

Is it Possible for a Purely Libertarian Government to Succeed?

Throughout the simulation my group was in control of the Libertarian State of Cavan. Cavan is built off of the idea that the people have absolute freedoms with no government intervention into their personal lives. This means that laws would only be put in place that have a clear victims and taxes would be eliminated. While this idea may seem ideal on paper, the actual practice of this is impossible as an independent state. I am writing this as a stark contrast of my previous writing after going throughout this entire simulation. Looking at examples from the simulation and real life instances of Libertarian states, we can come to the conclusion that the idea of pure true libertarianism is unrealistic and inoperable due to the fact of not working well with other nations that do not share the same ideals and the historic failures of any Libertarian nation existing in modern society.

Looking at our simulation we see that Cavan has actually had great success in its ability to function in the world theater. However from the very start Cavan was not a pure Libertarian government. Placed into an extremely varying yet close knit world Cavan faced many issues that Libertarianism could not provide reliable solutions. The recent war and now vulnerable position between two feuding powers necessitated the creation of a standing army to protect its people. Which in turn required funding through some sort of taxes. While this was not with direct income taxes it did require the, larger than average, taxes on sales and businesses. The collection of taxes in some form is a mandatory expense that must be put in place for any form of government to properly

operate and provide the security and protection for its people. That is an understood trade off that every person has with its governmenting body. As if the government has no funds there is no way for it to provide any protection from invaders or protection from those internally that threaten the freedoms that they live by. Taxes are seen as a restriction on the ability for a person to do what they please with what they earn, and would not exist in the ideal Livertarian world. However, that ideal world is an unattainable utopia.

With the removal of many taxes comes the removal of any federally funded public goods. This leaves goods like parks, libraries, and schools all up for voluntary local funding. The main idea behind this is to allow a local community to decide what it would like to spend its money on. Which makes sense if we think of the people being the most rational consumers. However we run into issues of free riders or a corporate sponsored dystopia. Free riders would be those who do not pay or contribute but still use a good. To define, quite literally, in the real world would be someone who sneaks onto a public bus without paying their fee in turn riding for free. In the example of public goods mentioned before, this would be a public park being funded by very few but being used by everyone. The burden of paying to upkeep that park is put on those few. The argument of free riders doesn't really have a solution in the eyes of Libertarian, only stating that if a good has a high enough public value it will continue to be funded even with free riders. The other issue with the public goods not being funded, that Cavan faced, was not allowing corporations to step in and fund them themselves. As this would lead to a very dystopian setting with the fear of becoming a Corporatocracy. On the scale of a single governing Libertarian system the absolute freedom ideals may be able

to succeed. However the world is diverse both in its beliefs and leaders making it impossible.

Having our complicated and diverse world both in the simulation and in real life brings up multiple issues with pure Libertarianism. With our simulation it was difficult to properly bargain with international relations. As we were not allowed to commit to full alliances as part of our restrictions. So we had to somewhat bend the rules and rely on technicalities to avoid restrictions set by both the simulation and the ideals of Libertarianism. This was in the form of forming pacts and partnerships with other nations instead of full blown alliances. These would be in the form of non aggression agreements and trade relationships. In most eyes these would be called alliances but for the sake of Cavan keeping towards its restrictions we avoided this label. We also had to implement taxes to operate as a government as before mentioned. Many states that we communicated with were reluctant to make deals with a neutral nation that would not provide a physical form of alliance in case of a foreign aggression. States that were already in heated relations, like Donethal, pushed for war pacts for mutual self defense but we couldn't commit to those. Similar to these we formed multiple "Respect Treaties" that go against Libertarian ideals without actually going against them due to technicalities. Cavan's government intervention with the production of Nuclear Power also went against Libertarian ideals in the name of creating a better, more reliable source of energy for the state. Overall when participating in the simulation we saw from the start that we would be going through this on technicalities to get around harsh restrictions brought upon us with a form of true Libertarianism. In the aspect of keeping to that ideal, we failed, however we did succeed in keeping the very basic ideals intact

making more of a classical Liberalism instead. This is with the freedoms of people staying mostly intact but having more restrictions and policies at an economic scale. While at an international relation scale, like economics, the rules were interpreted differently.

The idea of Libertarianism is supposed to promote peace with everyone as no one would have a reason to fight as no one would be able to restrict another. The idea of a free unrestricted trade would promote peace throughout all nations. While this idea would most likely work if all nations were Libertarian, the simulation where tensions were in place war was a grave concern. From the Perpetual Peace text we see that “No conclusion of Peace shall be held to be valid as such, when it has been made with the secret reservation of the material for a future war” (Kant, 1). Cavan has gone against this peaceful ideal with most of its peace ‘agreements’ with other states. As every agreement we made was discussed and had safeguards for any future relations as with the canal agreement. Cavan also violated a perpetual peace and Libertarian idea of no government sphere of influence with having a standing army. “Standing Armies shall be entirely abolished in the course of time” (Kant, 3). This idea from Kant is brought upon because if there was a true peace between nations there would be no need for any sort of military. This idea was reversed in our simulation. At the start war budgets for Cavan were small with a focus on economy, but by the end there was a large increase in military spending. The bolstering of a naval base goes against any commitment to peace with other nations as this could be seen as a potential act of aggression and preparedness for war. If Cavan was truly a Libertarian government with absolute freedoms there would only be reductions in military spending as there would be no need

for it. This bolstering of national defense can also be seen as an overspending to defend against piracy and a potential violation in our strict neutrality stance. If Cavan's lack of ability to stand strictly Libertarian, to no fault of itself, the idea that it can function in the real world is lacking.

There are no Libertarian countries in our world today. There are however many nations that have Libertarian style policies. Countries like Switzerland, New Zealand, and Denmark are all nations that identify as having a Direct Democracy, Parliamentary, and Parliamentary democracy styles of government respectively. These three countries all rank on the top of the Freedom Index by country and in turn have some very Libertarian ideals implemented. However none of these are truly Libertarian governments. We also see a common feature of these countries, with that being of a relatively small population. Pulling from Lind, an arguably biased author against Libertarianism, he argues that most Libertarian influenced states' success are because of their relations with other nations. Stating that "They are able to engage in free riding on the provision of public goods, like security and huge consumer populations, by other, bigger states." (Lind 2013). From this Lind argues that because there are other, capitalistic, nations to take advantage of it allows for Libertarians to thrive. We saw this with Cavan as we couldn't do the full Libertarian ideals successfully. We also would not be able to properly survive in the world without the peace agreements that were formed relatively early on.

In conclusion, as evidenced by the simulation and lack of real world examples, there is really no way for a pure Libertarian government to exist. There are few countries that heavily implement these ideals but do so with a very small population. In

the simulation Cavan failed to stay completely inline with Libertarian ideals and restrictions and were forced to bend the rules and rely on technicalities. Cavan is not a Libertarian state but more reflective of those of Switzerland, New Zealand, and Denmark.

Works Cited

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Retrieved April 29, 2022, from

<https://thebreakthrough.org/articles/the-failure-of-libertarianism>