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Dedicated to all young and promising researchers.

Contents

Libor Pavera

Editor-in-Chief's Foreword

Dear readers and fellow seekers of new knowledge,

I have been entrusted by Heritage & Partners LLP with the leadership of GIRN – the Global Insights Research Network, a new international academic journal. The name, and particularly its acronym, reflects our mission: to observe and interpret the changes shaping the world today across various domains of society and individual experience.

It is with pleasure that I have accepted the role of editor-in-chief. While this is not my first involvement in launching a scholarly journal, it is the first time I take on the responsibilities of a managing editor. Together with a dynamic team of early-career editors, we have worked to assemble this inaugural issue, composed largely – though not exclusively – of contributions by doctoral candidates from Euro-

pean universities. I am confident that this is just the beginning, and that more emerging scholars will soon join us.

Young researchers enjoy a distinct advantage: they have grown up in a world where digital tools and platforms are second nature. They make full use of online databases, libraries, and research networks. Yet many remain committed to traditional principles of scholarship – ad fontes – and return to printed sources, archives, and bibliographic foundations. Their dual orientation is visible in their research practices and citation habits.

As with any serious academic journal, we uphold clear citation standards – though we remain flexible in accommodating closely related systems, where function and clarity allow. All contributing authors have provided their ORCID identifiers to ensure transparency. Each article has undergone double-blind peer review, with independent reviewers selected by our editorial board for their subject-matter expertise.

And so, it is with great enthusiasm that we now introduce the contents of our first issue – an issue that ranges broadly in theme and method, from geopolitics and political philosophy to literary and semantic.

Sam Torres

The Influence of Dugin's Fourth Theory on the Current Socio-Economic Situation in the Russian Federation and its Impact on Vladimir Putin

Abstract: This article provides an in-depth analysis of Alexander Dugin's Fourth Political Theory and its impact on contemporary politics and the socio-economic situation in the Russian Federation, with a particular focus on its influence on President Vladimir Putin's decision-making and policies. Dugin's Fourth Political Theory is an intellectual response to the dominance of Western liberalism and globalization, which Dugin argues lead to cultural homogenization and the loss of national identities. The theory advocates for a multipolar world order where different civilizations and cultural spheres have the right to develop independently without external interference. The article explores how these ideas shape current Russian geopolitical strategy, support the growth of Russian nationalism, and serve as the ideological foundation for policies of expansion and the restoration of Russian influence. Furthermore, the article analyzes the potential risks associated with this ideology, such as the reinforcement of isolationism, authoritarianism, and ethnic nationalism, which may destabilize international relations and threaten global security. The article also considers how Dugin's philosophy resonates with Moscow's historical ambitions and how it is interpreted and implemented in contemporary Russian politics.

Keywords: Fourth Political Theory; Eurasianism; Vladimir Putin; Russian nationalism; Multipolarity; Geopolitics; Authoritarianism; Cultural diversity; Liberalism; Globalization

Introduction

Alexander Dugin is one of the most prominent Russian thinkers of our time, whose theories, particularly the Fourth Political Theory, have gained significant attention and controversy. This article will focus on analyzing Dugin's Fourth Theory, its influence on the current socio-economic situation in the Russian Federation, and its potential impact on the politician Vladimir Putin, often referred to as Gosudar (Ruler).

1. Early Clarifications and an Overview

In order to compare the fourth theory to other worldviews and ideologies, it is particularly important to hold a general understanding of their respective beliefs, historical implementations and value systems. This is what will be clarified below.

Fascism: Fascism is an ideology that originated in Italy under the leadership of Benito Mussolini in 1919. Fascism is characterized by authoritarianism, militarism, nationalism, and corporatism – a generally left-wing political system under which individuals are separated into government-controlled and/or government-subordinate corporations focused on specific activities (science, manufacture, agriculture, etc.). Emphasis is placed on a strong state and leader who has absolute power over the economy and society. Fascism promotes the unification of the nation under a single ideology and often uses propaganda and violence to achieve its goals. This regime caused significant suffering and destruction in Europe during the first half of the 20th century, especially during World War II.

Nazism (National Socialism): Nazism, an ideology associated with Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), emerged in Germany in 1920. Nazism placed a strong emphasis on racial purity, anti-Semitism, and the superiority of the Aryan race. The totalitarian regime created by the Nazis promoted genocide and expansion to gain Lebensraum (living space) for the German nation. This regime led to the Holocaust, causing the deaths of millions of

Jews and other minorities, and to the devastation of Europe during World War II.

Communism: Communism is an ideology derived from the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, which seeks a classless society where the means of production are collectively owned, and private property is abolished. Communism was implemented in various forms, most notably in the Soviet Union after the revolution in 1917. Communist regimes often introduced centralized economic planning and political repression. While communism aimed for social justice and equality, it often led to totalitarian regimes, economic failures, and widespread human rights abuses.

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, we witnessed a resurgence of interest in some of these ideologies, which is related to various socio-economic and political crises. In many countries, there is a rise of right-wing populist movements, new forms of nationalism, and authoritarian tendencies (though similar movements form on the left side – with nationalist socialist parties, or groups focused on taking away and/or punishing successful individuals). These movements often criticize liberal democracy and globalization, creating space for alternative ideologies like Dugin's Fourth Political Theory. How are ideologies and cultural and religious values currently being used to justify political and cultural goals?

Dugin's Ideology and its Political Use

Alexander Dugin is a key Russian thinker whose ideology significantly influences contemporary Russian geopolitics. Dugin's philosophy, known as the Fourth Political Theory, serves as a strategic tool to justify Russia's expansionist ambitions. This ideology combines elements of fascism, communism, and liberalism while rejecting modernity and Western liberalism. Dugin's theory focuses on creating a multipolar world where different civilizations can coexist without Western dominance.

Dugin uses his philosophy to support Russian imperialism and justify the invasion of Ukraine. He references the ideas of Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt, portraying the West as the Antichrist and calling for "total mobilization". This mobilization is seen as a fight against Western technological and cultural hegemony. Dugin's ideology is also evident in his collaboration with American commentator Tucker Carlson, where Dugin presents his vision of a dark future for Western society under the rule of artificial intelligence and technological dystopia. He is also supported and helped strongly, whether intentionally, or by chance and coincidence, by the Russian Orthodox Church, to be discussed below.

The Russian Orthodox Church, its Influence on State Politics, and its Relationship with Nationalism

The Russian Orthodox Church, led by Patriarch Kirill, plays a crucial role in Russian state ideology and nationalism. Organizations like the World Russian People's Council (WRPC) promote the spiritual and cultural revival of Russia and the strengthening of Orthodoxy as fundamental values. Since its inception in 1993, the WRPC has served as a platform for nationalist and revanchist ideas, including the restoration of the Russian Empire and influence over the "canonical territory" of the Russian Orthodox Church, such as Ukraine and Belarus.

Putin and Kirill jointly propagate the fight against Western values and support Russian nationalism. Putin expresses support for the WRPC and its goals, which include "fighting for sovereignty and justice" against Western neo-Nazism and Russophobia. The Church supports the introduction of Orthodox values into the education system and promotes anti-Western rhetoric, with Dugin being one of the main ideologists calling for a fight against the "satanic civilization of the West" and demanding cultural and scientific "de-occupation". It isn't possible to 'pigeonhole' the church as the only 'player' or involved entity. Although it is by far the strongest, there are several other ideologies and religions with involvement and effect on the political stance of the country.

International Religions, Ideologies, and Efforts at Dialogue

Interactions between different religions and philosophical traditions demonstrate how these ideas can influence cultural and social values. Researchers have examined the interactions between Buddhism and Western philosophy, covering historical contacts, philosophical dialogues, and modern applications (Langone & Ilieva, 2024). Historical interactions include the first contacts between Buddhism and Western ideas, which had an impact on both cultures. Philosophical dialogues focus on the acceptance and rejection of Buddhist concepts in Western philosophy and discussions of their significance.

Modern applications of Buddhist principles in the West show how these religious ideas can be integrated into different cultural frameworks and influence them. Examples of contemporary philosophical and practical uses of Buddhism include its influence on art, psychology, and science. This dialogue between different religious and philosophical traditions, despite its indirect relation to the topic, provides a broader context for understanding how ideologies like Dugin's or Orthodox values are used for political purposes.

The cited articles illustrate how ideologies and religious values can be used to justify and support political and cultural goals. Dugin's philosophy and the support of the Russian Orthodox Church are examples of how religious and ideological ideas can shape geopolitical strategies and national identities. The interaction between Buddhism and Western philosophy provides a broader context for understanding how religious ideas can be integrated into various cultural frameworks and influence them. This dialogue is crucial for understanding contemporary global political and cultural trends.

An Analysis of Alexander Dugin's Book "The Fourth Political Theory"

Alexander Dugin's book "The Fourth Political Theory" represents a comprehensive critique and alternative (while holding, in cases,

similar stances or a combination of the stances) to the three dominant political ideologies of the 20th century: liberalism, communism, and fascism. Dugin argues that these ideologies are exhausted and unable to adequately respond to the challenges of the contemporary world. This theory aims to create a new political philosophy that will address the problems of the postmodern era.

Dugin begins his analysis with a critique of liberalism, which he views as the dominant ideology of the contemporary world. According to him, liberalism is based on individualism and materialism, leading to the atomization of society and the destruction of traditional values. Dugin argues that "liberalism has become the universal measure, and all other ideologies have been marginalized" (Dugin, 2012). This hegemony of liberalism, according to him, leads to the homogenization of cultures and the suppression of 'diversity'.

Dugin further analyzes communism and fascism, which he considers alternatives to liberalism that have failed. Communism, he argues, failed due to its utopian vision of a classless society and the economic failure of centrally planned economies. Fascism, on the other hand, is associated with totalitarian practices and racism, which led to its historical condemnation. Dugin states that "communism and fascism were reactions to modernity, but they failed to offer a sustainable alternative" (Dugin, 2012).

The Fourth Political Theory, as proposed by Dugin, is based on the concept of multipolarity. This concept rejects the hegemony of a single civilizational model (Western) and aims to create a world where different civilizations and cultural traditions can coexist and develop without one dominating the others. Dugin asserts that "multipolarity means that each civilization must be able to decide its own destiny without external interference" (Dugin, 2012). This approach is intended to preserve cultural diversity and protect national identities from the homogenizing influence of globalization.

One of the main philosophical influences on Dugin's theory is Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's critique of modernity and technology, which he views as destructive to authentic beings and culture, provides a theoretical foundation for Dugin's critique of Western civilization. Dugin writes: "Heidegger's philosophy gives us the key to understanding the deep crisis of modern civilization and shows the way out" (Dugin, 2014). Heidegger's concept of being and authenticity is crucial for Dugin in formulating an alternative to the modern world order.

Dugin's theory also incorporates elements of postcolonial critique, rejecting Western imperialism and globalization. He argues that these processes lead, again, to the homogenization of cultures and the disappearance of national identities. In this context, Dugin's theory is attractive to various nations and cultures that feel threatened by Western dominance and seek alternative ways to preserve their identity and sovereignty. Dugin states: "Globalization is nothing but a new colonialism that destroys diversity and leads to uniformity" (Dugin, 2013).

In practical politics, Dugin's theory translates into support for Russian nationalism and imperialism – which may, by some, be considered somewhat hypocritical, based on his criticisms of similar values from Western groups. Dugin's vision of Russia as a leading power in a multipolar world is closely linked to the policies of Vladimir Putin, who seeks to restore Russian influence and power on the global stage. Putin and Dugin share the belief that Western liberalism is in decline and that Russia has a historical mission to lead the world to a new order that will be fairer and respect various cultural and civilizational traditions. Dugin argues: "Russia must take on the role of leader in the fight against globalization and for the preservation of traditional values" (Dugin, 2014).

Despite its ambitious goals, Dugin's theory faces significant criticism. Some label it as neo-fascist or ultra-nationalist, arguing that its emphasis on cultural and civilizational differences can lead to isolationism and conflicts between nations. Critics also point to internal contradic-

tions in Dugin's theory, particularly its conception of multipolarity, which can be interpreted as a cover for Russian imperialism. "Dugin's multipolarity is not genuine multipolarity but rather an attempt to restore the Russian empire" (Laruelle, 2012). The theory represents an attempt of strong determination to create a new ideological foundation for the 21st century. Its emphasis on multipolarity and cultural diversity offers an alternative to dominant Western models, but it also carries a relatively large risk of reinforcing nationalist and imperialist tendencies. The influence of this theory on contemporary Russian politics and its potential to shape the global political order is the subject of intense debate among political analysts and philosophers.

Comparison of Dugin's View of Putin with His Fourth Political Theory

Alexander Dugin, in his book "Putin vs. Putin: Vladimir Putin Viewed from the Right," creates a portrayal of Vladimir Putin that is deeply rooted in conservative and Eurasianist values. This portrayal of Putin aligns with many aspects of Dugin's Fourth Political Theory, but there are also some differences and inconsistencies.

Dugin's Fourth Political Theory strongly rejects liberalism, which he views as the dominant ideology of the contemporary world. Liberalism emphasizes individual freedoms, democratic institutions, the rule of law, and human rights. Dugin criticizes this approach as decadent and destructive to traditional societies. Similarly, in his book on Putin, Dugin emphasizes that Putin rejects Western liberalism and globalization, which aligns with Dugin's view of the need for a strong leader who stands against these trends.

Another key concept in both Dugin's Fourth Political Theory and his portrayal of Putin is multipolarity. Dugin's concept of multipolarity is based on rejecting the hegemony of a single civilizational model and aiming to create a world where different civilizations and cultural traditions can coexist and develop without one dominating the others. This goal aligns

with Dugin's surprising emphasis on cultural and civilizational diversity. Dugin asserts that multipolarity means that "each civilization must be able to decide its own destiny without external interference." This approach is intended to preserve cultural diversity and protect national identities from the homogenizing influence of globalization. Dugin's Fourth Political Theory additionally includes the idea of Eurasianism, which promotes the creation of a new Eurasian space as a counterbalance to Western hegemony. In his book on Putin, Dugin describes Putin as a leader who is spearheading a Eurasian revolution and seeking to restore Russian influence in the region. This aligns with Dugin's ideas about the need for a sovereign empire capable of resisting global pressures.

Moreover, the Fourth Political Theory advocates for a strong state and authoritarianism as means of protecting traditional values and maintaining stability. Dugin, in his book on Putin, emphasizes that Putin believes in authoritarianism as a way to maintain order and protect the state. This aligns with Dugin's ideal of a strong leader who can uphold traditional values.

However, there are differences and inconsistencies between Dugin's theory and his portrayal of Putin. While Dugin's Fourth Political Theory is deeply ideological and philosophical, Putin is often seen as a pragmatist who makes decisions based on practical needs and circumstances. Dugin acknowledges in his book that Putin sometimes acts pragmatically, which may be at odds with the purely ideological approach of the Fourth Political Theory. Another area of difference is economic policy. Dugin's Fourth Political Theory does not include a detailed economic doctrine, while Putin's policies involve specific economic reforms and measures. Dugin criticizes some aspects of Putin's economic policy, which he views as too liberal or capitalist, and this criticism does not fully align with Dugin's own ideals.

Furthermore, there are varying interpretations of Eurasianism. Although Dugin sees Putin as a leader of the Eurasian revolution, some of Putin's actions can be interpreted as more focused on protecting

Russian national interests rather than a broader Eurasian project. This can lead to discrepancies between Dugin's ideological vision and Putin's practical steps, although it is not possible to state that they do not both believe in a combination of the two.

Lastly, the role of religion differs between Dugin's theory and his portrayal of Putin. Dugin's Fourth Political Theory places a strong emphasis on spiritual renewal and the role of Orthodoxy in Russian society. While Putin supports the Russian Orthodox Church and traditional values, his approach to religion can sometimes be more pragmatic and less ideologically driven than Dugin's perspective.

Alexander Dugin and his Fourth Political Theory is an ideological framework that in many ways resonates with the politics and persona of Vladimir Putin. On the other hand, there are areas where Dugin's theory and Putin's practice diverge, particularly regarding pragmatism (rather than a fixed belief system that is set above situational politics) and economic policy. Nevertheless, it is clear that Dugin views Putin as a key figure for realizing his ideological goals and restoring Russia's greatness on the global stage.

The Dangers of Dugin's Concept of Eurasian Civilization for Traditional European and Euro-Atlantic Values

Alexander Dugin's concept of Eurasian civilization presents a significant challenge to traditional European and Euro-Atlantic values. Dugin's vision of connecting Russia with China and other Asian powers is built on several key principles that directly contradict the values defining the Western world. The following section outlines the potential dangers this vision poses.

Dugin's Fourth Political Theory strongly rejects liberalism, which is the cornerstone of European and Euro-Atlantic values. Liberalism emphasizes individual freedoms, democratic institutions, the rule of law, and human rights. Dugin criticizes this approach as decadent and

destructive to traditional societies. Instead, he advocates for an authoritarian model that places collective identity and state sovereignty above individual rights. This ideology directly opposes the values that Western societies consider fundamental to their functioning.

Dugin's concept of multipolarity is based on rejecting a unipolar world dominated by the United States and its allies. He seeks to create a world where different civilizations, including the Eurasian, can exist as independent powers. This vision can lead to geopolitical tension and conflicts, as different powers strive solely to expand their influence with no consideration or care regarding the expense of others. Dugin's multipolarity is not just about balancing power but also about an ideological battle against Western power. This can undermine international cooperation and stability, which are the foundation of Euro-Atlantic values and security.

National Sovereignty vs. Global Cooperation, Cultural and Civilizational Differences

Dugin emphasizes national sovereignty and resistance to globalization, which he sees as a tool of Western hegemony. This approach conflicts with the concept of global cooperation and integration, which are essential for addressing global issues such as climate change, pandemics, and international terrorism. Euro-Atlantic values support international institutions and legal frameworks that enable coordinated action and cooperation among states. The emphasis on sovereignty brings a relatively high chance of leading to isolationism and fragmentation of the international community.

Dugin's vision of Eurasian civilization emphasizes cultural and civilizational differences, which can lead to the strengthening of nationalism and xenophobia. This approach contradicts Euro-Atlantic values that promote multiculturalism, inclusion, and respect for human rights regardless of cultural or national origin. Dugin's philosophy can lead to the intensification of cultural conflicts and the division of society along ethnic and cultural lines.

Authoritarianism and Centralization of Power

Another important element of Dugin's ideology is the support for authoritarianism and the centralization of power as means of maintaining order and stability. This model is in direct conflict with democratic values that prioritize decentralization of power, participatory democracy, individual freedom, equality of opportunity, and transparency in governance. Authoritarian regimes tend to suppress opposition, restrict freedom of speech, and violate human rights, which is unacceptable for Euro-Atlantic (and generally citizen-friendly) societies.

Dugin's concept of Eurasian civilization presents a significant challenge to traditional European and Euro-Atlantic values. The rejection of liberalism, support for multipolarity and national sovereignty, emphasis on cultural differences, and authoritarianism are in direct opposition to the principles that define Western political and social systems. This ideology can lead to increased geopolitical tension, isolationism, and cultural conflicts, threatening the stability and security of the international community.

Dugin's Understanding of the "Great Reset" and Its Comparison to His Fourth Political Theory

Alexander Dugin's interpretation of the "Great Reset" is a critical analysis of what he perceives as a comprehensive globalist agenda aimed at reshaping the world's socio-economic and political order. This analysis is presented in his book "The Great Awakening vs the Great Reset," where he contrasts this agenda with his own ideological stance, the Fourth Political Theory. Below is a detailed exploration of Dugin's views on the Great Reset, followed by a comparison to his Fourth Political Theory.

In 2020, during the World Economic Forum in Davos, Klaus Schwab and Prince Charles announced the "Great Reset" as a new direction

for humanity. Dugin outlines the main points of this plan as follows:

1. *Capturing the Imagination and Will of Humanity:*
Dugin emphasizes that change will only occur if people genuinely desire it. This involves influencing public consciousness on a global scale, a concept he links to the "cancel culture" and the censorship controlled by globalist networks.

2. *Economic Recovery and Sustainable Growth:*
The economic recovery must focus on sustainable employment, livelihoods, and growth, redesigning incentive structures that have negatively impacted the environment.

3. *Advancing Net-Zero Transitions Globally:*
This includes carbon pricing and the shift to a sustainable market. Dugin interprets this as a move towards the fourth economic order, replacing human labor with cyborgs and implementing advanced artificial intelligence.

4. *Reinvigorating Science, Technology, and Innovation:*
Humanity is on the brink of breakthroughs that will redefine what is possible and profitable within a sustainable framework.

5. *Rebalancing Investment towards Green Initiatives:*
Green investments are expected to create job opportunities in renewable energy, the circular economy, and green infrastructure.

Dugin identifies the Great Reset as a continuation of globalization and the strengthening of globalism, particularly after setbacks such as the conservative presidency of Donald Trump and the rising influence of a multipolar world with nations like China and Russia challenging Western dominance. He argues that the globalist agenda seeks to consolidate power by utilizing new technologies for mind control, internet censorship, and data surveillance under the guise of health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Comparison with the Fourth Political Theory

Dugin's Fourth Political Theory is presented as a response to the perceived failures of the three dominant political ideologies of the 20th century: liberalism, communism, and fascism. The theory aims to provide an alternative framework that addresses contemporary global challenges by emphasizing cultural diversity, national sovereignty, and traditional values. There are some key points of comparison:

1. *Rejection of Liberalism:*
Both the Great Reset and 4PT reject the current liberal order, but for different reasons. The Great Reset purportedly seeks to reform liberalism into a more sustainable and technologically advanced system. In contrast, 4PT rejects liberalism outright, viewing it as fundamentally flawed due to its emphasis on individualism and materialism.

2. *Focus on Multipolarity:*
The Great Reset envisions a world governed by a global elite managing a unified economic and political system. Dugin's 4PT advocates for a multipolar world where various civilizations can coexist independently, preserving their unique cultural and national identities.

3. *Role of Technology:*
The Great Reset promotes technological advancements as a means to achieve sustainability and efficiency, including the integration of AI and robotics. Dugin is wary of these technologies, viewing them as tools for globalist control and the dehumanization of society. 4PT emphasizes the importance of maintaining human and cultural elements over technological dominance.

4. *Sovereignty and Traditional Values:*
The Great Reset appears to prioritize global governance and economic integration, potentially at the expense of national sovereignty. Dugin's 4PT, on the other hand, places a strong emphasis on the sovereignty of nations and the preservation of traditional values, arguing that these are essential for maintaining social and cultural cohesion.

5. *Critique of Globalism:*
Both perspectives critique globalism, but their solutions diverge significantly. The Great Reset seeks to reform globalism by addressing its flaws and creating a more equitable system. Dugin's 4PT calls for a complete rejection of globalist principles in favor of a new ideological framework that promotes cultural pluralism and national sovereignty.

Alexander Dugin's interpretation of the Great Reset highlights a globalist agenda that he believes seeks to consolidate power and control through technological and economic reforms. This vision is fundamentally at odds with his Fourth Political Theory, which advocates for a multipolar world rooted in cultural diversity and national sovereignty. While both the Great Reset and 4PT reject the status quo of liberalism, their approaches and end goals are vastly different. The Great Reset aims to reshape and continue the liberal project under a new guise, whereas 4PT seeks to establish a radically different political order based on traditional values and decentralized power structures.

War of Continents or Civilizational Circles?

Alexander Dugin's "Great War of Continents" conceptualizes a geopolitical and ideological conflict that transcends mere territorial disputes, delving into a profound civilizational clash between fundamentally different worldviews and powers. The text reveals Dugin's perspective on an ongoing eschatological battle between two opposing forces: the "Atlantists" and the "Eurasianists."

The editor introduces Dugin's study as a narrative of conspiracies between the "Atlantists" and the defensive "Eurasianists," framing it as an eschatological struggle between two radically opposing worlds. This dichotomy reflects an ideological divide where the "Atlantists" represent globalist, liberal, and materialist values, while the "Eurasianists" embody traditional, authoritarian, and spiritual principles.

Foundations of Geopolitics

Dugin bases his theory on the principles of geopolitics, a field significantly developed by British geographer Halford Mackinder. He distinguishes between two historical approaches to dominating terrestrial space: the land-based and the sea-based approaches. Mackinder's model posits that terrestrial empires (like Rome and Russia) are inherently opposed to maritime powers (like Carthage, England, and the United States), which reflects deeper ideological and cultural divides.

According to Dugin, Mackinder's ideas highlight the threat posed by Eurasian consolidation to maritime powers, particularly the Anglo-American alliance. This perspective frames the geopolitical strategy of the Atlantists as a long-term effort to prevent alliances between major Eurasian powers like Russia, Germany, and Japan. Dugin argues that this strategy extends to espionage, political lobbying, and cultural infiltration, aiming to maintain Anglo-Saxon dominance. In response, Eurasianists formulated their own geopolitical doctrine, advocating for an alliance between Russia, Germany, and Japan to counter Atlantist policies. Dugin highlights the intellectual contributions of Russian émigré thinkers and German geopoliticians like Karl Haushofer, who developed the idea of a continental alliance against the Atlantic powers.

"Blood and Soil" – "Blood or Soil"?

Dugin explores the geopolitical implications of choosing between national unity based on race ("blood") and territorial unity ("soil"). He references Russian philosopher Konstantin Leontiev, who advocated for aligning Russia with Eastern and Asian cultures rather than focusing on Slavic unity. This choice underscores the broader conflict between nationalist and geopolitical priorities.

Dugin critiques Panslavism, particularly its role in World War I, where Russian support for Slavic brothers against the Turks led to disastrous

consequences for Russia itself. He argues that this focus on Slavic unity served the interests of the Atlantists rather than those of Eurasia, drawing parallels with German Pangermanism, which similarly played into Atlantist hands. Furthermore, Dugin asserts that the rise of Pangermanism in Nazi Germany, driven by racist ideologies, ultimately benefited the Atlantists by diverting German attention eastward. He cites Admiral Canaris as an Atlantist agent who manipulated Nazi policies to serve Anglo-American interests.

Who is Whose Spy?

Dugin later delves into the complex 'interplay' of espionage and ideological influence, illustrating how geopolitical allegiances transcended national and political boundaries. He describes how figures like Lenin and Trotsky represented different geopolitical schemes, with Lenin's policies maintaining the Eurasian space and Trotsky advocating for global revolutionary expansion. He contrasts the Soviet military intelligence agency GRU, aligned with Eurasianist principles, with the KGB, which he views as an Atlantist institution. He recounts the historical rivalry between these two agencies and mentions the broader geopolitical context within the Soviet Union.

After Victory

Dugin discusses the aftermath of World War II, where the triumph of Atlantist forces led to a temporary setback for the Eurasian project. He emphasizes the ongoing influence of Eurasianist networks within the Soviet military and intelligence structures, suggesting that the Cold War represented a continuation of this eschatological conflict. The book "Great War of Continents" depicts a profound ideological and civilizational clash between the Atlantists and the Eurasianists. This conflict is not merely about territorial dominance but discusses a deeper struggle between opposing worldviews: the materialist, liberal, and individualistic values of the Atlantists versus the traditional, authoritarian, and collectivist principles of the Eurasianists. In this context,

Dugin's theory highlights the enduring significance of geopolitics in shaping global history and the future of international relations.

The Advantages of Eurasianism for the World or Specific Regions

Alexander Dugin's neo-Eurasianism, as outlined in "Eurasian Mission: An Introduction to Neo-Eurasianism," presents a comprehensive philosophical and political framework. This framework aims to offer an alternative to Western liberalism and globalization by emphasizing the unique civilizational identity of Eurasian countries, with, as in the previous pieces, promotion of multipolarity, and advocacy for a new form of integration based on cultural and civilizational diversity.

Philosophical Foundation

Neo-Eurasianism is rooted in the philosophy of structuralism, emphasizing the multiplicity and synchronicity of structures within different civilizations. Dugin builds on the ideas of Count Nikolai Trubetzkoy, a pioneer in structuralist linguistics, to argue that civilizations possess unique structures that define their cultural, social, and political elements. This holistic approach asserts that each civilization's structure is more than the sum of its parts and should be understood in its own context without imposing external frameworks.

The primary concern of Eurasianist philosophy is civilization. Dugin argues that there are multiple civilizations, each with its own unique structure, time, and space. This perspective challenges the universal applicability of Western values and systems, advocating instead for a multipolar world where different civilizations can coexist and interact on equal terms. This approach promotes cultural diversity and respects the sovereignty of each civilization.

Eurasianism offers several geopolitical advantages, particularly for the countries within the Eurasian continent. Its ideals could, in the-

ory, lead to a more stable and balanced global order, reducing the likelihood of conflicts driven by colonialist or expansive ambitions. Eurasianism advocates for economic integration based on regional cooperation rather than globalist free-market principles. This approach encourages the development of regional economic blocs that can support each other's growth and stability. The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) is an example of such an initiative, aiming to foster economic collaboration among its member states, which include Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan.

One of the core principles of Eurasianism is the protection of national sovereignty and independence. Dugin argues against the imposition of Western political models, advocating instead for governance systems that reflect the unique historical and cultural contexts of Eurasian countries. This respect for sovereignty can help to reduce external interference and promote self-determination among nations.

Eurasianism offers a critical perspective on modernity and postmodernity, which Dugin sees as manifestations of Western liberalism and materialism. Eurasianism has a strong focus on challenging these paradigms and opens the door to alternative ways of understanding and organizing society. This critique aligns with traditionalist and conservative values, appealing to those who seek a return to more stable and spiritually grounded forms of social organization. Critics also consider that such individuals are often fearful of being able to govern themselves, and are therefore quite reliant on governmental decisions to 'pick for them'.

Historical Context and Public Skepticism

Historically, Soviet and later Russian political narratives often diverged significantly from their practical applications. During the Soviet era, lofty promises of equality and prosperity frequently clashed

with the reality of economic hardship, political repression, and a lack of personal freedoms. This legacy has left a deep-seated skepticism among many people, particularly in Eastern Europe and former Soviet states, regarding the authenticity and credibility of Russian political ideologies.

This skepticism is mirrored in contemporary perceptions of Russian political rhetoric. For example, the promises of economic integration and cultural preservation under the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are often viewed with suspicion. Many people remember the historical instances where political slogans and ideologies served as covers for different agendas, such as consolidating power or suppressing dissent.

The Problem of "Inversion of Meaning"

The phenomenon, where the official rhetoric is perceived to mean the opposite of what is stated, is a significant barrier to trust. In the Czech comedy series "Kosmo," this is humorously illustrated by the need to translate Russian statements into their real-world implications by reversing/flipping the information that was stated. This "inversion of meaning" is not just a comedic exaggeration but reflects a real issue where political statements are seen as doublespeak.

In Dugin's case, while his theoretical framework of Eurasianism may emphasize sovereignty, cultural diversity, and multipolarity, critics argue that in practice, it can serve as a guise for Russian expansionism and control. The rhetoric of protecting traditional values and national sovereignty can be viewed as a strategy to extend Russian influence under the pretense of resisting Western hegemony.

The Role of Authenticity in Political Ideologies

For any political ideology to gain widespread acceptance and support, it needs to be seen as authentic and credible. In simple terms, authen-

ticity means that what is promised aligns with what is delivered. For Eurasianism to move beyond being just a theoretical concept, it must show real, tangible benefits that are consistent with its philosophical principles.

First, transparency and accountability are crucial. Political leaders who advocate for Eurasianism must be open about their intentions, policies, and the results of their actions. Without this openness, people will likely suspect hidden agendas and doublespeak, undermining trust.

There has to also be consistency between rhetoric and action. If leaders talk about cultural preservation and economic cooperation, their policies and practices must genuinely reflect these promises. Any inconsistency here can quickly erode trust.

Third, leaders must engage with public concerns. This means recognizing past mistakes and showing a genuine commitment to addressing current issues. Listening to citizens and incorporating their feedback into policy-making is key to building trust and relevance.

It is undeniable that Alexander Dugin's Eurasianism offers a compelling philosophical and geopolitical alternative. However, its success hinges on closing the gap between theory and practice. The historical context of Soviet and Russian political rhetoric, often marked by discrepancies between promises and reality, presents a significant challenge to the authenticity and credibility of Eurasianism. To overcome this, advocates must focus on transparency, consistency, public engagement, and genuine cooperation. Only by addressing these concerns can Eurasianism gain the trust and support it needs to become a viable and respected alternative on the global stage.

Moscow's Ambitions in a Contemporary Perspective

Throughout history, Moscow has had significant ambitions, which have often been perceived as imperialist and expansionist. This per-

ception stems from various historical epochs where Moscow sought to extend its influence and control, often justified by different ideological frameworks. This analysis will explore Moscow's ambitions from the medieval era to the present, focusing on Alexander Dugin's and Vladimir Putin's visions for Russia.

Moscow's ambitions date back to the medieval period, characterized by the doctrine of Moscow as the "Third Rome." This doctrine emerged after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, positioning Moscow as the successor to the Roman and Byzantine empires. This ideological foundation suggested that Moscow had a divine mission to uphold and spread Orthodox Christianity, thereby justifying its expansionist policies. During the Tsarist era, Moscow's ambitions were further reinforced by the notion of "gathering the Russian lands," leading to the annexation of various territories and the establishment of a vast empire. This period also saw the integration of diverse ethnic and cultural groups under Russian rule, often through forceful means.

The Soviet era marked another phase of Moscow's ambitions, though this time driven by the ideology of communism. The Soviet Union sought to spread its influence globally, supporting communist movements and establishing satellite states across Eastern Europe and beyond. This expansionist drive was justified by the belief in the inevitable global triumph of communism.

In contemporary times, Alexander Dugin and Vladimir Putin have articulated visions for Russia that continue to reflect Moscow's historical ambitions, albeit framed in new ideological contexts. Alexander Dugin's neo-Eurasianism presents a vision of Moscow as the heart of a new Eurasian civilization. Dugin envisions a multipolar world where Russia leads a coalition of Eurasian states, countering Western hegemony. This vision is rooted in the belief that Western liberalism is in decline and that Russia has a unique civilizational mission to offer an alternative model based on traditional values and cultural diversity.

Dugin's concept of the "Great War of Continents" frames this struggle as an eschatological battle between the "Atlantists" (representing Western liberalism) and the "Eurasianists" (representing traditional, authoritarian, and spiritual principles). According to Dugin, Russia must lead the charge against Western globalization and create a multipolar world order where different civilizations can coexist and thrive.

Vladimir Putin's vision for Russia aligns with many aspects of Dugin's neo-Eurasianism, emphasizing national sovereignty, traditional values, and a strong, centralized state. Putin has often articulated the idea of a "sovereign democracy," rejecting Western models of governance and promoting a uniquely Russian political system that prioritizes stability and order. Putin's foreign policy also exposes a 'mission' to restore Russia's influence on the global stage. This is evident in Russia's actions in Crimea, Ukraine, and Syria, where Putin has sought to assert Russia's power and challenge Western dominance. Putin's vision is often framed as a response to Western encroachment and a defense of Russian interests and sovereignty.

Moscow's ambitions, from the medieval doctrine of the "Third Rome" to Dugin's neo-Eurasianism and Putin's sovereign democracy show off Russia's strong emphasis on assertiveness and their large interest in influence and control. These ambitions are justified by various ideological frameworks that emphasize Russia's unique civilizational mission and the need to resist Western predominance. The practical implementation of these ambitions poses significant challenges and risks, both for Russia and the broader international community.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sam Torres collaborates with Heritage & Partners LLP, focusing on geopolitical analysis and political science literature. His main interests lie in the post–Cold War world and the formation of new global dynamics in the 21st century. He pays particular attention to political writings originating in various local contexts across the United Kingdom.

Samuel Torres, MSc.
Heritage & Partners
128 City Road
London EC1V 2NX
United Kingdom
samuel@heritage.partners
ORCID 0009-0009-0045-8218

Štěpán Turčín

The Course of the Šik Reform and Its Possible Final Form
Part I

Abstract: This article examines the Šik Reform, a major but ultimately unfinished attempt to modernize the centrally planned economy of Czechoslovakia in the 1960s. It situates the reform within the broader political and economic developments of the decade, additionally providing a highlight of the failure of the Third Five-Year Plan and the shift toward a more market-responsive model of socialist management. The study focuses on enterprise autonomy, the limits of central planning, and the evolving role of reform-minded economists. Using statistical data and period documents, it analyzes both the implementation of the reform and its gradual rollback following the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion. The article concludes with an outlook on the reform's intended direction and sets the stage for a deeper exploration of its institutional and legislative dimensions in the second part.

Keywords: Šik Reform, economic planning, socialist economy, Czechoslovakia, 1960s, economic reform

Introduction

This article focuses on the unfinished economic reform of the late 1960s in Czechoslovakia, commonly referred to as the Šik Reform, and on its envisioned final form. It was the second economic reform in post-war Czechoslovakia aimed at improving the efficiency of the socialist economy; the first one, known as the Rozsypal Reform, took place at the end of the 1950s. In addition to differing in scope and depth, the two reforms also diverged significantly in terms of their preparation and implementation. The Rozsypal Reform was designed as a systemically coherent package and was implemented in three stages between 1958 and 1960. In contrast, the Šik Reform, which began its development in 1963, was formally introduced to public debate and was implemented gradually. Its underlying concept evolved over time due to both internal and external factors, and its ideal version ultimately could not be realized due to external intervention in 1968.

Thanks in part to the broad publicity surrounding the Šik Reform, a number of unrealized proposals and documents have been preserved – not only draft legislation but also materials authored by various theorists and institutions in 1968 and 1969. These sources offer insight into the intended direction of the reform process. The aim of this study is to analyze the development and specific elements of the reform, from its ideological inception in 1963 to the final, unsuccessful efforts to continue it in 1969. The analysis focuses particularly on the degree of enterprise autonomy and the associated role of central planning. It also takes into account the evolving attitudes of the political leadership toward the reform's implementation – factors that help illustrate the reform's trajectory, depth, and the prospects for its successful realization.

To this day, debates continue over whether the incomplete Šik Reform could have functioned effectively within a centrally planned economy based on state ownership – raising living standards and boosting economic performance – or whether it was a utopian illusion inevitably

leading either to a restoration of capitalist structures or collapse under the weight of internal contradictions. Views on this issue, both in academic and public discourse, are often colored by ideological biases. From today's perspective, it can be challenging to fully grasp the historical context in which the reform was conceived and attempted.

While existing research has largely examined the course and individual steps of the reform, relatively few scholars have addressed what its final form might have looked like. I believe that exploring this aspect may help to clarify lesser-known dimensions of the process and offer a more comprehensive understanding of the Šik Reform.

The study primarily employs descriptive methods and basic statistical analysis. It outlines the political and economic developments from the early considerations of the reform's necessity to its eventual suppression. Special attention is given to the Third Five-Year Plan (1961–1965) and the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1966–1970), with selected performance indicators presented in tables to enhance clarity. The second article on this topic will cover practical cases, primarily using analytical methods, and shall be divided into two parts, the first part, covering the years 1963 to 1967, dealing with the formation of the reform's conceptual foundations and the implementation of some of its initial elements, and the second part, focusing on 1968 and 1969, addressing proposed but unrealized measures intended to take the reform further, as well as the reformers' subsequent, unsuccessful efforts to bring these ideas into practice.

Numerous authors have examined the Šik Reform in their scholarly works. A valuable overview of economic reforms in Czechoslovakia is provided by Zdislav Šulc's study *Stručné dějiny ekonomických reforem v Československu (České republice) 1945–1995* [A Brief History of Economic Reforms in Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic), 1945–1995]. Karel Kaplan discusses the development of the Czechoslovak economy between 1957 and 1967 and the attitudes of political leaders toward economic reform in the first volume of *Kořeny československé*

reformy 1968 [The Roots of the Czechoslovak Reform of 1968]. Ota Šik himself published his memoir Jarní probuzení – iluze a skutečnost [Spring Awakening: Illusion and Reality], in which he recounts many fascinating aspects of the reform's genesis and course.

More objective analyses of the economic reform only began to appear in works published after 1989. Nevertheless, descriptions of specific steps and proposals of the Šik Reform can also be found in many contemporary sources from the 1960s, such as laws, official documents, and the press. Key documents relating to the Šik Reform can be found in Zdislav Šulc's *Dokumenty k hospodářské politice v Československu z let 1963–1969* [Documents on Economic Policy in Czechoslovakia from the Years 1963–1969], as well as in the extensive volume by Jitka Vondrová titled *Ekonomická reforma 1965–1969* [The Economic Reform 1965–1969]. The thinking of the then political leadership regarding the reform process is also reflected in the stenographic transcripts of the Czechoslovak Parliament. For deeper research, sources held in the *National Archives* – such as the records of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia – can also be of significant value.

1. Economic and Political Developments in Czechoslovakia During the Šik Reform

The formulation of the Third Five-Year Plan (1961–1965) was marked by excessive optimism, partly stemming from the success of the previous plan, during which national income grew by an average of 7% annually and increased by a total of 40.5% over five years.[1] Expectations for future progress were further buoyed by the declarations of Soviet leader N. S. Khrushchev, who predicted that socialism would soon surpass the most advanced capitalist economies and that the tran-

[1] FEDERÁLNÍ STATISTICKÝ ÚŘAD. *Historická statistická ročenka ČSSR*. Praha: SNTL, 1985, s. 88. [Federal Statistical Office. Historical Statistical Yearbook of the ČSSR.]

sition to communism was on the horizon.[2] The main objective of the Third Five-Year Plan, which also proclaimed the victory of socialism in Czechoslovakia, was to increase national income by more than 42%. Industrial output was expected to grow by at least 56%, agricultural production by 22–23%, and personal consumption by 30%.[3]

However, the plan's targets exceeded the actual capabilities of the Czechoslovak economy. For example, the projected increase in iron metallurgy was so inflated that its realization would have led to serious economic imbalances and reduced overall efficiency. At the same time, the limitations of extensive growth became more evident – shortages in raw materials, energy, capital, and labor began to pose serious challenges. External pressures also played a role, including the need for additional military spending related to the Berlin and Cuban crises, the consequences of the Sino-Soviet split, and a series of unfavorable natural events. Together, these factors led to an economic stagnation in the early 1960s and fostered a growing sense of public discontent.
In 1961, the Third Five-Year Plan effectively collapsed, and for the next four years, the economy was managed through short-term, annual operational plans. In 1962, the planning system introduced under the first economic reform (1958–1960), known as the Rozsypal Reform, was abandoned and replaced by the previous administrative-directive model of economic management.[4]A striking indication of the gravity of the situation was the fact that, in 1963, for the first time since the end of World War II, national income declined in absolute terms, specifically by 2.2%. Over the entire duration of the Third Five-Year

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2 PRŮCHA, Václav. Dvě zmařené ekonomické reformy. Hospodářské noviny, 2000, roč. 44, č. 92, s. 7. ISSN 0862-9587 [Two Thwarted Economic Reforms.]

3 Zákon č. 165/1960 Sb., o třetím pětiletém plánu rozvoje národního hospodářství Československé socialistické republiky. [Act No. 165/1960 Coll., on the Third Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.]

4 SIRŮČEK, Pavel a kol. *Hospodářské dějiny a ekonomické teorie: (vývoj, současnost, výhledy).* Slaný: Melandrium, 2007, s. 193. ISBN 978-80-86175-03-4 [Economic History and Economic Theories: Development, Present, Prospects.]

Plan, instead of the intended 42% growth, national income rose by only 10.2%. Agricultural output not only failed to meet the planned growth of 22–23% but actually decreased by 2.7% between 1960 and 1965 (see **Table 1**).[5] Overall, Czechoslovakia's economic growth in the first half of the 1960s was among the slowest in Europe.[6]

The economic crisis significantly undermined the confidence and complacency of regime leaders, which had been fueled by the unusually high economic growth of the late 1950s. In response, policymakers adopted several measures. In addition to abandoning the unrealistic five-year plan (which had practically failed), they drastically curtailed accumulation and investment funds – especially in 1963 – out of fear of social unrest. As a result, personal consumption grew at a faster pace than national income. Growth in the production of consumer goods also had a positive effect. Efforts were made to boost agricultural output, with the aim of raising it to match the level of industrial production. The leadership decided to deepen economic alignment with the Soviet Union. Czechoslovak officials negotiated the import of raw materials and supplies from the USSR that they could not purchase on capitalist markets, along with a loan to finance purchases on those markets. By 1965, when national income rose by 3.4%, it appeared that the worst of the crisis had passed – but its underlying causes remained unresolved.[7]

The failure of the Third Five-Year Plan and the slowdown in living standards were also reflected in public consciousness. Criticism of the

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5 FEDERÁLNÍ STATISTICKÝ ÚŘAD. *Historická statistická ročenka ČSSR…*, s. 88, 213. [Federal Statistical Office. Historical Statistical Yearbook of the ČSSR.]

6 PRŮCHA, Václav a kol. *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992* [Economic and Social History of Czechoslovakia 1918–1992]. Díl 2, Období 1945–1992. Brno: Doplněk, 2009, s. 316. ISBN 978-80-7239-228-5

7 KAPLAN, Karel. *Československo v letech 1953–1966 : 3. část* [Czechoslovakia in the Years 1953–1966, Part 3]. Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1992, s. 103–105. ISBN 80-04-25745-3

Table 1: Annual, Average, and Total Growth of Selected Indicators Compared to Original Plans, 1961–1965 (in %)

Indicator	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	Avg. 1961–65	Total 1960–65	Plan
National Income	6.8	1.4	-2.2	0.6	3.4	2.0	10.2	42
Industrial Production	8.8	6.1	-0.6	4.1	7.9	5.3	28.9	56
Agricultural Output	0.3	-7.0	7.1	3.5	-6.0	-0.4	-2.7	23
Personal Consumption	3.4	2.4	1.1	3.0	5.1	3.0	15.8	30

Source: FEDERÁLNÍ STATISTICKÝ ÚŘAD. *Historická statistická ročenka ČSSR* [Historical Statistical Yearbook of the CSSR], pp. 88, 91, 213, 241; Zákon č. 165/1960 Sb., o třetím pětiletém plánu rozvoje národního hospodářství Československé socialistické republiky [Act No. 165/1960 Coll., on the Third Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic]. Author's calculations based on absolute values in constant/comparable prices. Planned values are midpoints of given ranges, rounded to whole numbers.

Communist Party's policies increased, distrust of the centrally directed management system grew, and interest in foreign economic theories – including the work of Western economists – expanded. At the same time, the dogmatic environment that had dominated Czechoslovak economic thought began to erode, as evidenced by the writings of economists such as O. Šik, K. Kouba, J. Goldmann, and others.[8] These developments contributed to a weakening of the regime's authority and overall stability, and gradually led to a limited liberalization of the political and social climate.[9] Among other things, the regime abandoned its previous declarations that Czechoslovakia was approaching the stage of transitioning from socialism to communism.[10]

Not only in Czechoslovakia, but also in other countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), a new economic reform became a pressing demand of the time. Its goal was to revive the role of the market.[11] The reform was officially launched in January 1965. In essence, it aimed on one hand to fundamentally change how central plans were formulated and linked to the economy, and on the other hand to increase the responsiveness and autonomy of enterprises in reacting to market signals. Desired behavior by these enterprises was to be guided by economic instruments of the center, while planning and central management would no longer impose directives on enterprises through administrative-command methods.[12]

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8 PRŮCHA, Václav. Dvě zmařené ekonomické reformy [Two Thwarted Economic Reforms]. Hospodářské noviny, 2000, roč. 44, č. 92, s. 7. ISSN 0862-9587

9 LONDÁK, Miroslav. Ekonomická tzv. Šikova reforma [The So-Called Šik Economic Reform]. *Encyklopedie českých právních dějin, II. svazek D–J.* Plzeň: Aleš Čeněk, 2016, s. 324. ISBN 978-80-7380-587-6

10 PRŮCHA, Václav a kol. *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992* [Economic and Social History of Czechoslovakia 1918–1992]. Díl 2, Období 1945–1992. Brno: Doplněk, 2009, s. 318. ISBN 978-80-7239-228-5

11 PRŮCHA, Václav. *Dvě zmařené ekonomické reformy* [Two Thwarted Economic Reforms]. Hospodářské noviny, 2000, roč. 44, č. 92, s. 7. ISSN 0862-9587

12 SIRŮČEK, Pavel a kol. *Hospodářské dějiny a ekonomické teorie: (vývoj, současnost, výhledy)* [Economic History and Economic Theories: (Development, Present, Prospects)]. Slaný: Melandrium, 2007, s. 194. ISBN 978-80-86175-03-4

Table 2: Annual, Average, and Total Growth of Selected Indicators Compared to Original Plans, 1966–1970 (in %)

Indicator	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	Avg. 1966–70	Total 1965–70	Plan
National Income	9.1	5.3	7.2	7.3	5.7	6.9	39.7	23
Industrial Production	7.4	7.1	5.5	5.4	8.5	6.8	38.8	31
Agricultural Output	11.3	5.2	4.8	0.7	1.3	4.7	25.1	20
Personal Consumption	5.3	3.5	10.8	6.6	1.1	5.5	30.1	18

Source: FEDERÁLNÍ STATISTICKÝ ÚŘAD. *Historická statistická ročenka ČSSR* [Historical Statistical Yearbook of the CSSR], pp. 88, 89, 91, 213, 241; FEDERÁLNÍ STATISTICKÝ ÚŘAD. Statistická ročenka Československé socialistické republiky 1972 [Statistical Yearbook of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic 1972]. Prague: SNTL, 1972, p. 166; Zákon č. 83/1966 Sb., o čtvrtém pětiletém plánu rozvoje národního hospodářství Československé socialistické republiky [Act No. 83/1966 Coll., on the Fourth Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic]; Vývoj a cíle národohospodářské politiky ČSSR [Development and Goals of the National Economic Policy of the CSSR], p. 159. Author's calculations based on absolute figures/indices in comparable/constant prices. Planned indicators were calculated as midpoints of given ranges and rounded to whole numbers.

The preparation of the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1966–1970) was more complex, in part because it was expected to coincide with the implementation of the economic reform. The plan's authors could not precisely anticipate how the central and enterprise sectors would behave under the new conditions. Compared to previous plans, the Fourth Five-Year Plan included a significantly reduced set of macroeconomic indicators and shifted its focus from physical to value-based measures.[13] It was essentially a compilation of general objectives, which could not be fully aligned with enterprise-level plans. As a result, the economy continued to be guided primarily by annual plans (as had been the case from 1962 to 1965), and only partially adhered to the directives of the five-year strategy.[14]

The economic policy focus for 1966–1970 was to revitalize the economy after the stagnation of the early 1960s and to transition to a more intensive form of growth. Both of these goals were tied to the reform, which was expected to support the generation of resources and enable a return to economic equilibrium. The specific targets of the Fourth Five-Year Plan – somewhat more modest than those of its predecessor – included achieving, over five years, national income growth of 22–24%, industrial output growth of 30–32%, agricultural output growth of 20.1%, and personal consumption growth of 17–19%.

When looking at the aggregate data for the years 1966 to 1970, one can observe favorable economic and social developments. In the areas of national income, industrial and agricultural output, and personal

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13 PRŮCHA, Václav a kol. *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992* [Economic and Social History of Czechoslovakia 1918–1992]. Díl 2, Období 1945–1992. Brno: Doplněk, 2009, s. 320. ISBN 978-80-7239-228-5

14 Zákon č. 83/1966 Sb., o čtvrtém pětiletém plánu rozvoje národního hospodářství Československé socialistické republiky [on the Fourth Five-Year Plan for the Development of the National Economy of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic]; *Vývoj a cíle národohospodářské politiky ČSSR* [The Development and Objectives of the National Economic Policy of the CSSR]. Praha: Svoboda, 1968, s. 159.

consumption, not only were the Fourth Plan's targets exceeded (see **Table 2**), but so were the results of the Third Five-Year Plan (see **Table 1**). National income grew at a rate nearly matching that of the highly praised Second Five-Year Plan, while agricultural output far surpassed its levels from 1956 to 1960. The significant rise in agricultural production was driven by changes in the management and incentivization of the sector.[15] Czechoslovakia's food self-sufficiency improved alongside rising consumption, and agriculture, long considered a weak point, began to evolve into a stabilizing factor for the economy, aided in part by higher procurement prices. By the mid-1960s, living standards had also begun to advance.[16]

At the outset of the economic reform during 1966–1967, new conditions were established for enterprise management. The role of internal financing of investments by enterprises was strengthened, and the wage ceiling was abolished.[17] However, one of the more problematic developments was the accelerated adjustment of wholesale prices, effective January 1, 1967, which led to an average price increase of approximately 29%, far exceeding the original target of a maximum 19% rise.[18] Price imbalances became increasingly apparent, and some enterprises acquired disproportionately large financial gains without any improvement in efficiency – contradicting the reform's goal of applying effective economic pressure on enterprise performance.[19]

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15 FEDERÁLNÍ STATISTICKÝ ÚŘAD. Historická statistická ročenka ČSSR… [Historical Statistical Yearbook of the CSSR…], s. 88, 213.

16 SIRŮČEK, Pavel a kol. *Hospodářské dějiny a ekonomické teorie: (vývoj, současnost, výhledy)* [Economic History and Economic Theories: (Development, Present, Prospects)]. Slaný: Melandrium, 2007, s. 194. ISBN 978-80-86175-03-4

17 PRŮCHA, Václav a kol. *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992…* [Economic and Social History of Czechoslovakia 1918–1992…], s. 323.

18 KYSILKA, Hugo a ZAHRADNÍČEK, Ivan. *Cenová problematika v ČSSR* [Price Issues in the ČSSR]. Praha: Svoboda, 1977, s. 150.

19 PRŮCHA, Václav a kol. *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992…* [Economic and Social History of Czechoslovakia 1918–1992…], s. 7

These newly enriched enterprises no longer depended on the credit system and launched a surge of new investment projects. Wage increases and investment demand not backed by real production capacity further encouraged inflationary tendencies. In contrast, other enterprises found themselves in difficult financial situations – often through no fault of their own – and sought government subsidies or relief from standardized mandatory contributions.

At the beginning of 1968, the economic reform gained momentum with the replacement of Antonín Novotný as head of the Communist Party by Alexander Dubček, and the election of Ludvík Svoboda as president. The key political document of this period became the Akční program KSČ [Action Programme of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia], adopted by the Central Committee of the CPCz on April 5, 1968. Reform efforts aimed at moving closer to a market economy, and the success of the reform was increasingly seen as dependent on changes to the political system.[20]

The State Statistical Office, in its report dated May 22, 1968, concerning the effects of democratization on economic development, stated the following: "Economic developments in 1968 are taking place under conditions of high political activity among workers and social and economic institutions. Even in the first quarter of 1968, the economic instruments of the new management system failed to steer developments in the desired direction. The favorable income situation as a whole does not allow the center to implement either desirable structural changes in production or more intensive use of production factors. Enterprises are able to finance inventory growth and investments from their own resources, which weakens the role of credit. In the first quarter of 1968, the financial operations of state and cooperative organizations were marked by a 10.5% increase in output, an 11.4% rise in gross income, and a 24.8% rise in net profit. Higher income generation led to increases in both contributions to the state budget and enterprise

[20] PRŮCHA, Václav. *Dvě zmařené ekonomické reformy…* [Two Thwarted Economic Reforms…], s. 7.

funds."[21]

Following the invasion by Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968, the reform programme was gradually curtailed. In April 1969, when Gustáv Husák replaced Alexander Dubček as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, a new era began – one that would come to be known as the period of "Normalization." The administrative-command system of economic management was reinstated, a return to dogmatism emerged in economic sciences, and politically motivated purges were carried out, affecting many economic experts as well.[22]

In the economic sphere, the military intervention led to several disruptions, including a temporary decline in workforce productivity, a wave of panic buying, and a surge of emigration. This emigration cost the country a significant portion of its population – most of them skilled workers in their prime productive years. The suppression of reform efforts had lasting consequences for the public consciousness, eroding any lingering belief in the possibility of reshaping the political and economic system into what had been previously referred to as "socialism with a human face," a vision promoted by Alexander Dubček.[23]

Reform efforts were also brought to an end not only in Czechoslovakia, but in the Soviet Union and other COMECON countries as well.[24] One of the most significant structural changes to affect the management system of the national economy was the introduction of federalization, enacted by a constitutional law in October 1968 and taking effect at

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21 Národní archiv, f. 07/15, sv. 12, a. j. 114, Současný hospodářský vývoj (stručné podklady) od Státního statistického úřadu z 22. května 1968 [Current Economic Development (Brief Materials) by the State Statistical Office, 22 May 1968], s. 1.

22 SIRŮČEK, Pavel a kol. *Hospodářské dějiny a ekonomické teorie…* [Economic History and Economic Theories…], s. 196.

23 PRŮCHA, Václav a kol. *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992…* [Economic and Social History of Czechoslovakia 1918–1992…], s. 326–327.

24 PRŮCHA, Václav. *Dvě zmařené ekonomické reformy…* [Two Thwarted Economic Reforms…], s. 7.

the beginning of 1969. This change ended the asymmetric constitutional arrangement that had defined Czechoslovakia since 1945.[25]

2. Outlook: What to Expect in the Second Part of This Study

This article has explored the economic and political context in which the Šik reform was conceived, developed, and – at least partially – implemented during the 1960s in Czechoslovakia. Particular attention was paid to the macroeconomic dynamics, the changing political climate, and the evolving role of central planning.

The second part of the study, to be published in the next issue of GIRN, will delve into the practical dimension of the reform process. It will trace the specific measures introduced between 1963 and 1969, examine the reform's implementation challenges, and analyze its intended final shape as envisaged by reform theorists. Drawing on unpublished documents and legislative drafts from 1968 and 1969, it will reconstruct the direction in which the reform was meant to evolve – before it was interrupted by external intervention. The second part will thus offer deeper insight into the reform's unrealized goals and provide a clearer picture of its potential significance within the broader trajectory of socialist economic governance in Central Europe.

[25] PRŮCHA, Václav a kol. *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918–1992…* [Economic and Social History of Czechoslovakia 1918–1992…], s. 327.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Štěpán Turčín (born in Jičín) graduated from the Prague University of Economics and Business, where he specialized in Economic Policy (as the primary area of Master's degree studies), Modern Economic History. His research focuses primarily on national economic policy in Czechoslovakia during the second half of the 20th century. He is currently a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Economics.

Ing. Štěpán Turčín
Fakulta národohospodářská
Vysoká škola ekonomická v Praze
Nám. W. Churchilla 1938/4
130 00 Praha 3
turs00@vse.cz
ORCID 0009-0002-9788-393X

ŠIMON PAVERA

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 extens 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 libertari-

an 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 sensical 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 presences), 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 com-

mitments 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 compar-

ative 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 subnational elections over the last 15–20 years is reviewed (of course, where possible, as these parties are in many case 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 libertarinism; 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 politial 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-inflected 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 runoff – 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 longtime 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 prefered 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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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Šimon Pavera, born in Prague, has been immersed in humanistic disciplines since childhood, cultivating a deep appreciation for foreign languages, theatre, film, and modern digital media. His intellectual curiosity spans both traditional and contemporary cultural forms, shaping a well-rounded perspective from an early age. At the heart of his academic and personal pursuits lies a strong passion for economics and the principles of the free market, which he has explored through historical and modern case studies. This focus has been reflected in his high school projects and further develops during his early college years.

Šimon Pavera
Prague Univerzity of Economics and Business
Nám. W. Churchilla 1938/4
130 00 Praha 3
simon.pavera@gmail.com

ORCID 0009-0003-9456-2206

Beata Kozieł

The Totalitarian Society as a Literary Image: A Comparative Perspective

Abstract: This article explores the literary representation of totalitarian societies in selected works of Czech, Slovak, and Polish prose fiction written after 1918. Focusing on the cultural and ideological legacies of authoritarian regimes in Central Europe, the study proposes a comparative framework that accounts for historical, linguistic, and aesthetic specificities. It argues that literary texts not only document repression and control, but also reflect divergent strategies of adaptation, resistance, and memory-making. Drawing on approaches from hermeneutics, historical poetics, and narratology, the analysis moves beyond national canons to include marginal, minority, and exilic literatures. A three-level model – contextual, textual, and interpretive – is proposed to examine how totalitarian experience is articulated through narrative form, character construction, and language. The article contends that totalitarian society, as rendered in literature, is not only a political structure but a cultural trauma, shaping both authorial voice and reader reception across generations.

Keywords: totalitarianism; Central European literature; Czech prose; Slovak prose; Polish literature; comparative literature; narrative strategy; cultural memory; resistance; literary canon; minority writing

Introduction to the Problem[1]

The literary production of the independent states that emerged from former Czechoslovakia and Poland after 1918 opens up a rich field of inquiry – not only for tracing the trajectories of national literary developments, but more fundamentally for exploring the ways in which authors from these regions have engaged with the experience of totalitarianism. A comparative approach to fiction written under the constraints of authoritarian rule offers a valuable perspective on divergent cultural memories, narrative strategies, and ethical positions that have shaped both authorial self-understanding and the broader reception of literature.

Yet, such an undertaking is necessarily fraught with methodological and interpretive complications. One must reckon with substantial differences in historical context and institutional infrastructure, as well as the specificities of language, censorship, and the varying configurations of collaboration and resistance. Totalitarianism, after all, does not present itself as a singular or monolithic phenomenon; its internal mechanisms and outward expressions shift according to the regime, period, and locale in question. Likewise, the formal and generic contours of literary responses to totalitarianism require careful and differentiated analysis.

The complex internal stratification of literary production during the totalitarian decades – ranging from state-sanctioned works, through clandestine or samizdat publications, to the literature of exile and the ambiguous "grey zone" of texts produced under compromise – shall also be noted. Each of these zones carries its own tensions and inter-

[1] The initial impetus for the research and the selection of the topic came from Professor Libor Pavera, the academic supervisor of the author of this study. During the admissions process for the doctoral program at the University of Bielsko-Biała, the author chose this theme and was accepted by the committee. The present article constitutes one of the first methodological reflections on how to approach a comparative topic that mirrors the intricate cultural and historical dynamics of Central Europe in the twentieth century.

pretive demands. This study sets out to examine how the structures and legacies of totalitarian power are represented in selected works of Polish, Czech, and Slovak fiction; how writers have thematised domination, repression, and resistance; and how such texts contribute – both in their time and in retrospect – to the formation of collective memory.

The Totalitarian Community as a Literary Construct

The concept of a totalitarian community has become a central category in the study of modern authoritarian regimes. It describes not merely a political order, but an entire social configuration in which the lives of individuals are subject to total state control. Such control extends beyond public institutions into the private sphere, seeking to regulate culture, economic life, religion, and even the most intimate domains of thought, emotion, and personal relationships. In such a context, the individual is not an autonomous moral or political subject, but a functionary of the state's ideological and disciplinary apparatus.

The defining features of a totalitarian community may be summarised as follows:

- the state's absolute supremacy over the individual;
- the imposition of ideological uniformity through propaganda and censorship;
- a monopoly of political power, maintained by a single ruling party and the systematic suppression of dissent;
- the pervasive indoctrination of the populace;
- a climate of fear, sustained by surveillance and the ever-present threat of repression;
- and the dissolution of the boundary between public and private life, whereby family, friendship, and intimacy become sites of political scrutiny.

These dynamics were most extensively realised in the political systems of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, and have been analysed

in foundational theoretical works. In The Origins of Totalitarianism,[2] Hannah Arendt explores the collapse of traditional social and moral structures under the weight of ideological myth-making and mass atomisation, arguing that totalitarian regimes isolate individuals from one another while rendering them obedient through bureaucratic mobilisation and terror. Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzeziński,[3] in their typology of totalitarian rule, stress the structural ambition of such regimes to achieve total penetration and transformation of society.

For literary scholarship, however, the totalitarian community is not simply an object of description. In contrast, it constitutes a representational field – a discursive and imaginative construct through which writers negotiate their relation to power, ideology, and historical experience. Fictional texts do not merely chronicle repression; they also dramatise the psychological interiority of submission, the ethical ambiguity of compromise, and the tacit codes of silence. They expose the fractures within imposed uniformity, commonly deploying allegory or narrative displacement (or other literary devices, such as irony) to articulate what could not be said directly.

Indeed, the literary engagement with totalitarianism is frequently less concerned with ideological confrontation than with the experience of living under conditions of extreme constraint. Through narrative, authors recover not only facts, but also gestures, hesitations, refusals–the minute textures of existence within systems designed to obliterate subjectivity. Literature thus, from such a standpoint, functions as both a

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[2] Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1951. See Chapter 12: "Totalitarianism in Power." Available online: https://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/arendt_originsoftotalitarianism.pdf

[3] Friedrich, Carl J. and Zbigniew K. Brzeziński, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956, esp. pp. 22–23. Available online: https://faculty.washington.edu/sangok/NorthKorea/Friedrich%2C_Carl_and_Abigniew_Brzezinski_-_Totalitarian_Dictatorship_and_Autocracy.pdf

document and a medium of memory, offering insights into the lived realities of repression and the subtle grammars of resistance.

Inner Conflict and Cultural Trauma

It is in literature, perhaps more than in any other form of cultural expression, that the internal tensions of life under totalitarianism are most vividly rendered. Through narrative, authors explore the subtle and often painful oscillation between loyalty and subversion, between social conformity and moral dissent, between outward compliance and inward freedom. The totalitarian community, in this light, is not merely an ideal type – it is also a cultural trauma, a historically situated experience whose echoes continue to reverberate long after the fall of the regimes that produced it.

As such, the theme of the totalitarian community serves as a powerful analytical key for reading Central European fiction of the second half of the twentieth century. It enables us to trace the articulation of history through literary means, while also opening up broader questions of morality, personal autonomy, memory, and responsibility.

Research Problem and Methodology

At the core of this study lies a fundamental question: how does literary fiction respond to the specific historical experience of totalitarianism, and in what ways does it represent that experience? In the cases of Czechoslovakia and Poland, this experience encompasses not only political and social control, but also cultural indoctrination, censorship, enforced loyalty, and – crucially – both self-censorship and exile. Literary responses to such conditions have been varied, evolving alongside shifts in political practice and across generational lines. Methodologically, the study is grounded in the interdisciplinary framework of literary comparatism, drawing on thematic analysis, historical poetics, hermeneutics, and narratology.

The research proceeds through close readings of selected prose texts by Czech, Slovak, and Polish authors, with particular attention to:

- the representation of totalitarian mechanisms – ideology, violence, surveillance, propaganda;
- the typology of characters and their responses to pressure – ranging from conformity to inner exile to active resistance;
- the linguistic and compositional strategies employed to aestheticize, ironize, or allegorize totalitarian experience.
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Special emphasis is placed on how memory – both personal and collective – is inscribed into the literary fabric, and on the positioning of the reader: to what extent is the literary text a vehicle for historical understanding, critical distance, or the reconstruction of identity?

The Question of Corpus and Canon

One of the most delicate issues in any comparative study of the literatures of former Czechoslovakia and Poland is the selection of texts and authors. The very term "Czechoslovak literature" must be understood as a historically contingent construct rather than a linguistically or aesthetically unified field. While notions of cultural unity between Czechs and Slovaks were officially promoted during the interwar and postwar periods, the linguistic realities of the region did not reflect such unity. The concept of a "Czechoslovak language" – invoked, for example, by T. G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš – had primarily a symbolic-political rather than communicative function.

In practice, literary circulation routinely crossed linguistic boundaries: Slovak literature was read in the Czech lands, Polish prose found readers in regions such as Teschen Silesia and among university-educated audiences, and German-language writers had its own essential role in the urban cultures of multilingual cities. This areal and stratified context calls for a complex approach, one that resists the reductive gesture of relying solely on canonical "great names" of national literatures.
The central question thus becomes: should the comparative analysis focus on canonised authors whose work has already been extensively interpreted and institutionalised, or should it rather highlight marginal

figures – writers whose position in the literary field remains peripheral, yet who offer valuable perspectives shaped by ethnic origin, regional background, or direct experience of repression?

This article opts for a combined strategy. Alongside the analysis of established works that have become integral to national memory and literary education, it also seeks to engage with lesser-known texts whose marginal status may prove interpretively fertile. Here, marginality is understood not only in geographic terms, but also in discursive terms – as works that have been excluded due to ideological nonconformity, aesthetic deviance, or lack of accessibility to mass readership. The goal is to reconstruct as wide a spectrum as possible of literary responses to the experience of totalitarian power.

Thematic Analysis: Representing Totalitarian Order within a Culturally Heterogeneous Space

The representation of totalitarian regimes in Central European literature is not merely a record of historical repression; it also reflects the culturally distinct ways in which societies have grappled with that experience. In the case of former Czechoslovakia, the contrast between the state's declared unity and its internal linguistic, national, and cultural plurality is particularly striking. This pluralism had a direct impact on the literary portrayal of power, resistance, and societal normalization–and simultaneously complicates any straightforward comparison with the relatively more homogeneous Polish tradition.

In Polish prose, a strong current of moral and philosophical reflection on dictatorship began to take shape as early as the 1950s, with writers such as Andrzej Szczypiorski, Tadeusz Konwicki, and Jerzy Andrzejewski. By contrast, Czech and Slovak literature tended toward more fragmentary responses: irony (Škvorecký), allegory (Hrabal, Klíma), satire (in the tradition of Hašek), or introspective fiction (Rudolf Sloboda, Dominik Tatarka). Totalitarianism here is not always depicted as a monolithic apparatus of control, but often as a contradictory, dif-

fuse, and internally unstable system in which the individual navigates an ambivalent space between adaptation and resistance.

When we take into account the significance of location and linguistic area – such as Slovak authors writing in Hungarian, or Czech women writers living in the Teschen region – it becomes clear that literary representations of totalitarianism are frequently shaped by regional experience. In some instances, social pressure appears less as ideological force from the political center and more as the coercion of cultural norms or the dynamics of ethnic conflict. In others, it emerges as the traumatic imprint of collective silence.

From this perspective, it becomes quite clear that the selection of texts for analysis must not be guided solely by thematic relevance, but must also attend to linguistic and cultural horizons. Crucial points of comparison are to be found not only in the treatment of power and repression, but also in narrative voice, language use, structure, and the degree of openness or coded indirection with which experience is conveyed.

Comparative Challenges within a Plural Cultural Space

Any comparative analysis of literature produced in Central Europe after 1918 is immediately confronted by a fundamental question: what exactly is being compared? If we begin with national literatures – Czech, Slovak, Polish – we risk reducing a richly layered and historically complex cultural space to overly tidy categories. The territory of former Czechoslovakia was home to a multilingual mosaic of literary expression: texts were written not only in Czech, Slovak, and Polish, but also in Hungarian, German, Yiddish, Romani, and Rusyn. Many of these literatures developed with a high degree of autonomy, while simultaneously contributing to a shared, if contested, cultural landscape.

This plurality is not merely a linguistic fact; it carries significant implications for literary form, reception, and interpretation. It poses a challenge to any method that would rely on rigid national frameworks, and it demands a more nuanced approach – one that recognises the

dynamic interplay between dominant and minority traditions, between central narratives and their margins, between literary institutions and the counter-publics they often sought to suppress.

Just as the historical trajectory of the three – at times somewhat artificially paired into two – Central European literatures was complex, ambiguous, and winding, so too is the contemporary effort to recover, reconstruct, and interpret their historical meanings. Literary texts do not merely reflect history; they refract it in layered, and often paradoxical, ways. It is precisely this multiplicity of meaning that presents both a challenge and a justification for continuous return – to read them not only as aesthetic artefacts, but as forms of testimony, memory, and human orientation in a world shaped by conflict and change.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Beata Kozieł was born in Karviná in the Czech Republic. She graduated from the University of Ostrava, where she studied Polish, Czech and Spanish Philology and Global History. During her research work, she carried out six-month internships in Spain (Málaga), Germany (Passau), Poland (Wrocław and Katowice) and conducted dialectological research in Russian Siberia. Her academic background combines Bohemian studies, with a focus on linguistic and literary phenomena, and foreign language pedagogy, particularly in Spanish, Czech and Polish. She is currently pursuing a doctoral degree with a dissertation that compares Polish, Slovak, and Czech literatures, with a special emphasis on the literary representation of totalitarian societies. She professionally works as a court interpreter of Polish language.

Beata Kozieł
Wydział Humanistyczno-Społeczny
Uniwersytet Bielsko-Bialski
ul. Willowa 2
43-309 Bielsko-Biała
D29@student.ubb.edu.pl

ORCID 0009-0008-9950-5426

DOROTA CHŁOPEK

Linguistic Creativity in Motion: How Speakers Extend Intransitive Verbs into Argument Structure Constructions

Abstract: This study examines how speakers extend prototypically intransitive "noise" verbs (coughed, laughed, sneezed) into Caused Motion and Resultative Constructions, as described by Goldberg (1995). Using corpus data from the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the analysis identifies the linguistic mechanisms and cognitive-semantic principles that support these non-prototypical uses. Results indicate that, despite their conventional intransitivity, these verbs are productively coerced into transitive frames when licensed by constructional meaning. Path and result phrases play a key role in signaling these interpretations. While both corpora provide evidence of such constructions, American English demonstrates greater frequency and flexibility, particularly in Resultative uses. These findings support a construction grammar framework, highlighting the role of usage patterns in shaping argument structure and extending verb meaning.

Keywords: noise verbs; intransitive verbs; the Caused Motion Construction; the Resultative Construction; BNC; COCA; concordance lines; usage-based; construal; semantic coertion

Introduction

Language is a remarkably flexible system (Zock, 1988), allowing speakers to extend the meanings of words and constructions in creative ways (Rambelli, 2025). In English, some verbs that are typically intransitive – such as the following 'noise verbs': *sneeze*, *cough*, or *laugh* (Urban and Ruppenhofer, 2001, p. 79) – occasionally appear in argument structure constructions that imply motion or result. For example: "He sneezed the napkin off the table" (Goldberg, 1995, p.9, Example (8)), or "She *laughed* herself *crooked*" (Goldberg, 1995, p. 182, citing Benson's *Mr. Teddy*, 1910). Such patterns challenge traditional views of verb valency (Langacker, 1987) and argument structure (Goldberg, 1995, 2006), suggesting that speakers dynamically shape grammar based on cognitive and usage-based principles (Langacker, 1987; Goldberg, Casenhiser, and Sethuraman, 2004; Bybee, 2010).

For students of English as a foreign language – especially those with a solid grounding in English syntax – the creative extension of intransitive verbs into transitive constructions often lies outside the scope of formal instruction. These learners are typically trained to avoid "unlicensed" uses of verbs such as *coughed*, *sneezed*, or *laughed* in syntactic environments that resemble transitive complementation, such as the resultative (SVOC)[1] or the caused-motion construction (SVOA)[2], as defined by Goldberg (1995). Yet, native speakers frequently use these verbs in such constructions with expressive and communicative purpose. This discrepancy between prescriptive models and actual language use may restrict the learners' expressive potential and inhibit their understanding of the dynamic, metaphor-driven, and constructional nature of English argument structure. A study of this phenomenon is thus not only theoretically significant but also pedagogically valuable, offering insights into how authentic language stretches

[1] SVOC stands for Subject-Verb-Object-Complement. (see Quirk et al. 2007 [1985], p. 721).

[2] SVOA stands for Subject-Verb-Object-Adverbial. (see Idem).

beyond canonical clause types – a perspective especially important when exploring concordance lines that document naturalistic, idiomatic usage.

Consider the sentence: *"He sneezed his tooth right across town."* (Munsch, 2002, as Example (3) in Goldberg, 2006, p. 6)

At first glance, *sneeze* is an intransitive verb, meaning it does not typically take a direct object. Yet, in this sentence, it appears in a Caused Motion construction (Goldberg, 1995, p. 3) as if sneezing can transfer force onto an object. How is this possible? What allows speakers to use verbs in ways that extend beyond their conventional meanings?

The unexpected use of intransitive verbs (see Goldberg, 2006, p. 6) in these constructions raises fundamental questions about how argument structure is shaped by experience (Goldberg, Casenhiser, and Sethuraman, 2004), categorization (Goldberg, 1995; Bybee, 2010), and analogy (Blanchette and Dunbar, 2000). This study draws on Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006) and Usage-Based Linguistics (Bybee, 2010; Langacker 1987; Johnson 1987) to explore how speakers extend verbs into new argument structures.

Earlier Research on Argument Structure Flexibility

The question of how argument structure constructions shape meaning and accommodate non-prototypical verbs has been examined from various linguistic and psycholinguistic perspectives. Goldberg (1995) introduced the concept of constructional polysemy, demonstrating that argument structure constructions carry inherent meaning and allow verbs to be extended beyond their conventional valency through semantic 'coercion' (see point 2.3.1). Supporting this, Johnson and Goldberg (2013) provide psycholinguistic evidence that speakers automatically access constructional meaning, even in nonsensical sentences, suggesting that argument structure constructions function as pre-established cognitive templates for meaning.

Further expanding on the flexibility of argument realization, Goldberg (2001) discusses cases where patient arguments are omitted, shedding light on how transitive verbs can take on intransitive uses. Similarly, Levin and Rappaport Hovav (1995) examine intransitivity, argument realization, and alternations, which are closely tied to Goldberg's framework. Their work on unaccusativity highlights a key distinction within intransitive verbs – some behave as if their subjects were direct objects. By contrasting unaccusativity with ergativity, they explore the implications of these phenomena across different languages and introduce the concept of split intransitivity, which distinguishes unaccusative from unergative verbs. This has significantly contributed to ongoing debates in syntactic and lexical semantics.

A related line of research focuses on resultative constructions, which often involve shifts in argument realization. Goldberg and Jackendoff (2004) explore how transitive verbs can be used in intransitive-like resultative constructions, further illustrating the flexibility of argument structure. Hans Boas (2003) builds on this perspective using Construction Grammar and Frame Semantics, categorizing English resultative constructions into conventionalized (fixed meanings) and non-conventionalized (allowing novel meanings). His usage-based model suggests that each verb sense functions as a mini-construction, crucial for licensing arguments. Furthermore, a comparison between English and German resultatives reveals differences in their lexical polysemy networks, emphasizing cross-linguistic variation in argument structure flexibility. While not Goldberg's own work, this study aligns with her framework by illustrating how argument structure constructions adapt dynamically to accommodate novel syntactic and semantic contexts.

Additionally, studies have shown that learners acquire argument structure constructions based on exposure to high-frequency exemplars (Goldberg, Casenhiser, and Sethuraman, 2004), reinforcing the idea that argument structure patterns are learned through categorization rather than being innate grammatical rules. From a cognitive perspective, research on analogy and structural mapping has contributed

to understanding how speakers generalize linguistic patterns to novel contexts. Blanchette and Dunbar (2000) found that people rely on deep structural similarity rather than surface resemblance when drawing analogies, supporting the idea that linguistic generalization occurs through abstract relational reasoning.

These findings align with usage-based models of language learning, which argue that linguistic patterns emerge from frequency effects and analogical extension rather than rigid syntactic rules (Bybee, 2010). In line with this, Zock (1988) emphasizes the flexibility of natural language, noting that this very flexibility makes it both powerful and difficult to formalize – a challenge also present in understanding how argument structure constructions dynamically adapt to non-prototypical verbs.

Research Question and Structure of the Study

This study investigates the following question:

How do speakers extend intransitive 'noise' verbs (such as *sneeze*, *cough*, and *laugh*) into Caused Motion and Resultative constructions (Goldberg, 1995), despite their conventional intransitivity?

Specifically, this study examines:

1. The linguistic mechanisms that allow non-prototypical verbs to appear in these constructions.
2. The cognitive and semantic principles that support this flexibility.
3. Corpus-based evidence for the frequency and productivity of these patterns in English.

To address this question, the article is structured as follows:

Section 2 provides the theoretical background, outlining Construction Grammar and the usage-based approach to meaning construction.
Section 3 presents a case study of the verbs *cough*, *laugh*, and *sneeze* in the Caused Motion and Resultative Constructions, illustrating how

argument structure shifts occur through conceptual extension. Drawing on the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), it examines the frequency and productivity of these constructions and discusses their linguistic and cognitive implications.

The Conclusion synthesizes the findings from Section 3, demonstrating that the extension of intransitive 'noise' verbs into Caused Motion and Resultative constructions reflects broader cognitive and linguistic mechanisms. It highlights the productivity and frequency of these constructions, reinforcing the argument that argument structure shifts are guided by both usage-based patterns and conceptual extensions in English.

To further investigate the productivity of Caused Motion and Resultative constructions, this study analyzes concordance lines from the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). While the BNC provides a representative sample of British English, COCA offers a much larger dataset for American English, allowing for a broader examination of usage patterns. For instance, the verb form *sneezed* appears only 39 times in the BNC but occurs over 600 times in COCA, highlighting the importance of cross-corpus comparison. By extracting instances of *sneezed*, *laughed*, and *coughed* in Caused Motion and Resultative constructions, this analysis aims to determine the extent to which these patterns appear in natural discourse, as well as their frequency, distribution, and possible constraints on productivity. This corpus-based approach complements the theoretical and psycholinguistic perspectives discussed earlier, providing quantitative evidence of how speakers generalize and extend argument structure constructions in everyday communication.

Theoretical Background

In Construction Grammar (Goldberg, 1995, 2006), grammatical constructions are symbolic units (Langacker, 1987, p. 58), meaning that

they pair form with meaning in a way that is at least partially arbitrary (Croft, 2001, p. 18).

The extension of intransitive verbs into argument structure constructions challenges traditional views on verb selectional restrictions and underscores the role of constructional meaning in shaping linguistic creativity (Goldberg, 2006, pp. 6–7). This section establishes a theoretical foundation by examining Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006), the issue of non-prototypical verbs, and the cognitive and semantic mechanisms that facilitate these extensions.

Goldberg's Construction Grammar Approach

Construction Grammar (CxG) posits that argument structure constructions are form-meaning pairings independent of specific verbs (Goldberg, 1995, p. 9). Constructions impose their own meaning onto verbs, allowing for creative extensions that might not align with the verb's prototypical usage.

More generally, in Construction Grammar, grammatical constructions are symbolic units, meaning that they pair form with meaning in a way that is at least partially arbitrary (Langacker, 1987, p. 58; Croft, 2001, p. 18). Even the most general syntactic constructions have corresponding general rules of semantic interpretation (Goldberg, 1995, p. 4), reinforcing the view that constructions themselves contribute to interpretation, independent of the lexical items they contain (Goldberg, 2006, pp. 6–7). This perspective departs from traditional syntactic theories, where meaning is assumed to emerge primarily from the properties of individual verbs or argument structures. Instead, Construction Grammar posits that meaning is inherently tied to constructions (Goldberg, 1995, p. 1), allowing for creative extensions beyond conventional verb usage (Goldberg, 2013).

Crucially, metaphorical extensions of constructions often emerge from a central sense based on actual transfer (Goldberg, 1995, p. 37). For example, in Caused Motion and Resultative Constructions, verbs

that do not inherently encode physical transfer (*laugh, cough, sneeze*) can still be extended metaphorically because the core constructional meaning provides a basis for interpreting them in terms of force or motion (Talmy, 2000). This ability to reinterpret verb meanings within constructions exemplifies the polysemy of argument structure constructions, where abstract extensions remain grounded in a central, literal meaning (Goldberg, 1995, pp. 31–39, 75–39).

Two particularly relevant constructions for this discussion are:

The Caused Motion Construction – typically represented as "X CAUSES Y to MOVE Z" (Subj–V–Obj–Obl[3]) (Goldberg, 1995, p. 3) and, in terms of thematic roles, as [Agent] [Verb] [Theme] [Goal/Path] (see Goldberg, 1995, pp. 52, 78, 90) – typically features verbs of caused movement (e.g., *throw*, *push*, *carry*). However, speakers often extend this construction metaphorically to verbs that do not inherently encode motion, such as *sneeze* in "Pat sneezed the napkin off the table" (Goldberg, 1995, Example 2, p. 3).

The Resultative Construction – typically represented as "X CAUSES Y to BECOME Z" (Subj–V–Obj–Xcomp[4]) (Goldberg, 1995, p. 3) or as "Subj V Obj RP"[5] (Goldberg, 2006, p. 73) – expresses a change of state in the object. For example, in "She kissed him unconscious" (Goldberg, 1993, Example 3, p. 3), the object (*him*) undergoes a change

[3] "Subj V Obj Obl" stands for Subject–Verb–Object–Oblique, a schematic representation of argument structure. The Oblique element typically refers to a prepositional or case-marked phrase that expresses direction, path, location, or other peripheral roles in the event – such as to the park, with a stick, or for the children. Unlike core grammatical relations like Subject and Object, Obliques are often marked by prepositions (in English) or case inflections (in other languages), and they encode a wide range of semantically related participant roles (Croft, 2012, p. 3).

[4] "Xcomp" (open clausal complement) is a secondary predicate that expresses the result of the action on the object – e.g., "She kissed him unconscious", where unconscious is the Xcomp.

[5] RP" stands for Result Phrase, following the structure of the Resultative Construction as described in Goldberg (2006): [Subj V Obj RP].

of state (*becoming unconscious*), even though the verb *kiss* does not inherently encode such a result, as it is not a change-of-state verb.

In both cases, the construction itself contributes meaning, sometimes overriding the lexical constraints of the verb – a process known as coercion (Goldberg, 2006). Coercion is not merely a pragmatic inference; rather, it is systematically licensed by constructions that impose an interpretation not independently encoded by the verb itself (Goldberg, 1995, p. 159). When a verb does not inherently fit the construction's meaning but can be coerced into a related interpretation, the resulting expression is perceived as grammatical and interpretable within the constructional framework.

These constructions illustrate the flexibility of argument structure constructions, supporting the idea that grammar is not merely a syntactic system but a reflection of how speakers conceptualize and structure experience.

The Problem of Non-Prototypical Verbs

A key issue in argument structure alternations is how verbs that are inherently intransitive – for example, "noise verbs are usually intransitive, taking the sound Source as subject" (Urban and Ruppenhofer, 2001, p. 79) – can appear in transitive constructions. Classical lexicalist approaches struggle to explain why verbs like *sneeze*, *cough*, or *laugh* – which do not encode causation or motion – are nonetheless used in Caused Motion or Resultative Constructions (Goldberg, 2006, p. 6).

For instance:

- *She sneezed the tissue off the desk.* (see Goldberg, 1995, Example (8), p. 9)
- *He laughed the argument away.* (see "Return of the Phantom King," 2017, Chapter 1, para. 1)
- *She coughed herself hoarse.* (see Goldberg, 1995, Example 56, p. 193)

These examples illustrate that the constructional meaning can override the verb's traditional selectional restrictions, allowing intransitive predicates to take direct objects. This flexibility suggests that speakers are guided not solely by verb semantics but also by broader cognitive and conceptual principles.

Cognitive and Semantic Mechanisms

The phenomenon of extending intransitive verbs into transitive constructions can be explained through several interrelated cognitive and semantic mechanisms.

Coercion

Coercion (Goldberg, 1995, p. 159; 2006, p. 22; Leclercq, 2019) occurs when a verb is integrated into a non-prototypical argument structure, prompting a reinterpretation of its meaning. In examples like *She sneezed the tissue off the desk*, the verb *sneeze* – which typically does not imply caused motion – acquires a motion-causing interpretation due to the constraints imposed by the Caused Motion Construction. This construction corresponds to the schematic pattern "X CAUSES Y to MOVE Z" (Goldberg, 1995, p. 3), in which an agent (X) causes a theme (Y) to move along a path (Z). The presence of this syntactic frame licenses an interpretation where *sneeze* is understood as bringing about motion, even though the verb itself encodes no such semantics. This process demonstrates how syntactic structures can override lexical meaning, reshaping the interpretation of a verb rather than the other way around.

Leclercq (2019) investigates coercion as a contextual enrichment or adjustment (Lauwers and Willems, 2011, p. 1220) and explores the potential for a cross-theoretical account by integrating insights from Construction Grammar and Relevance Theory. While Construction Grammar conceptualizes coercion as an interaction between linguistic semantics and syntactic structures, Relevance Theory treats it as a broader phenomenon of lexical adjustment guided by pragmatic prin-

ciples. Leclercq ultimately argues that coercion is best understood as a linguistically required pragmatic process and may constitute a specific type of saturation.

Metaphorical Extensions

Metaphor plays a crucial role in argument structure creativity. Many extensions of intransitive verbs into transitive constructions involve conceptual metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) that map bodily actions onto forceful interactions with the world. For instance:

- *sneeze a tooth out* – conceptualized as an external force expelling an object
- *laugh the argument away* – laughter metaphorically removes the problem

These metaphorical mappings align with force-dynamic schemas (Talmy, 2000, pp. 409─470), where actions are conceptualized in terms of physical movement or resultative change.

1.1.1. Analogy and Productivity

The ability to extend intransitive verbs into argument structure constructions is not a one-off phenomenon but part of a broader pattern of analogical extension (Langacker, 1987, pp. 437–447). Speakers generalize usage patterns based on previous exemplars (Langacker, 2009, p. 115), making creative verb–construction pairings more productive over time.

Langacker (2009, p. 267) distinguishes between two types of generalizations conveyed by sentences. The first ("*A kitten is born with blue eyes*" Example (9d)) is a generic statement – it refers to a virtual event involving a virtual participant (a kitten), expressing a general truth about the inherent structure of the world. The second ("*Four times during the speech, a heckler shouted out an insult*" (Example 9e)) is also a generalization, but a local one: it abstracts over multiple actual events to highlight what they have in common. Although those events

truly occurred, the sentence profiles an abstract, fictive representation of their shared structure.

The extent to which such patterns are conventionalized or remain restricted to humorous or poetic contexts remains an open question. However, corpus data suggest that such extensions are frequent and not merely idiosyncratic (Goldberg, 2006, p. 167).

Linking to Event Construal and Conceptualization

Langacker (1987, p. 138) introduces the idea of "alternate construals," arguing that grammatical structure is shaped by "conventional imagery" – our ability to construe the same conceived situation in different ways. The conceptualization of an event is not merely a matter of content, but also of how that content is structured in terms of "attention, selection, figure/ground organization, viewpoint, and level of schematicity." As Cognitive Grammar (CG) posits, meaning is equated with "conceptualization," understood as "cognitive processing" (Langacker, 1987, p. 5). This dynamic perspective challenges the notion of fixed verb meanings and instead emphasizes how linguistic structure interacts with conceptual organization.

Expanding on this foundation, Langacker later suggests "that a lot of predicates usually not considered factive are nonetheless susceptible to a factive construal under particular circumstances" (2009, p. 279). This notion of factive construal further illustrates how speakers creatively structure events linguistically. It helps explain the extension of intransitive verbs into transitive argument structure constructions – an instance of event construal – where verbs like *sneeze*, *laugh*, and *cough* appear in Caused Motion or Resultative Constructions (Goldberg, 1995, 2006), despite their inherent intransitivity.

A key aspect of Langacker's argument is that conceptualization involves "anomalous processing" (1987, p. 138), whereby one conceptual representation can be transformed into another through shifts in construal. This is precisely what occurs in cases like:

- *She sneezed the tissue off the desk.* (see Goldberg, 1995, Example (8), p. 9)
- *He laughed the argument away.* (see "Return of the Phantom King," 2017, Chapter 1, para. 1)
- *She coughed herself hoarse.* (see Goldberg, 1995, Example 56, p. 193)

In these examples, the speaker coerces an intransitive verb into a transitive frame by construing the action not merely as an isolated bodily function (as per the verb's default meaning) but rather as an event with a force-dynamic structure (Talmy, 2000). The subject's action is reinterpreted as exerting force on an object (*tissue*, *argument*, *oneself*), causing movement or a change of state – aligning with the meaning imposed by the Caused Motion and Resultative Constructions.

From a cognitive perspective, this "anomalous" reanalysis is not arbitrary but follows systematic principles of event construal and conceptual transformation. By shifting "figure/ground" relationships and adjusting levels of "schematicity" (Langacker, 1987, p. 138), speakers highlight different aspects of the event. For example, in *She sneezed the tissue off the desk*, the verb *sneeze* is reconstrued as an agentive force that propels an object (*tissue*) rather than simply denoting a bodily action. Similarly, in *She coughed herself hoarse*, the intransitive verb *cough* is reinterpreted as causing a resultant state (*hoarse*), consistent with the Resultative Construction.

These examples illustrate how grammatical constructions and cognitive construal mechanisms interact to extend verb usage beyond traditional selectional restrictions. Just as Divjak, Milin, and Medimorec (2019) found that linguistic construal affects visual event perception, the extension of intransitive verbs into transitive frames reflects a conceptual shift that reorganizes event structure in the speaker's mind.
To further substantiate this theoretical account, the following section examines corpus-based evidence for the transitive use of intransitive verbs such as *sneeze*, *cough*, and *laugh* – specifically in their preterit

forms – within Caused Motion and Resultative Constructions. By analyzing concordance lines from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the British National Corpus (BNC), this study explores how these verbs are extended through constructional coercion and alternate construals, and whether such uses reflect isolated creativity or systematic usage patterns across registers and contexts.

Summary

In sum, Construction Grammar provides a framework for understanding how speakers creatively extend intransitive verbs into argument structure constructions. The flexibility of Caused Motion and Resultative Constructions suggests that meaning is not solely determined by lexical semantics but is shaped by broader cognitive principles, including coercion, metaphor, and analogy. This perspective challenges traditional assumptions about verb selectional restrictions and highlights the dynamic, usage-based nature of language. Furthermore, insights from event construal research suggest that such linguistic creativity is not arbitrary but reflects deeper interactions between perception, cognition, and grammatical structure.

More specifically, integrating Langacker's (1987) notion of alternate construals with Goldberg's (1995, 2006) Construction Grammar allows us to explain the extension of intransitive verbs into transitive constructions as a cognitive phenomenon driven by conceptual restructuring. Rather than viewing these extensions as mere anomalies, they exemplify language's flexibility in shaping event construal through coercion, metaphor, and force-dynamic reasoning. This perspective underscores the broader claim that grammar is not merely a syntactic system but a reflection of how speakers conceptualize and structure experience. As Tyler and Evans (2003, p. 24) point out, a central tenet of cognitive linguistics is that meaning is fundamentally embodied, a view supported by a wide range of scholars "(e.g., Evans, 2000; Grady, 1997a; Heine, 1997; Jackendoff, 1983, 1990, 1992; Johnson, 1987; Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999; Langacker, 1987; Sweetser, 1990; Svorou, 1994; Talmy, 2000; Turner,

1991, 1996; Varela et al., 1991)"[6].

Concordance-Based Analysis of Transitive Uses of Intransitive Verbs

Methodology and Data Sources

This section outlines the methodology and data sources used to investigate the transitive use of intransitive verbs in Caused Motion and Resultative Constructions. Specifically, it examines how verbs such as *sneezed*, *coughed*, and *laughed* occur in non-prototypical transitive constructions within these patterns. The analysis is based on concordance data predominantly drawn from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), supplemented by examples from the British National Corpus (BNC), and considers patterns of usage across different registers and contexts.

Relevant examples were collected using *AntConc*, a freeware corpus analysis toolkit developed by Laurence Anthony (available at https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/). Concordance lines containing the past-tense forms of the target verbs were extracted from both corpora, and instances showing transitive usage were identified through manual judgment, with particular attention to their occurrence in the target constructions.

Case Study: Concordance Examples

This subsection presents selected concordance examples that illustrate how the intransitive verbs *sneezed*, *coughed*, and *laughed* are used in Caused Motion and Resultative Constructions.

The Caused Motion Construction, as defined by Goldberg (1995, p. 159), encodes a meaning in which an agent causes an entity to move to a location, independently of verb meaning. This interpretation aris-

[6] This list of scholars is cited in full from Tyler and Evans (2003, p. 24).

es from the construction itself, which conventionally pairs a verb with a directional prepositional phrase (PP), yielding a [Subj V Obj Obl] pattern that carries a caused-motion interpretation. In cases where the PP appears locative rather than directional, a process of coercion allows the construction to impose a motion reading on otherwise non-directional expressions.

The Resultative Construction expresses a change of state caused by an agent's action, following the schematic pattern [Subj V Obj Xcomp], where the result phrase (*Xcomp*) denotes the outcome of the event. This interpretation is not derived from the verb alone but is licensed by the construction itself (Goldberg, 1995, p. 3).

The Use of *Coughed* in the Caused Motion Construction: Evidence from BNC and COCA

While the examples featuring the verb form *coughed* in the Caused Motion Construction in (1) and (2) are drawn from the British National Corpus (BNC), the concordance lines cited in (3) through (21) originate from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). This distribution reflects the relative availability of such constructions in each corpus, highlighting potential differences in usage patterns between British and American English.

1. "53 CEH W_fict_prose the launch from the jetty, a wheel spun in capable hands, [**the engine coughed them on their way**][7]. Then a half-turn astern, and they were heading confidently" (BNC)

The concordance line in (1) contains the verb form *coughed*, which occurs in the clause "the engine coughed them on their way," a structure that follows the pattern of the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent:

[7] Bolded fragments within square brackets in the concordance lines excerpted from BNC and COCA (with the verbs sneezed, coughed, and laughed) are not highlighted in the original sources; they have been emphasized here to indicate a modification to the original text.

the engine] [Verb: coughed] [Theme[8] (Object moved): them] [Goal/Path: on their way]. Semantically, the engine is the entity causing the motion of *them* (presumably people in a boat). The verb *coughed* is used metaphorically here – while it typically describes a sound or action associated with an engine starting up, in this construction, it is extended to express caused motion. The phrase "on their way" indicates a direction or path – not a change of state, but a change in location or trajectory.

Goldberg's theory accounts for such creative verb uses, where a typically intransitive verb like ***cough*** is extended by the construction to take on a transitive, motion-related meaning.

2. "125 HA2 W_fict_prose. But he wasn't one for being matey, or even civil. Rather [**coughed his orders out**]. I mean, as I told Dick Treadwell, we're" (BNC)

The clause "coughed his orders out" in (2) follows the pattern of the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: he] [Verb: coughed] [Theme (Object moved): his orders] [Goal/Path: out]. The verb *coughed* is used metaphorically to describe the expelling of words – that is, the subject ("he") causes the object ("his orders") to move from an internal source (e.g., his mind or throat) to an external destination (spoken aloud). The particle *out* functions as a path marker (see Talmy, 2000b), indicating motion in an outward direction.

This use of *coughed* exemplifies the Caused Motion Construction as described in Goldberg's (1995) framework, in which the construction licenses a typically intransitive verb to take on a transitive, motion-related meaning.

While concordance lines (1) and (2) are the only examples of the Caused Motion Construction among the first 100 search results for the

[8] The semantic role of THEME is typically associated with newer information (Goldberg, 2019, p. 42).

token *coughed* in the BNC, the COCA corpus contains nineteen concordance lines illustrating this construction among its first 100 results with the same verb form, presented in (3) through (21) below.

3. "13 2019 MAG Gizmodo predictably, ended in tears. Boxer Floyd Mayweather and kind-of-a-rapper, **32;2281; [**TOOLONG DJ Khaled coughed up tens of thousands of dollars to the SEC**] in connection with their decision to" (COCA)

In line (3), the clause "TOOLONG DJ Khaled coughed up tens of thousands of dollars to the SEC" follows the pattern of the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: DJ Khaled] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): tens of thousands of dollars] [Goal/Path: to the SEC]. The subject ("DJ Khaled") causes the object ("tens of thousands of dollars") to move toward a recipient ("the SEC"), with the prepositional phrase "to the SEC" marking the goal of motion. The verb phrase "coughed up" is idiomatic and metaphorical, but it retains the sense of forcible release or transfer.

This use of *coughed* illustrates the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg's (1995) framework, where the construction licenses even idiomatic expressions to convey caused motion through the integration of agent, theme, and goal roles.

4. "18 2018 FIC Ploughshares contracted tuberculosis while accompanying him on his monthly charitable rounds and within six months had [**coughed away her lungs**] and wasted away to nothing but skin. " The rich die" (COCA)

In line (4), the predicate "coughed away her lungs" [Subj] [Verb] [Obj] [Goal/Path]. The subject causes the object to move (physically or metaphorically) along a path or to a destination. The subject causes the object to move "away". Even though metaphorical, the motion is conceptualized via the path particle *away*. The verb *cough* is metaphorically extended to take a direct object ("her lungs") and a path particle

("away"), meaning the subject caused the object to move. The use of *coughed* in "coughed away her lungs" represents the Caused-Motion Construction, according to Goldberg (1995).

In line (4), the clause "coughed away her lungs" instantiates the pattern of the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: she] [Verb: coughed] [Theme (Object moved): her lungs] [Goal/Path: away]. The subject ("she") causes the object ("her lungs") to move away, with the path particle *away* marking the direction of motion. Although metaphorical, the construction expresses a conceptualized transfer or loss through motion. The verb *coughed* is metaphorically extended to take a direct object and a directional particle, indicating that the subject caused the object to undergo motion.

This use of *coughed* exemplifies the Caused Motion Construction as described in Goldberg's (1995) framework, where a typically intransitive verb is licensed by the construction to encode caused, directed motion.

5. "23 2018 FIC Fan Fic of her head. A slew of gagging noises emanated from her beak and [**she coughed up an ovoid pellet**]. # " Ah, that's what it was." (COCA)

In line (5), the clause "she coughed up an ovoid pellet" instantiates the pattern of the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: she] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): an ovoid pellet] [Goal/Path: up]. The subject ("she") causes the object ("an ovoid pellet") to move upward, with the particle *up* marking the path of motion. The verb *coughed* is extended metaphorically and syntactically to take a direct object and a directional particle, encoding caused physical motion.

This use of *coughed* demonstrates the Caused Motion Construction as defined by Goldberg (1995), in which a typically intransitive verb is licensed by the construction to express the caused movement of an object along a path.

6. “24 2018 NEWS New York Post to Chytil near the right post. He turned to see oncoming checkers and quickly [**coughed it up along the wall**]. # It didn’t result in a goal,” (COCA)

In line (6), the clause “coughed it up along the wall” follows the pattern of the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: he] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): it] [Goal/Path: along the wall]. The subject (“he”) causes the object (“it”) to move along a trajectory, with the prepositional phrase “along the wall” marking the path of motion. The verb phrase “coughed up” is used metaphorically to express a sudden or involuntary release, and the constructional meaning licenses this atypical use to convey caused physical motion.

This use of *coughed* exemplifies the Caused Motion Construction as defined in Goldberg’s (1995) framework, where the construction enables a typically intransitive verb to express caused, directed motion.

7. “25 2018 NEWS Minneapolis Star Tribune Bortles, who was benched in the third quarter after his second fumble. [**Bortles coughed up the ball on Jacksonville’s third play of each half**], leading to 10” (COCA)

In line (7), the clause “Bortles coughed up the ball on Jacksonville’s third play of each half” instantiates the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: Bortles] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): the ball] [Goal/Path: *up* (implicit endpoint)]. The subject (“Bortles”) causes the object (“the ball”) to move away from his control, with the particle *up* marking a metaphorical path of release. While the final location is not explicitly stated (e.g., to the ground or the opposing team), the construction still licenses this implicit goal.

This use of *coughed* exemplifies the Caused Motion Construction as defined in Goldberg’s (1995) framework, which allows for metaphorical and implicit paths in expressions of caused motion.

8. “37 2017 FIC Bk:NotDeadEnough the longhouse. The Corps finally admitted they’d screwed up the original relocation and [**coughed up millions of bucks**] to rebuild everything. “ # I whistled. “ I” (COCA)

In line (8), the clause “The Corps … coughed up millions of bucks” expresses the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: The Corps] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): millions of bucks] [Goal/Path: *up* (implicit endpoint)]. The subject causes the object to move out of its possession, with the particle *up* marking the metaphorical path of release. Although the final goal is not explicitly stated (e.g., “to the victims”), the construction conveys a transfer of money.

This use of *coughed* exemplifies the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg’s (1995) framework, which allows for implicit endpoints when motion and transfer are contextually entailed.

9. “41 2017 FIC Analog When she slept, perspiration stood on her forehead. When she woke, [**she coughed up fluid**] and couldn’t keep anything down. Soon she wouldn’t eat at” (COCA)

In line (9), the clause “she coughed up fluid” represents the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: she] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): fluid] [Goal/Path: up]. The subject causes the object to move upward and outward, with the particle *up* marking the physical path of expulsion from inside the body. This is a literal instance of caused motion.

This use of *coughed* illustrates the Caused Motion Construction as defined by Goldberg (1995), where the construction expresses a direct, physical transfer caused by the agent.

10. “47 2017 FIC New England Review As we sped off, the scene receded in the rearview mirrors, and [**Havoc coughed up a hunk of flesh**]. He would not stop licking it. # Although” (COCA)

In line (10), the clause "Havoc coughed up a hunk of flesh" instantiates the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: Havoc] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): a hunk of flesh] [Goal/Path: up]. The subject causes the object to move outward from the body, with the particle *up* marking the path of expulsion. This is a literal instance of caused physical motion.

This use of *coughed* exemplifies the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg's (1995) framework, where the construction expresses an agent-caused transfer along a marked path.

11. "50 2017 NEWS Detroit Free Press (7-1) had a two-touchdown lead, 14-0. [**Cass Tech (7-1) coughed up the ball on its second offensive play**] and Tyrece Woods returned the ball to" (COCA)

In line (11), the clause "Cass Tech (7–1) coughed up the ball on its second offensive play" presents the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: Cass Tech] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): the ball] [Goal/Path: up (implicit endpoint)]. The subject causes the object to move out of possession, with the particle *up* marking the path of release. In context, the motion is implicit (e.g., a fumble or turnover), but constructional meaning licenses the interpretation.

This use of *coughed* expresses the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg's (1995) framework, which allows for idiomatic verbs and implicit goals when motion is entailed.

12. "51 2016 FIC Bk:BorrowedMan The librarian merely pulled out another card and waved it at Bill, who [**promptly coughed up a couple more**]. The librarian took them and passed one to me," (COCA)

In line (12), the clause "promptly coughed up a couple more" instantiates the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: Bill] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): a couple more (cards)] [Goal/Path: up]. The subject causes the object to move outward, with the particle *up* marking the path – metaphorically from an internal source (e.g., pocket or wallet).

This use of *coughed* exemplifies the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg's (1995) framework, where idiomatic expressions can encode caused motion with overt path marking.

13. "60 2016 NEWS Virginian-Pilot territory. # With a first and 10 at the Ocean Lakes 20, [**Browning coughed it up**] at the 25 and White recovered at the 30 before returning it to" (COCA)

In line (13), the clause "Browning coughed it up" expresses the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: Browning] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): it (the ball)] [Goal/Path: up (implicit endpoint)]. The subject causes the object to move out of possession, with the particle *up* marking the path of release. Although the goal is not explicitly stated, the context (e.g., a turnover) and verb semantics imply motion.

This use of *coughed* exemplifies the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg's (1995) framework, even in idiomatic sports contexts.

14. "65 2015 FIC FantasySciFi still as he could, trying to will the sensation to stop. Finally [**he coughed something up**]. He pulled his mask aside to spit it out. It was" (COCA)

In line (14), the clause "he coughed something up" expresses the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: he] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): something] [Goal/Path: up]. The subject causes a physical object to move outward, with the particle *up* marking the literal path of expulsion from the body.

This use of *coughed* illustrates the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg's (1995) framework, expressing agent-driven physical motion along a marked path.

15. "76 2015 MAG SatEvenPost Mrs. Westbrook arrived, her face as pale as the white patio – [**the child coughed up water**] and took in a huge, hitching breath. # Billy moaned his" (COCA)

In line (15), the clause "the child coughed up water" instantiates the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: the child] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): water] [Goal/Path: up]. The subject causes the object to move outward, with the particle *up* marking the path of physical expulsion from the body.

This use of *coughed* exemplifies the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg's (1995) framework, expressing literal, agent-caused motion along a marked path.

16. "78 2015 NEWS STLouis the Stars discussed worked. Paul Stastny won the ensuing face-off, but [**Jay Bouwmeester coughed up the puck to Tyler Seguin**], who fed Stars captain Jamie Benn. Just" (COCA)

In line (16), the clause "Jay Bouwmeester coughed up the puck to Tyler Seguin" follows the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: Jay Bouwmeester] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): the puck] [Goal/Path: to Tyler Seguin]. The subject causes the object to move out of possession, with the prepositional phrase "to Tyler Seguin" marking the explicit goal.

This use of *coughed* reflects the Caused Motion Construction as defined in Goldberg's (1995) framework, combining idiomatic expression with clearly expressed caused motion.

17. "82 2014 FIC Bk:GreatAbrahamLincoln on it. As he shared the cone with his brothers, [**one of them coughed up the vice president**], and another hacked on William Jennings Bryan's long name" (COCA)

In line (17), the clause "one of them coughed up the vice president" follows the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: one of them] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): the vice president] [Goal/Path: up]. The subject causes the object to move outward, with the particle

up marking the path. Though surreal or humorous in tone, the verb "coughed up" implies expulsion, and the constructional pattern remains intact.

This use of *coughed* illustrates the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg's (1995) framework, even in figurative or fantastical contexts.

18. "84 2014 FIC KenyonRev , my dog. He, too, was cocooned in kelp, and [**he coughed up whiskered fish**] when we pressed on his belly. He remained lying on his" (COCA)

In line (18), the clause "he coughed up whiskered fish" illustrates the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: he] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): whiskered fish] [Goal/Path: up]. The subject causes the object to be expelled, with the particle *up* marking the literal path of motion from inside the body to outside.

This use of *coughed* demonstrates the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg's (1995) framework, expressing agent-caused physical movement along a marked path.

19. "86 2014 FIC Confrontation pain had softened and he could breathe again, he breathed in loose dirt and [**coughed it out**], again and again. But the dirt was cool on his cheek" (COCA)

In line (19), the clause "coughed it out" follows the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: he] [Verb: coughed out] [Theme (Object moved): it (dirt)] [Goal/Path: out]. The subject causes the object to move outward, with the particle *out* marking the physical path from inside the body to the outside.

This use of *coughed* instantiates the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg's (1995) framework, expressing literal, agent-caused motion along an overt path.

20. “91 2014 NEWS Denver pushed so hard to make up a deficit over the last 200 meters that [**he coughed up blood**] after the race, winning by 0.01 of a second. He tries” (COCA)

In line (20), the clause “he coughed up blood” follows the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: he] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): blood] [Goal/Path: up]. The subject causes the object to be expelled, with the particle *up* marking the physical path from inside the body to the outside.

This use of *coughed* reflects the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg’s (1995) framework, expressing literal, agent-caused motion along a marked path.

21. “92 2014 NEWS STLouis What can you say about a 25-year-old girl who died? “ [**A blubbering public coughed up $100 million**] to learn the answer. Adjusted for inflation, the 1970 film” (COCA)

In line (21), the clause “A blubbering public coughed up $100 million to learn the answer” follows the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: a blubbering public] [Verb: coughed up] [Theme (Object moved): $100 million] [Goal/Path: up (implicit endpoint)]. The subject causes the object to move out of their possession, with the particle *up* marking the metaphorical path of reluctant release. The phrase “to learn the answer” expresses purpose, not a spatial goal.

This use of *coughed* illustrates the Caused Motion Construction in Goldberg’s (1995) framework, despite its idiomatic and figurative nature.

Summary of Findings

Across all 21 concordance lines, the verb form *coughed* (including idiomatic phrasal forms like *coughed up* and *coughed out*) was used in

a range of literal, metaphorical, and idiomatic contexts. Despite these differences in meaning, each instance fits the Caused Motion Construction, which follows the generalized semantic pattern:

[Agent] [Verb] [Theme (Object moved)] [Goal/Path]

In each case, the subject (Agent) causes an object (Theme) to move, either literally (e.g., expelling fluid) or metaphorically (e.g., transferring money or possessions), and the path or goal of motion is either explicitly marked (e.g., with a particle like *up* or a prepositional phrase) or implicitly understood from context.

Goldberg's framework allows for:
- Overt or implicit paths
- Metaphorical extensions of motion
- Idiomatic phrasal verbs, as long as the constructional meaning of caused motion is preserved.

Line	Clause	Literal / Metaphorical / Other	Path Marker	Goal Explicit?	Corpus BNC / COCA per 100 search results
(1)	"the engine coughed them on their way"	Metaphorical	"on their way"	Yes	BNC
(2)	"coughed his orders out"	Metaphorical	"out"	Yes	BNC
(3)	"coughed up tens of thousands of dollars to the SEC"	Metaphorical	"up" + "to the SEC"	Yes	COCA
(4)	"coughed away her lungs"	Metaphorical	"away"	Yes	COCA
(5)	"coughed up an ovoid pellet"	Literal	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(6)	"coughed it up along the wall"	Literal	"up" + "along the wall"	Yes	COCA
(7)	"coughed up the ball"	Metaphorical	"up"	Implicit	COCA

(8)	"coughed up millions of bucks"	Metaphorical	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(9)	"coughed up fluid"	Literal	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(10)	"coughed up a hunk of flesh"	Literal	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(11)	"coughed up the ball"	Metaphorical	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(12)	"coughed up a couple more"	Metaphorical	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(13)	"coughed it up"	Metaphorical	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(14)	"coughed something up"	Literal	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(15)	"coughed up water"	Literal	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(16)	"coughed up the puck to Tyler Seguin"	Metaphorical	"up" + "*to* phrase"	Yes	COCA
(17)	"coughed up the vice president"	Surreal / Figurative	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(18)	"coughed up whiskered fish"	Literal	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(19)	"coughed it out"	Literal	"out"	Implicit	COCA
(20)	"coughed up blood"	Literal	"up"	Implicit	COCA
(21)	"coughed up $100 million"	Metaphorical	"up"	Implicit	COCA

Table 1: Comparative Overview Examples (1) through (21)

Key Observations

- Path markers such as *up*, *out*, *away*, and prepositional phrases (e.g., *to the SEC*, *along the wall*) are central to identifying the constructional role of the Goal/Path element.

- Both the BNC and COCA contain instances of *coughed* used in the Caused Motion Construction, based on a sample of the first 100 concordance lines from each corpus. However, they differ in both the frequency and variety of path markers. In the BNC, *up* appears only twice in this construction, whereas in COCA it is significantly more frequent, occurring in 19 lines where *coughed* is used within the Caused

Motion frame ([Agent] [Verb] [Theme (Object moved)] [Goal/Path]).

- Even in idiomatic or figurative contexts (e.g., sports commentary or satire), the underlying constructional schema remains intact.

- Although the verb *cough* is typically intransitive, it is licensed by the Caused Motion Construction to take on a transitive, caused-motion interpretation.

- Implicit motion is permissible within this construction, provided it is contextually recoverable.

A Patterned Use in Caused Motion, an Absence in Resultatives

An analysis of the first 100 concordance lines containing *coughed* from both the BNC and COCA reveals that the verb does not appear in the Resultative Construction, as described by Goldberg (1995), in either corpus. That is, there are no attested instances where *coughed* occurs in a frame such as [Subj V Obj Result Phrase] (e.g., *He coughed his throat raw*[9]), within the initial sample. This contrasts with the Caused Motion Construction, in which *coughed* is attested a total of 21 times across both corpora – 2 instances in the BNC and 19 in COCA – demonstrating a patterned albeit limited extension of the verb into this argument structure. The absence of *coughed* in the Resultative Construction within the corresponding sample suggests either a lower productivity of this verb in resultative contexts or its marginal status in such usage compared to its more prominent role in caused-motion expressions.

The Use of *Laughed* in the Caused Motion Construction: Evidence from COCA and BNC

While examples (22) and (23) from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and examples (24) through (26) from the British National Corpus (BNC) all feature *laughed* used in the Caused

[9] Kilgallon, P.T., 2022. Careful Now: A Short Story. Vocal. https://vocal.media/fiction/careful-now. Similar uses of coughed in caused-motion contexts can also be found in various internet blogs and online texts.

Motion Construction, the former two are drawn from COCA, and the latter three from the BNC.

22. "102 2013 TV Suits interview with Harvey? No... But I'm assuming it went well. [**He laughed me out of the room**]. - Are you kidding? - No, I" (COCA)

In line (22), the clause *"*He laughed me out of the room*"* illustrates the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: he] [Verb: laughed] [Theme (Object moved): me] [Goal/Path: out of the room]. This creative, semi-idiomatic use of *laugh* – attested in dictionary entries (e.g., Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary 2010, definition 4) – depicts a situation in which the subject ("he") causes the object ("me") to move along a path ("out of the room"), driven by the act of laughter. The construction implies that the speaker is metaphorically forced to leave due to being mocked, dismissed, or humiliated. Although *laugh* is typically intransitive, this usage exemplifies its extension into a transitive, caused-motion frame, in line with Goldberg's (1995) analysis.

23. "365 1999 FIC Bk:WhenIFallInLove but Mark looked at her with a raised eyebrow she knew was disapproving. "[**Laughed his tubes out**?]" " It was okay. The nurses hurried in and" (COCA)

In (23), "Laughed his tubes out?" [Subj] [Verb] [Obj] [Path/Goal] appears as a fragment (likely dialogue), but it references a situation in which laughter causes the physical displacement of medical tubes. Consultation of the extended context clarifies that Bryan, a hospital patient, laughed so hard at Charlie Roth's comedic antics that his tubes came loose, prompting the nurses to rush in and reattach them. This strongly supports a literal interpretation of *laughed*, as it describes an actual physical consequence of laughter rather than a figurative or metaphorical effect.

From a constructional standpoint, the example shows how the typically intransitive verb *laugh* is coerced into a transitive frame, taking a

direct object ("his tubes") and a directional particle ("out") to encode physical motion. Unlike metaphorical expressions such as "laughed me out of the room" – which implies social dismissal through laughter – this case represents a real-world causal event.

This usage fits within Goldberg's (1995) Caused-Motion Construction, illustrating how an action (laughing) can be construed as exerting force that leads to the displacement of an object.

24. "364 J13 W_fict_prose ' They burst out laughing. But then the second girl wails that [**she has laughed away her whizz powder**]. All four swarm like seagulls round the tiny sink." (BNC)

In (24), the clause "she has laughed away her whizz powder" [Subj] [Verb] [Obj] [Goal/Path] suggests the powder is gone as a result of laughter. The Subject ("she") causes an object ("her whizz powder") to be lost as a result of laughing. "The particle *away* marks the path of motion (loss/displacement). The verb *laugh* is normally intransitive, but here it is extended to take a direct object and a path phrase – a key feature of the Caused-Motion Construction. The predicate "laughed away her whizz powder" indicates that laughter causes the powder to metaphorically or physically disappear.

Consequently, the use of *laughed* in "laughed away her whizz powder" represents the Caused-Motion Construction in Goldberg's (1995) framework.

25. "463 FES W_non_ac_humanities_arts union would disappear in the same way as the others ", and good humouredly [**laughed Wilson's overtures out of court**]. Powell in his history of the Shipping Federation" (BNC)

In line (25), the clause "laughed Wilson's overtures out of court" reflects the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: implied] [Verb: laughed] [Theme (Object moved): Wilson's overtures] [Goal/Path:

out of court]. The subject causes the metaphorical removal of the object through laughter, with "out of court" marking the path of displacement. The verb *laugh* is coerced into a transitive, caused-motion frame, consistent with Goldberg's (1995) analysis.

26. "471 CL2 W_biography real thing'. He seems to have been a great romancer.' [**He laughed them into bed**],' Warren Mitchell said.' There was the poetry," (BNC)

In line (26), the clause "He laughed them into bed" exemplifies the Caused Motion Construction: [Agent: he] [Verb: laughed] [Theme (Object moved): them] [Goal/Path: into bed]. The subject brings about a metaphorical change of location through laughter, with "into bed" serving as the path element. This is a clear case of constructional coercion, where the intransitive verb *laugh* adopts a transitive, caused-motion frame in line with Goldberg's (1995) analysis.

Summary

Examples (22) through (26) illustrate various instances of the Caused-Motion Construction (Goldberg, 1995), where the typically intransitive verb *laugh* is extended into a transitive frame, taking a direct object and a path phrase to express causal motion. These cases demonstrate both literal and metaphorical uses of the construction.

In (22) "He laughed me out of the room", laughter metaphorically forces the object (*me*) to leave, conveying dismissal or humiliation. Similarly, (25) "Laughed Wilson's overtures out of court" follows the same pattern, where laughter metaphorically rejects an idea (*Wilson's overtures*), mapping laughter onto an external force that causes displacement.

Example (26) "He laughed them into bed" extends this pattern but encodes a change of state or location, where laughter is construed as an influence leading to a metaphorical outcome (*them ending up in bed*). Like the previous examples, this use reinforces the idea that laughter

can be conceptualized as a social or persuasive force.

In contrast, (24) "She has laughed away her whizz powder" introduces a different kind of metaphor, where laughter causes the disappearance or loss of an object (*whizz powder*). The particle *away* signals a path of loss or dissipation, aligning with other expressions like *cried away the pain*[10].

Crucially, (23) "Laughed his tubes out?", unlike the others, does not operate metaphorically. Consulting the extended context reveals that this example describes a literal physical consequence, where laughter led to the unintended dislodging of medical tubes in a hospital setting. Unlike the metaphorical examples, here laughter has a direct physical impact, making it a literal instantiation of the Caused-Motion Construction.

Collectively, these examples demonstrate how the Caused-Motion Construction can accommodate both metaphorical extensions (where laughter functions as a force for dismissal, rejection, or persuasion) and literal causal effects (where laughter physically impacts objects). The variability across these cases supports Goldberg's (1995) analysis of argument structure constructions, showing how meaning can be coerced onto verbs that would not typically appear in transitive, caused-motion frames.

Contrastive Observations: Laughed in the Caused Motion Construction Across COCA and BNC

Examples (22) and (23), drawn from the first 500 concordance lines in COCA, and examples (24) to (26), from the first 500 in the BNC, indicate that the verb *laughed* appears less frequently in the Caused Motion Construction in COCA than in the BNC. Nonetheless, both corpora contain clear instances where *laughed*, typically intransi-

[10] Taylor, P., 2025. Love Letters. "The nights we cried away the pain." Boomplay. Available at: https://www.boomplay.com/lyrics/54568976 [Accessed 20 March 2025].

tive, is coerced into a transitive, caused-motion frame that includes a displaced object and a path or goal phrase (e.g., *laughed away her whizz powder, laughed them into bed*). These metaphorical extensions demonstrate that, despite the quantitative imbalance, *laughed* exhibits a shared constructional potential in both American and British English.

Line	Clause	Literal / Metaphorical	Path Marker	Goal	Corpus BNC / COCA per 500 search results
(22)	"He laughed me out of the room"	Metaphorical	"out of the room"	Room (Metaphorical dismissal)	COCA
(23)	"Laughed his tubes out?"	Literal	"out"	Tubes physically displaced	COCA
(24)	"She has laughed away her whizz powder"	Metaphorical (Loss/displacement)	"away"	Powder disappears	BNC
(25)	"Laughed Wilson's overtures out of court"	Metaphorical	"out of court"	Overtures metaphorically rejected	BNC
(26)	"He laughed them into bed"	Metaphorical	"into bed"	Metaphorically leading to be	BNC

Table 2: Comparative Overview Examples (2) through (26)

The Use of Laughed in the Resultative Construction: Evidence from COCA and BNC

Examples (27) through (32) all feature *laughed* used in the Resultative Construction. While the example in (27) is drawn from the British National Corpus (BNC), four concordance lines are taken from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), as shown in (28) through (31); an additional example from COCA, which would appear as (32), is not cited here due to offensive content.

27. “419 JYE W_fict_prose wanted to know why. He looked very doubtful when I asked certain questions and [**laughed me to scorn**] when I gave my verdict. He said I was just covering” (BNC)

In line (27), the clause “laughed me to scorn” exemplifies the Resultative Construction: [Subject: implied] [Verb: laughed] [Object: me] [Result-XP: to scorn]. The object undergoes a figurative change of state, with “to scorn” expressing the resulting condition. The laughter brings about a shift in how the object is perceived – namely, as scorned – aligning with Goldberg’s (1995) resultative frame.

28. “74 2015 MAG NatlReview of the Democratic National Committee would not answer, or could not answer. [**She laughed off the question**] and instead said she wanted to talk about the difference between a” (COCA)

In line (28), the clause “She laughed off the question” represents the Resultative Construction: [Subject: she] [Verb: laughed off] [Object: the question] [Result-XP: off]. The object undergoes a conceptual change of state, with *off* marking its dismissal or removal from relevance. The result is encoded in the particle, signaling that the question is no longer engaged with – consistent with Goldberg’s (1995) framework.

29. “76 2015 NEWS Atlanta dogs, slobs, and disgusting animals. “ During Thursday’s debate, [**Trump laughed it off**]. In the Lemon interview, the GOP frontrunner called the question “” (COCA)

In line (29), the clause “Trump laughed it off” exemplifies the Resultative Construction: [Subject: Trump] [Verb: laughed off] [Object: it] [Result-XP: off]. The object undergoes a conceptual change of state – from a potential concern to something dismissed – with *off* encoding the result. The construction signals that the issue is no longer taken seriously, aligning with Goldberg’s (1995) resultative pattern.

30. “133 2012 WEB patheos.com came buzzing by those of us standing near the pile of un-ignited fireworks. [**We laughed it off**] as an abberation and kept going, bringing out the “ big guns” (COCA)

In line (30), the clause “We laughed it off as an aberration” exemplifies the Resultative Construction: [Subject: we] [Verb: laughed off] [Object: it] [Result-XP: off]. The action reclassifies the object as insignificant, with *off* encoding its dismissal. The construction reflects a change in the object’s conceptual status and licenses a transitive use of the otherwise intransitive verb *laugh*, consistent with Goldberg’s (1995) framework.

Lines (29) and (30) – “Trump laughed it off” and “We laughed it off as an aberration” – represent near-identical idiomatic realizations of the Resultative Construction, both following the pattern [Subject] [Verb] [Object] [Result-XP]. In each case, the verb *laughed* is extended into a transitive frame, with *it* as the object undergoing a conceptual change of state. The particle *off* encodes the result: dismissal or minimization of the object. These constructions demonstrate a stable idiomatic usage in which laughter serves to invalidate or downplay a potential issue, aligning closely with Goldberg’s (1995) model of resultative meaning derived from the verb–object–result configuration.

31. “134 2012 WEB blogs.indiewire.com 627196 # And [**they laughed him to scorn**],.... The servants, neighbours, and relations, the pipers” (COCA)

In line (31), the clause “they laughed him to scorn” represents the Resultative Construction: [Subject: they] [Verb: laughed] [Object: him] [Result-XP: to scorn]. The object undergoes a figurative change of state, with “to scorn” expressing the resulting condition. This mirrors line (27) from the BNC and shows the intransitive verb “laugh” extended into a transitive, resultative frame – consistent with Goldberg’s (1995) analysis.

Lines (27) from the BNC ("laughed me to scorn") and (31) from COCA ("they laughed him to scorn") exemplify parallel uses of the Resultative Construction across the two corpora. Both follow the pattern [Subject] [Verb] [Object] [Result-XP], with the phrase "to scorn" expressing the resulting emotional or social state imposed on the object. In each case, the typically intransitive verb *laugh* is extended into a transitive resultative frame, showing that this idiomatic expression – though possibly archaic or literary in tone – remains constructionally viable in both British and American English. These examples highlight a shared metaphorical mapping between laughter and scorn within the resultative schema, consistent with Goldberg's (1995) framework.

Line (32) contains an additional informal instance of the Resultative Construction in COCA. Due to the offensive nature of the expression, the full example is not cited here; however, it follows the familiar [Subject] [Verb] [Object] [Result-XP] pattern and contributes to the corpus evidence for resultative extensions of *laughed* in colloquial American English.

Summary of Findings

Examples (22) to (26) illustrate clear instances of the Caused Motion Construction, in which *laughed* is coerced into a transitive frame involving a displaced object and a goal or path (e.g., *laughed away her whizz powder, laughed them into bed*). These examples, though not equally distributed, appear in both COCA and the BNC, highlighting the cross-linguistic applicability of this construction in British and American English.

Examples (27) to (31) shift to the Resultative Construction, where *laughed* similarly adopts a transitive frame, this time leading to a change of state in the object (e.g., *laughed me to scorn, laughed it off*). These instances include both idiomatic and metaphorical uses, with consistent structural patterns across the two corpora.

Finally, example (32), from COCA, provides an additional informal instance of the Resultative Construction. Although not cited due to of-

fensive language, it follows the same [Subj] [Verb] [Obj] [Result-XP] pattern, reinforcing the productivity of this construction in colloquial American English.

Constructional Extensions of *Sneezed*: Caused Motion and Resultative Uses

Although *sneeze* is canonically an intransitive verb, corpus data reveal instances where it appears in extended argument structure constructions. This section examines uses of *sneezed* in both the **Caused Motion** and **Resultative Constructions**, based on an analysis of the first 500 concordance lines from COCA. While the BNC contains 39 concordance lines of *sneezed*, all are strictly intransitive. In contrast, COCA includes cases where *sneezed* is coerced into transitive frames, either to encode the displacement of a physical entity or to express a figurative change of state, demonstrating its constructional flexibility in American English.

Examples (33) and (34) demonstrate the use of *sneezed* in the Caused Motion Construction, based on two concordance lines from COCA, while (35) illustrates a Resultative Construction with *sneezed* in another line from COCA, and (36) presents a similar Resultative Construction in a concordance line from the BNC.

33. "49 2016 FIC FantasySciFi couldn't help it. I sucked up a great gust of air and [**I sneezed it back out**] again, all over her. # Something - the droplets my" (COCA)

In line (33), the clause "I sneezed it back out again, all over her" represents the Caused Motion Construction: [Subject: I] [Verb: sneezed] [Theme (Object moved): it] [Goal/Path: back out again, all over her]. The subject causes the movement of an entity (air or droplets) along a spatial path through the act of sneezing. This construction reflects a transitive extension of the typically intransitive verb *sneeze*, consistent with Goldberg's (1995) analysis of caused-motion patterns.

34. 130 2012 WEB sarahbessey.com has been horribly sick, when he bent over to kiss my head, [**he sneezed boogers all over my hair**]. I wondered if that is the sort of thing" (COCA)

In line (34), the clause "he sneezed boogers all over my hair" illustrates the Caused Motion Construction: [Subject: he] [Verb: sneezed] [Theme (Object moved): boogers] [Goal/Path: all over my hair]. The subject causes a physical substance to move along a spatial trajectory via the act of sneezing. This transitive extension of the typically intransitive verb *sneeze* aligns with Goldberg's (1995) analysis of caused-motion patterns.

35. "109 2012 MAG ParentingEarly So I did and I had a massive allergy attack. I had hives, [**sneezed my head off**], and my eyes were tearing. And this detergent was geared" (COCA)

In line (35), the clause "sneezed my head off" exemplifies the Resultative Construction: [Subject: I] [Verb: sneezed] [Object: my head] [Result-XP: off]. The object undergoes a figurative change of state, with off encoding the exaggerated result of the action. Though idiomatic, the expression fits the resultative pattern in which an otherwise intransitive verb is extended into a transitive frame, consistent with Goldberg's (1995) framework.

36. "3 ACB W_fict_prose it was only moments, until a pollen-laden grass flower tickled his nose and [**he sneezed himself back to life again**]. He rolled over and saw Simon's face," (BNC)

In line (36), the clause "he sneezed himself back to life again" demonstrates the Resultative Construction: [Subject: he] [Verb: sneezed] [Object: himself] [Result-XP: back to life again]. The action brings about a figurative change of state in the object – from a diminished or unconscious state to vitality. Although *sneeze* is typically intransitive, the construction licenses a transitive use with a result phrase, exemplifying the core features of the Resultative Construction as described by Goldberg (1995).

Summary: Constructional Extensions of Sneezed Across COCA and the BNC

The verb *sneeze*, typically intransitive, appears in both the Caused Motion and Resultative Constructions in the COCA and, more rarely, in the BNC. Among the analyzed examples, three instances come from COCA and one from the BNC, illustrating the verb's constructional flexibility in American and, to a lesser extent, British English.

Lines (33) and (34) from COCA exemplify the Caused Motion Construction. In both cases – *"I sneezed it back out again, all over her"* and *"he sneezed boogers all over my hair"* – the subject initiates an action that causes a physical substance to move along a spatial path. These examples clearly follow the pattern [Subject] [Verb] [Theme] [Goal/Path], showing how *sneeze* is coerced into a transitive, caused-motion frame.

In contrast, lines (35) and (36) reflect the Resultative Construction, extending the verb *sneeze* to encode a figurative change of state in the object. In COCA line (35), *"sneezed my head off"* follows the idiomatic [Subject] [Verb] [Object] [Result-XP] structure, where *off* marks the exaggerated result of the action. Line (36), from the BNC, offers a more vivid resultative use: *"he sneezed himself back to life again"*. Here, the object *himself* undergoes a figurative transformation, brought about by the act of sneezing.

Together, these examples demonstrate that while the BNC contains only one instance of *sneeze* in an extended construction (line 36), COCA reveals multiple cases in both caused-motion and resultative frames. This distribution highlights a greater degree of constructional productivity for *sneeze* in American English, especially in informal or expressive contexts.

Final Conclusions

This study set out to explore how speakers extend prototypically intransitive "noise" verbs (*coughed*, *laughed*, and *sneezed*) into Caused

Motion and Resultative Constructions, despite their conventional intransitivity.

In response to the first research question, the corpus data from COCA and the BNC revealed that these verbs can be integrated into both constructions through constructional coercion, whereby the syntax of the construction licenses a transitive, caused-motion or resultative interpretation. Specifically, the presence of path elements (e.g., *up*, *out*, *along the wall*) and result phrases (e.g., *off*, *to scorn*) enables these verbs to function within argument structures that go beyond their prototypical valency.

Addressing the second question, the findings support the role of cognitive and semantic principles – such as metaphorical extension, event schema compatibility, and 'conceptual blending' (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002) – in facilitating this flexibility. Speakers interpret these constructions as coherent events of caused change or displacement, even when the verb's core meaning does not entail transitivity.

Finally, with respect to the third question, corpus-based evidence from both American (COCA) and British (BNC) English indicates that while both varieties support these extended uses, American English exhibits greater frequency, variety, and productivity – particularly in Resultative contexts. Overall, the findings provide strong support for construction grammar approaches, illustrating how abstract argument structure constructions enable semantic innovation and flexibility in everyday language use.

These conclusions reinforce Goldberg's (1995) argument that constructions carry meaning independently of the verbs they contain, and that verb-construction pairings can yield new, contextually grounded meanings. They also highlight the role of corpus-based analysis in uncovering the nuances of such usage patterns across varieties of English.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dorota Chłopek was born in Jędrzejów, Poland. She holds a degree in English philology from the Faculty of Philology at the University of Silesia in Katowice, where she also earned her PhD in linguistics. She subsequently obtained her postdoctoral degree (habilitation) at the Faculty of Arts of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia.

Her academic research centers on cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, and selected aspects of functional linguistics, with a particular focus on the interplay between grammatical constructions and conceptual semantics. Her work examines linguistic phenomena through the lens of cognitive paradigms, offering contrastive insights into English and Polish.

In addition to her scholarly contributions, she actively integrates her research findings into her academic teaching. Her publications in the fields of cognitive, corpus, and functional linguistics provide both theoretical frameworks and practical perspectives that enhance the educational experience of her students. She currently holds a research and teaching position at the University of Bielsko-Biała in southern Poland.

Dorota Chłopek
Wydział Humanistyczno-Społeczny
Uniwersytet Bielsko-Bialski
Ul. Willowa 2
43-309 Bielsko-Biała
dchlopek@ubb.edu.pl

ORCID 0000-0003-3636-8969

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