country’s current status as ‘repressed.’ That would be a major change, and we are hopeful that it’s only the starting point.”

Atlas Network’s CEO Brad Lips called attention to the significance of the moment. “The world’s attention is on Argentina. Milei’s campaign, at first, seemed a curiosity: who’s the wild-haired entertainer waving a chainsaw as he talks about cutting the size of government? Now, it’s clear this is a sober effort to do something extraordinarily hard that would have huge consequences if it succeeds. Latin American countries have trended toward authoritarianism and statism for the last quarter century,

and it hasn’t worked well. Argentine voters want something different: an end to Peronist overreach and a return of power to the people.”

What change shifted Argentina’s Overton Window? That’s a term, coined by the late Joe Overton of Mackinac Center (a Michigan-based partner of Atlas Network), that describes the range of government policies deemed “acceptable” to the public at a given point in time. The election of Javier Milei in late 2023 showed that the Overton Window in Argentina now includes libertarian ideas about letting people choose their preferred currency, whereas previously, the authority of the central bank was not questioned in mainstream political discussions. For generations, Argentine politics has been dominated by “Peronism,” a special mix of cronyism and unionism that Juan Perón first brought as president of Argentina right after World War II. The result was a slow decline for Argentina, from being one of the world’s freest and richest economies at the beginning of the 1900s, to one of the most unstable at its end.

In the twenty-first century, Cristina Kirchner continued this style of governance—heavy taxes on a heavily regulated private sector, to support lavish public spending and a web of “clientelism” across varied constituencies—as president and then vice president until Milei’s surprising election at the end of last year.





↑ **Jonas Torrico**, executive director of Asociación Argentina de Contribuyentes, celebrates his organization's win of Atlas Network's 2024 Latin America Liberty Award.

Jonás Torrico is executive director of Atlas Network partner Asociación Argentina de Contribuyentes (AAC), a pro-taxpayer group. "With the passage of time we have allowed the state to advance over us," Torrico remarked, "to advance with more regulations, to advance with more taxes, to advance with more and more restrictions to freedom, to private property, to work, to development."

What this has meant for everyday Argentines is a 221% inflation rate that made daily essentials unaffordable and rendered savings all but worthless. Argentina also has the dubious distinction of having the second highest tax burden in the world. According to World Bank calculations, the country's corporate tax rate can be as high as 106% of commercial profits once each level of government has taken their bite of the apple.

While Atlas Network celebrates when a government implements ideas long championed by its members, it is careful to keep the focus on policy not political personalities.

On the campaign trail, Milei promised to change this. So far he's slashed federal spending, bringing the budget out of a deficit for the first time in years, cut bureaucratic agencies, and succeeded in bringing inflation down out of the stratosphere. His landmark speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos was a ringing endorsement of the free market and the heroism of entrepreneurs.

Many fans of freedom, newly attentive to Argentina politics and policy, are asking "How? How did Milei become 'one of us'? How did he capture the enthusiasm of such a wide segment of Argentina's voting public, especially its younger generations?"

Both questions share a similar answer. Argentina has had a robust freedom movement for decades. Gerardo Bongiovanni founded Fundación Libertad in 1988. "Even at our think tank's founding, we were building on a strong liberal tradition within Argentina," he said. "A decade earlier, a classical liberal business school, ESEADE, was founded by Alberto Benegas Lynch, whom Milei praised at Davos as our country's 'greatest hero of the ideas of freedom.'" Bongiovanni continued, "Fundación Libertad and other partners of Atlas Network in this country have made pro-liberty policy ideas acceptable, even 'cool.' We're proud that President Milei himself and many of his advisors have participated in our programs."

Partners of Atlas Network in Argentina also have shown the practical benefits of moving in the direction of greater liberty, no matter who is in office.

Asociación Argentina de Contribuyentes won Atlas Network's 2024 Latin America Liberty Award for leading successful efforts to repeal an arbitrary tax on all credit card statements in the country's capital. Gaining support across the political divide, the tax was eliminated, and three million residents of Buenos Aires were refunded \$300 million dollars.

Libertad y Progreso's *Policy Handbook* (now in its fifth edition) has long proposed ways to reduce the size of government and cut wasteful public spending. As Argentina dipped further into economic decline, voters and politicians of all stripes began looking for solutions; Libertad y Progreso had them ready. Last year, LyP held dozens of meetings with political parties across the political spectrum, including Milei's, in conjunction with the *Policy Handbook*. After Milei's election, the president implemented several of the handbook's recommendations, including a significant deregulation of the labor market and cutting the number of executive branch agencies from 21 to eight.

↓ **Gerardo Bongiovanni** in 2008 at the 20th anniversary of Fundación Libertad, which has kept classical liberal principles in the public debate over the decades in Argentina.



↑ **Agustín Etchebarne**, general director of Libertad y Progreso, which will host the June 2024 conference "The Rebirth of Liberty in Argentina and Beyond."

"Atlas Network and its partners are 100% committed to policy changes and more impactful pro-liberty narratives that will lead to inclusive prosperity. This is what will be on display at the upcoming conference that Libertad y Progreso is holding with Cato Institute in Buenos Aires—a serious effort to curate effective solutions to enormous economic and social problems," said Atlas Network Senior Fellow Roberto Salinas León. "While it is exciting to have a politician self-identify as a libertarian, no one should underestimate the technical challenges of a complete overhaul of the monetary system and other important structural reforms. Let's bring together those with experience and expertise to outline how it can be done right."

Atlas Network's strategic model—collaborating with hundreds of independent think tanks and do-tanks around the globe—is built to ensure that lessons learned in one location can be applied in another.

While Atlas Network celebrates when a government implements ideas long championed by its members, it is careful to keep the focus on policy not political personalities. "F. A. Hayek was really wise in dedicating his book *The Road to Serfdom* to 'the socialists of all parties.' He wanted to warn everyone of the dangers of certain ideas. We keep the same approach and stay authentically non-partisan," said Atlas Network CEO Brad Lips. "Long-term ideas are much more important than short-term politics."

In this same spirit of objective analysis, Universidad Francisco Marroquín has launched a website with monetary, fiscal, labor, and macroeconomic

dashboards with continuously updated statistics to monitor what's happening in Argentina. Project Director Olav Dirkmaat explains, "Interest in Milei is bringing unprecedented interest in free-market ideas, so we want to provide this growing audience with a clear window into what is working and what's not working. My big hope is that, by objectively tracking reforms and their measurable results, we'll have many lessons for other countries to consider as they chart future plans."

President Milei has welcomed the scrutiny, even sharing links to the UFM dashboard on his social media channels. You can visit the dashboard by scanning the QR code.

Atlas Network's strategic model—collaborating with hundreds of independent think tanks and do-tanks around the globe—is built to ensure that lessons learned in one location can be applied in another. For a long time, Argentina has provided only a cautionary tale about how big government can suffocate a once-productive economy. Thanks to the perseverance of many Atlas Network partners and friends, this may change. The Overton Window has shifted in Argentina, and its leaders have an opportunity to reduce government to its proper limited role, and to unleash the enterprising spirit of its people.

Big challenges remain, but they are accompanied now by bigger opportunities and growing optimism in the ranks of the freedom movement—in Argentina, in Latin America, and across the world.

The inaugural episode of our new webinar series "Freedom Worldwide with Tom G. Palmer" featured experts from Libertad y Progreso and the Cato Institute discussing the political and economic landscape in Argentina and what it will take for Milei to succeed. Scan the QR code now to view the webinar and find out more about this series.

Scan the code to access Milei Reform Watch, UFM Dashboard:



Scan the code to view the webinar and learn more about "Freedom Worldwide with Tom G. Palmer."



2024 SIR ANTONY FISHER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Leading the Charge for Liberty and Free Markets in India

Dr. Parth J. Shah has been a transformative force in promoting liberty and free-market principles in India, founding the Centre for Civil Society to advance policy reforms and empower the poor through the ideals of economic and livelihood freedom.



Few people have had as much of an impact on India's ever-changing public policy and intellectual conversation as Dr. Parth J. Shah.

Since his time as a university professor in the United States, Parth has been actively connected with Atlas Network as a senior scholar of the freedom movement. He established the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) in New Delhi in 1997. Since then, he has committed his career to advancing social change and the abolition of poverty via the reform of laws and policies, pushing for accountability and choice in the public and private spheres. His work in policy training, education, and livelihood freedom reflects his deep dedication to advancing the ideals of liberty and personal empowerment.

His journey to becoming one of India's brightest economic lights was not a straight-line path. During his time in college, he became acquainted with classical liberalism through reading Ayn Rand's works, especially her groundbreaking novels *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. Parth found great resonance in Rand's embrace of independence and willingness to defy societal expectations, which led to a life-changing adventure into the world of philosophical inquiry and economic theory.

Parth studied the work of classical liberal writers such as Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and Ludwig von Mises in greater detail after becoming inspired by Rand's writings. He laid the groundwork for his future aspirations as a policy advocate by thoroughly grasping economic ideas and their consequences for public policy through the works of these great minds.

His reading presented Parth with a new—and out-of-fashion—way of understanding the world around him. Notwithstanding Rand's relative popularity in India at the time, most Indians saw free-market ideas as rather foreign and potentially nefarious, thanks to widespread influence from the Soviet Union. "The assumption was that anybody who talked about market ideas had to be funded by somebody in the U.S. and most likely by the CIA. It was a common belief," he said.

Real-world policy encounters, such as seeing the disastrous effects of alcohol prohibition in Gujarat,

his native state, further stoked Parth's intellectual curiosity. His conviction in the ability of free markets and individual liberty to propel societal progress and prosperity was strengthened by this exposure to the shortcomings of government interventionism.

"I asked myself the night before : 'what's one thing I would regret if things do not go well tomorrow in the operating room?' And the answer was completely obvious. I always wanted to come back to India—start a think tank."

Parth's desire to study economics in India, however, was thwarted by a prohibition on switching majors, in this case from science to arts (which in India includes economics). He learned it was possible to do so in the United States, so he enrolled in a graduate pharmacy program in Boston. He soon also learned that it was possible to "audit" courses for free—something not offered in India—an opportunity he took full advantage of by soaking up lectures from Nobel Prize-winning economists at Harvard University.

After completing his pharmacy degree, Parth gained admission to the economics program at Auburn University, where he earned a PhD. He landed his first teaching job at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and soon became an advisor at the Mackinac Center, where he saw firsthand how think tanks function. He also attended training programs offered by Atlas Network that provided him with the skills to start a think tank back home in India.

Another turning point came when Parth learned he needed open heart surgery. For many years, he had

▼ Parth presents CCS's work on livelihood freedom at an Atlas Network conference in 2007





↑ Parth (bottom right) with participants at an early Liberty and Society Seminar in 2000



↑ Parth with Casey Pifer (left, Atlas Network) and Linda Kavuka (center, African Students For Liberty) at Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner 2023

intended to return to India to create a forum for the advancement of individual liberty and free-market principles, but he had repeatedly put it off after securing a professorship. Coming face to face with major heart surgery forced him into action.

"I asked myself the night before: 'what's one thing I would regret if things do not go well tomorrow in the operating room?' And the answer was completely obvious. I always wanted to come back to India—start a think tank."

So that night, after years of enjoying the life of a U.S. academic, he realized it was time to return home and roll up his sleeves. After recuperating from surgery, Parth moved to New Delhi, and—with the help of supporters in the U.S. and his own savings—he established Centre for Civil Society (CCS). He founded the organization with the goal of advancing social change through scholarly research, policy analysis, and outreach.

Parth set out to create a network of academics, activists, and thinkers who were dedicated to promoting economic freedom and liberty in India. He faced a challenge, however, at the time, India did not have much of an active liberty movement to speak of, so he set out to get the movement started himself through educational programs focused on classical liberal ideas. "We advertised on the college campuses, got people to sign up for it, and we would run the program," he recalled. "And basically what we had to do is to create our own soldiers."

The Liberty and Society Seminar, named after a program created by the Institute for Humane Studies to teach college students the ideas of classical liberalism and free-market economics, was one of Parth's most significant endeavors. With stimulating talks, lively debates, and chances to network, the seminar gave young people the tools they needed to question accepted wisdom and consider different approaches to policy-making.

Basically what we had to do is to create our own soldiers.



was able to gain broad support for its cause by bridging the gap between abstract concepts and the local reality. For Parth, it was a eureka moment.

"And so we began to associate the idea of classical liberalism with the poor. I think that was a big shift in some ways compared to how people saw those ideas in other countries," he said.

"We didn't work with an industrial house or a large business. We worked with street vendors. And so I think that had a huge impact in terms of our communication."

Thanks to Parth's trailblazing efforts and dynamic leadership, including helping launch Atlas Network's first Asia Liberty Forum in 2011, CCS has become a prominent international voice for policy reforms in fields including economic liberalization, governance, and education—establishing a model for others to follow around the world. His example helped lead CCS to win the Templeton Freedom Award in 2021 for their work defending the livelihood freedom of millions of India's street vendors. In recognition of his over 25 years of grassroots classical liberal activism, Atlas Network is proud to announce Parth Shah as the recipient of the 2024 Sir Antony Fisher Achievement Award. The award will be presented on stage on November 21 at Freedom Dinner in New York City.



Building a Strong and Sustainable Freedom Movement



The freedom movement's effectiveness depends on cultivating and retaining talent. Atlas Network partners are having more impact than ever, and in this issue, as always, you'll find evidence of that, such as the success of long-term efforts by our allies in Bulgaria, Argentina, and beyond.

But these victories are achieved by Atlas Network partners, which are often relatively modest-sized non-profits and, as a result, may find it challenging to attract and retain good talent. They risk jeopardizing their success, and missing out on potential wins, if they are unable to hold on to the teams and leaders who fight to make those wins happen.

"This is where the real value of Atlas Network Academy comes in," said Alex Cordell, director of Atlas Network Academy. "We invest in people at every level, and by way of those people, the organizations in our network. Our goal is to help our participants see how they can build a rewarding, life-long career in the freedom movement."



← Alex Cordell, director of training at Atlas Network, speaks to participants at a Fundraising 360 workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

↙ Participants at a Fundraising 360 workshop in Cape Town, South Africa collaborate on a training assignment.



The difficulty of replacing staff is part of the reason why it's so important to retain them in the first place. Of course it goes beyond simply the challenge of recruiting. Particularly for small organizations with just a few staff members, the loss of an experienced or skilled leader can be devastating.

In addition to the human capital cost of turnover, the financial cost to an Atlas Network partner of replacing a staff member is substantial. In the United States, some studies report that it costs an organization six to nine months of their average salary to replace an employee. The recruitment costs to find new talent who can do the job and are aligned with the mission, the onboarding costs to get them up to speed, the cost of lost productivity, and the intangible costs of the effects of turnover on morale are likely even greater than that.

“We invest in people at every level, and by way of those people, the organizations in our network. Our goal is to help our participants see how they can build a rewarding, life-long career in the freedom movement.”

To some extent, it's true that nonprofit organizations like those in our network simply cannot compete with the salaries that come from the private sector or a government job. At a base level, salary incentives have to be aligned between the employer and the employee, after all. But our network's

ability to keep good talent goes beyond the salary conversation, and that's where Atlas Network Academy can really make an impact.

Based on a survey done by McLean & Company, two of the top five reasons why people voluntarily leave organizations are 1) Opportunities for Career-Related Skill Development and 2) Opportunities for Career Advancement. Salary will always be part of the equation, but data shows us over and over again that people stay at organizations that invest in their professional development.

Organizations from around the world and across the United States use Atlas Network Academy courses both to develop their existing leaders and get new staff up to speed quickly.

Daniel Bunn, president of the Tax Foundation, said:

Think tanks spend the bulk of their resources on accomplishing their missions and keeping the lights on. There is usually very little additional time or money for investing in professional development for project or team leaders. This can lead to inefficient team management, lack of strategic alignment, and less overall impact.

Atlas Network has stepped up to the plate on this challenge by providing training resources to help think tanks develop staff who think strategically, understand the value of planning and measuring impact, and building relationships among like-minded groups.

I personally have benefited from these training programs, and I regularly recommend that Tax Foundation staff participate as well. Over time this can create a shared understanding of the value of a clear mission and vision and a strategic plan with measurable goals.

Chad Wilcox, vice president for operations and strategy at Pacific Legal Foundation, said:

Many Pacific Legal Foundation staff have participated in Atlas Network Academy professional development programs over the years, and to a person they report back how valuable they find the training and relationship-building. PLF management finds the Atlas Network training model so useful that, each year, we

→ Participants from around the world discuss an exercise at a Leader Lab training in New York City.



make it a point to discuss who to encourage to apply to programs in each skill level. And I can personally attest to the value of the COO cohort to my own professional growth. It provides opportunities for shared learning—and, frankly, shared catharsis—and I have made many useful connections as well as some lifelong friends.

Our skills-based certifications bring together subject-matter experts to collaborate, share knowledge, and level up their capabilities and effectiveness.

Micky Horstman of Illinois Policy Institute credited the Marketing & Communications 360 course with helping his team defeat a proposed tax increase.

Thanks to feedback on my marketing plan from speakers and the rest of the cohort, I can excitedly announce that the “mansion tax” failed. Chicagoans rejected the proposal 52–48%; it lost by over 15,000 votes. I came back from the workshop with new communications strategies and was able to help guide our social media content, target pitching, and op-ed placements.

After taking part in Think Tank 360, Simon Lee, a leader in Hong Kong's freedom movement, said the training helped him take a step back and evaluate his work in a new light.

Even for someone with 20 years of experience in business, journalism, and think-tank start-ups, I find the whole process of going through the essential questions very helpful. The experience in Think Tank 360 really helped me to reflect on and refresh my ideas, which we hope will help us to influence what is going on in Hong Kong now. Once you have something that you want to do, then you [should] sign up for Think Tank 360. It will help you work out how you are going to get it done.

Martynas Gruodis, a policy analyst at the Lithuanian Free Market Institute, said the Fundraising 360 workshop made him a more effective communicator and a more valuable asset for his organization.

Even though I'm a policy analyst, I was interested in taking the Fundraising 360 training because our potential donors want to discuss specific details of the law. I can talk about details with them thanks to my background as a policy analyst, but I needed to gain some knowledge regarding fundraising tactics. This

training provided the structure and tools to make fundraising possible. Probably the most mind-blowing information that I got is that before you explain what you do, you first have to explain why you do it. We have to sell our purpose to the donor, and then we can speak about specific projects.

Just as there's no end to the opportunity for learning, there is no end point to the ways think-tank leaders engage with Atlas Network.

“One of the most effective ways to develop professionally and maintain enthusiasm for your career is to connect with the right people,” said Atlas Network President Matt Warner. “The Coach, Compete, Celebrate!™ model is designed specifically to provide our network partners with an abundance of productive relationships, skills training, and leadership development to accelerate their ability to make a difference in the world and to experience more frequently the motivating reward of advancing our shared mission effectively.”

For us to achieve our shared vision of a free, prosperous, and peaceful world, we cannot afford to lose good talent.

The real impact of Atlas Network Academy comes after attendees leave the training. When the people who attend our programs go back to their organizations armed with a new strategic plan, a fundraising strategy to bring in and retain new donors, an understanding of how they want to show up as a leader for their teams to motivate and inspire others to greatness, that is where we see the real results of our programs.

“The work that Atlas Network partners are doing around the globe has never been more vital. For us to achieve our shared vision of a free, prosperous, and peaceful world, we cannot afford to lose good talent,” said Alex Cordell. “I see our role at Atlas Network Academy in that shared vision to be a source of professional development, coaching, and inspiration for the people who power our partner organizations to take their work to new heights.”

Bringing New Life to the Bayou

Growing up in Louisiana, Aly Rau saw firsthand what it means to live your values. She learned hard work and perseverance by watching her mom work two jobs and earn a college degree all while raising three kids as a single mother.



Her grandfather, a Vietnam War veteran, taught her love of country and public service. And her grandmother, a Korean immigrant, helped her gain a perspective on the freedoms offered by the United States—and where more progress could yet be made.

These past lessons and experiences have shaped Aly into who she is today as a wife, a mother, and an example of the best the freedom movement has to offer. “I do what I do because I love my country,” she said. “I love my community, and I have two little boys that I’d like to see grow up in Louisiana and be able to stay here and raise their families.”

In her professional life, Aly has applied these values by helping address some of the deepest challenges faced by her home state of Louisiana. The state is troubled by a lack of economic opportunity thanks to high taxes and overregulation, driving many residents to move elsewhere. As chief of staff at the Pelican Institute for Public Policy, an Atlas Network partner, Aly built a team dedicated to

fixing these problems. They seek to preserve Louisiana’s unique and vibrant culture by making it a place where people want to stay to raise families—or even relocate to.

Aly worked closely with Pelican Institute CEO Daniel Erspamer to rebuild the organization practically from scratch. After the untimely passing of founder Kevin Kane in 2016, Daniel quickly stepped up to relaunch the organization and get it back on track. Aly was his first hire.

“I think when you have a brilliant visionary like Daniel, you’ve got to pair that with someone who can take that big picture and break it down, make it really tangible,” Aly said. “And so that’s really where I’ve come in with working to recruit talent. Without incredible people executing on that vision and mission, you’re not going to go anywhere.”

But she brought more than just business know-how. She helped foster an environment of camaraderie, team work, and positivity. “If we can’t have fun, this can be really hard work,” Daniel said. “If we can present something that is lighthearted and optimistic, that’s the way we’re going to approach it.”

↓ Pelican Institute CEO Daniel Erspamer (left) and Special Counsel James Baehr (right)





← Aly attends COO Summit with leaders from other Atlas Network partners

✓ Aly leads a workshop for leadership of America's Future Foundation



Being able to approach big, hefty ideas with humor and optimism and that joie de vivre has really made a difference in standing out among our ideological opponents.”

This collaborative environment has carried Pelican Institute through many hard-fought wins. After Daniel secured Atlas Network grant funding through one of the organization’s pitch competitions, their team stepped up their effort to roll back Louisiana’s incredibly restrictive job licensing laws. The state imposes license requirements on more jobs than any other in the United States—even requiring a license from the state for a resident to practice as a florist, the absurdity of which the team highlighted in a recent video skit.

Through their Right to Earn a Living project, Pelican Institute set a precedent in favor of rolling back these requirements. They helped pass legislation of the same name, which put the burden of proof on lawmakers to show that individual license requirements are necessary for public health and safety. This has not only made it much more difficult for the state to issue new licensing regulations, it has created a legal pathway for those harmed by

current requirements to sue to have them repealed. Pelican Institute is now representing two veterinarians—one of whom is the subject of an Atlas Network documentary—as they seek the removal of overly restrictive rules on the recognition of valid out-of-state veterinary licenses.

The Pelican team has made a point to connect with Atlas Network and other partner organizations across the United States. Daniel pointed Aly toward Atlas Network Academy, which provided her with opportunities to grow her skill set. She also attended COO Summit, where she exchanged ideas, experiences, and challenges with other executives from across the global network. Aly and the Pelican Institute worked closely with the Goldwater Institute and their director of Strategic Engagement, Heather Curry, to advance the Right to Earn a Living Act, legislation for which Goldwater Institute had developed a model. They also joined the “Alliance for Opportunity,” a collaboration with Georgia Center for Opportunity and Texas Public Policy Foundation, focused on lifting families out of poverty.

My team makes me hopeful. They are people that raised their hands to do really hard work—and win. ”

Aly now serves as assistant secretary for Family Services in the Louisiana state government, where she continues to advocate for policies that promote freedom and help everyday Louisianans—just as she did working with the Alliance for Opportunity. But she continues to cheer on Pelican Institute as they transform their state into a better place for all.

“My team makes me hopeful,” she said. “They are people that raised their hands to do really hard work—and win. [Our team’s] dedication, [and] the leaders that go through our leadership programs, they’re incredible. They’re having a significant impact across our state. That gives me hope.”

Carrying the Torch for Liberty in East Africa

About a quarter of all businesses in Africa are started by female entrepreneurs. These women must overcome the stifling bureaucracy their governments impose on any small business while also facing legal and cultural discrimination that deprives women of their economic liberties.

Dorcas is one such entrepreneur, and her journey is symbolic of the struggle faced by many women in Tanzania. Abandoned to the streets by relatives after her husband passed away, she started a micro-business making bar and liquid soaps for personal hygiene and clothes washing. But she soon faced daunting obstacles in the form of business licensing and trade regulations that made it difficult for her to legally operate and expand her new enterprise. Her situation caught the attention of Tanzania-based Atlas Network partner Liberty Sparks. “In 2019, when we were running an entrepreneur training program for local businesses in Tanzania, I met a woman named Dorcas,” explained Evans Exaud, executive director of Liberty Sparks. Dorcas’ business, he said, began earning a meager but life-sustaining \$1 or \$2 a day. She eventually earned enough to put food on the table and pay for her three children’s school fees. “However, she still faced a number of challenges, one of which was the procedures of registering the business,” Evans said. “If she could register her business and have a proper license, she could sell her products not just in Tanzania but in the entire eastern part of Africa.” Dorcas is just the type of entrepreneur that Liberty Sparks seeks to empower through their work. The organization has worked extensively to reform and repeal economic policies that put up barriers for Tanzanians seeking to escape poverty and partic-

If she could register her business and have a proper license, she could sell her products not just in Tanzania but in the entire eastern part of Africa.

ipate not only in local commerce but international trade. Liberty Sparks notes that many Tanzanians have had their goods confiscated and even destroyed when trying to import goods from neighboring countries like Kenya due to overly complex legal requirements. The organization has even ventured into documentary filmmaking to support its policy arguments. Backed by grant and production support through Atlas Network’s Lights, Camera, Liberty program, Liberty Sparks created a documentary based on the story of Dorcas and the community of women entrepreneurs she joined. Titled *The Winners*, the film went on to win the 2023 Lights, Camera, Liberty Film Festival Award. The short film documents the efforts by a group of women entrepreneurs like Dorcas who support each other in their individual enterprises, which include the making of dyed fabrics and the production of basic foodstuffs like nutritional flour, spicy condiments, and bread—despite facing a labyrinth of licensing and trade barriers by local and national bureaucracies. The women each operate their individual microenterprises, but support each other with hands-on help and guidance through the bureaucratic hoops entrepreneurs face operating in the formal economy.

↓ Evans (second from right) presents the Economic Freedom Audit report at a launch event in 2022



Even more importantly, *The Winners* connected with policymakers as they deliberated on key reforms. Liberty Sparks used the film as an important tool in the reform efforts, and it helped them convince lawmakers to simplify business licensing procedures and pass tax reductions for entrepreneurs. At the same time, the film brought national recognition to the organization as a group dedicated to fighting on behalf of Tanzania’s disadvantaged.

Being an Atlas Network partner, it means everything, it means change, it means freedom, it means prosperity, it means dignity.

Atlas Network has provided significant support for Liberty Sparks’ initiatives, and these training opportunities, grants, and awards have helped the think tank grow into one of Africa’s foremost free-market advocates. For example, Evans’ win of the 2022 Africa Think Tank Shark Tank pitch competition helped the organization secure the funds to expand their planned project to address restrictive international trade policy, a project that they carried out with sweeping success. This ability to plan, pitch, and execute earned them a spot in Atlas Network’s Smart Bets grant program. Liberty Sparks’ participation in this accelerator program promises to further hone their effectiveness and raise their ambitions as a team. Evans’ pitching talent even secured them the chance to present on stage at Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner 2023, which won Liberty Sparks additional grant funding to fuel their operations. Perhaps Liberty Sparks’ most impressive achievement to date is its Economic Freedom Audit, carried out in 2022 in partnership with Atlas Network and the Fraser Institute, which produced a top-to-bottom assessment of Tanzania’s economic policy and legal systems and identified areas for improvement. They didn’t stop at simply producing an academic report, however. By engaging with scholars and government officials, Liberty Sparks developed reform recommendations based on the issues they identified in their audit and worked with policymakers to implement them. These reforms affected many areas

of economic policy, including lowering and removing barriers to international trade, reducing taxes, streamlining labor regulations, and digitizing many government services. Liberty Sparks has made the most of its partnership with Atlas Network in becoming one of the brightest lights for liberty and economic development on the African continent as it seeks to make economic freedom alive in the laws of the land. And Exaud’s and Liberty Sparks’ success proves the value of the relationship. “So being an Atlas Network partner, it means everything,” he said. “It means change, it means freedom, it means prosperity, it means dignity.”

↓ Liberty Sparks Executive Director Evans Exaud speaks at the press conference for their Economic Freedom Audit





One of the best rewards of being in the ideas business has been seeing those ideas be actualized. I had to mentor multiple projects in SFL and with Atlas Network Academy's Project Mentorship program. The experience was enriching and made me realize the similarities between our shared end goal and how collaboration will get us there faster.



-DR. AYEMEN FATIMA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF STUDENT
PROGRAMS, STUDENTS FOR LIBERTY