

*From the desk of Brad Lips
Chief Executive Officer, Atlas Network*

Freedom at 36,000 Feet

August 28, 2025

Intended for perusal by friends of Atlas Network, this personal newsletter has been compiled during long flights with the goal of entertaining and informing you, whether you're in the air or on the ground. It's an assortment of observations about the freedom movement and world events with firsthand accounts from my most recent travels.

Lessons from *The Humble Approach*

An important leadership change happened this month at the John Templeton Foundation (JTF), which has powered important initiatives of Atlas Network and many of our partner organizations over the past quarter century. (As usual, you can use the QR code on this page to access links to additional materials, including pieces I've written in the past about [Sir John Templeton's importance to the freedom movement](#).) JTF's Charter specifies ten-year limits on the terms of its chief executive, so Heather Templeton Dill has just passed the torch to Timothy Dalrymple as the foundation's new president.

While his start date was August 1, Dalrymple appeared at an annual meeting of the Templeton philanthropies that I regularly attend as a member. He grounded his remarks at this meeting on ideas from the first book written by the late Sir John Templeton, *The Humble Approach*. That book begins:

We are perched on the frontiers of future knowledge. Even though we stand upon the enormous mountain of information collected over the last five centuries of scientific progress, we have only fleeting glimpses of the future.

This is useful for all of us. It's easy to see oneself at the culmination of a chain of specified historical events: we are the inheritors of a freedom movement tradition that has led to this point. Let's challenge ourselves to think differently. We are still at the beginning of a project that will have history-shaking significance.

Our project is about changing the focus of philanthropy: from charity that makes poverty more bearable to social change that makes it escapable. It's about building a more peaceful world in which countries align around free society institutions but doing this through persuasion at the level of civil society rather than bargaining between governments.

Scan this QR code to view
online materials
mentioned via blue text!



I hope that all friends of Atlas Network find meaning, as I do, in being part of this project. Helping principled people achieve positive changes for their communities is a wonderful calling.

At a recent staff meeting, I reminded our team of how fortunate we are to be trusted by generous donors, who could spend their money in any number of ways, but who choose to express their love for the freedom of others by trusting Atlas Network with their gifts. Please know we stay mindful of our huge responsibility to be good stewards of your funds and to establish a track record that will help us take the freedom movement to new heights.

The Experiment Unfolding in Argentina

In the middle of the summer, I traveled with the CEO of a great Argentine think tank, Fundación Libertad y Progreso. Supporters of Atlas Network kindly hosted events (on Nantucket and in New York and Philadelphia) at which Agustín Etchebarne and I discussed what is happening under President Javier Milei and its importance in Argentina and beyond.

Friends of Atlas Network may know the contours of Argentina's story. Established in 1853, the country grew rich under a constitution modeled after the state Constitution of California. It ranked among the top countries in the world in income per capita one hundred years ago, but its trajectory changed during the reign of Juan Peron who became president in 1946. Peron admired the fascism of Mussolini and turned Argentina into a corporatist state, which slowly strangled private enterprise in the effort to keep it aligned with his political goals.

By the time of Milei's election, this model of governance had brought Argentina to rock bottom with an inflation rate of 211%. Forty-five percent of Argentines lived below the poverty line.

Agustín explains that, just as ju jitsu fighters turn an opponent's strengths against him, Milei won over young voters by seizing on the Peronists' existing arguments. They had encountered one refrain endlessly during their schooling: "You are oppressed by the system, oppressed by capitalists." Milei's campaign joined the argument saying, "Yes, it's true that you are oppressed by the system. But your enemy is not capitalists. Your enemy is the politicians."

Milei has been able to enact bold reforms during his first twenty months, and the results have been extremely encouraging. Poverty is now at 32% not 45%. Inflation is 30% not 211%. Economic growth was recently reported at north of 7%! The country is running a budget surplus, which creates the opportunity for a virtuous cycle: tax cuts for the population, creating more economic growth, reducing interest rates, creating still bigger surpluses.

Of course, many vested interests have been disrupted by Milei's reforms and fight tooth and nail against the broader agenda. The opposition in parliament has overridden his veto to increase public spending and interest rates have been volatile over the summer. Milei has not closed the central bank to fulfill a core campaign promise. All this underscores the difficulty of reining in expansive government and setting the foundation for prosperity. This October Argentina's Parliamentary elections will be important for Milei's ambitions.

In the meantime, it should not be overlooked that the Argentine freedom movement laid the groundwork for this important experiment in pro-liberty reform by:

- sustaining interest in the Austrian School of Economics that Milei discovered after the 2009 financial crisis, instilling in him the passion of the converted;
- preventing the erosion of key institutions (e.g., the judiciary and independent media) that were targeted by Peronist administrations of the last decade. In its first years, *Libertad y Progreso* helped inspire mass protests that blocked damaging reforms;
- sketching a libertarian vision for reform. [Libertad y Progreso was a finalist for our Templeton Freedom Award back in 2018](#) for its work popularizing an agenda that was later implemented by Milei to slash the number of government ministries by more than half. Agustín's think tank has issued 100 recommendations to the Milei government; thus far, 42 have been adopted.

The future is always uncertain, but we can hope Milei's experiment continues on and becomes a great teaching moment for the world.

The Experiment that May Unfold in New York

Speaking of teaching moments ... we may have a less positive one in New York City in coming years.

Walking with me amid Manhattan's skyscrapers toward one of the events about Argentina that we held in July, Agustín's charming wife, Maria, quipped, "I don't know what is harder to believe: that Argentina has a libertarian president, or that this city of vitality is on the brink of electing a communist mayor."

John Stossel just published a helpful video on New York's [Socialist State of Mind](#), courtesy of his work for the Center for Independent Thought. It reminds me of a pair of videos we helped Guatemala's Gloria Álvarez produce with Stossel's team when he was with Reason: "[Socialism Fails Every Time](#)" and "[Socialism Leads to Violence](#)." You may want to send these to any young people in your life who are enamored with government-run grocery stores or other campaign promises of Zohran Mamdani!

As a reminder, the next mayor of New York City does not take office until January 1, so several weeks *after* our upcoming Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner, which will be held at the Sheraton Times Square on November 12–13.

As always, there will be much to discuss—and much to celebrate—when we bring together our global community of think tank leaders for the most inspiring event of the year. Let me take this opportunity to remind you to register today! (I'll provide a link for viewing details on Liberty Forum and how to register via the QR code on the front, although you can also just go to our home page at AtlasNetwork.org.)

Honoring Dan Grossman, Hero of the Freedom Movement, at Liberty Forum

At our Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner (as mentioned in the above item, to be held in New York City over November 12–13, 2025), we will recognize a hero of our movement with a prize in our founder's name: the Sir Antony Fisher Achievement Award.

This year's honoree will be Dan Grossman, who has served twenty years on the Atlas Network Board of Directors (eight as board chair) in addition to other governance roles for American Conservation Coalition, Charter Cities Institute, Compassion and Choices, Consumer Choice Center, Foundation for Economic Education, Future of Freedom Foundation, Human Rights Foundation, Students For Liberty, and Young Voices.

Dan is a generous donor to many organizations in the liberty movement, and it has been his personal mission to improve the governance of the organizations he loves. Few people give thought to the complexities of non-profit governance; this leaves organizations vulnerable to mission drift and inefficiencies.

Dan explains that board members of non-profits should represent donors' interests to make sure organizations are lean, well-run, and serving the stated charitable mission.

Relatively few of Atlas Network's donors know of Dan's personal efforts to make sure our organization delivers strong philanthropic return on investment. Fewer still have considered how Atlas Network's positive example has ripple effects for hundreds of partner organizations around the world. At the 2025 Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner, we will finally stand and applaud Dan's enormous legacy improving the liberty movement.

And Next ... "Brad's Law" and a Memory of *The Simpsons*

Thanks to a strong board of directors (informed by Dan Grossman's example, among others), I am confident that Atlas Network is and will continue to be run as a tight ship.

This has always been a priority, of course, and it's made even more relevant when you know that there are many members of the media who would like nothing more than a chance to discredit those with our classical liberal principles.

Some years ago, I posited a theory (joking that I wanted to claim ownership of it as "Brad's Law") that scandal is most likely to fester within entities that broadly enjoy a great deal of public goodwill. The idea dawned on me in the early 2000s as a succession of problems popped up:

At Enron, which had been the poster child for corporate social responsibility before it became the biggest accounting scandal in history.

At the Olympics, when a bribery scandal tarnished an institution that once seemed above reproach.

Then, thanks to the journalism of our late friend Claudia Rosett, the United Nations Oil for Food program was revealed to have diverted funds, not to suffering Iraqis, but to their oppressors in the Iraqi government and corrupt UN officials.

These examples demonstrate how many academics and media talking heads are reluctant to divert from their preferred narrative—a narrative in which we trust the benevolence of big institutions and look down upon skeptics who question their plans.

Groups that identify as libertarian or conservative *expect* media scrutiny, so it is imperative to play within the rules. By contrast, those who have a sense of impunity become tempted to take short cuts, or worse.

I imagine, dear reader, that you might have a famous Lord Acton quote in mind right now: “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Yes, my point is along these same lines, although the writers of *The Simpsons* put it even better.

In one early episode, Bart needed tutoring from Martin Prince to pass fourth grade, and in exchange promised to help him gain the social acceptance denied to elementary school nerds. Bart tells him not to sit at the front of the bus.

Bart: Only geeks sit in the front seat. From now on, you sit in the back row. And that's not just on the bus. It goes for school and church too.

Martin: Why?

Bart: So no one can see what you're doing...

Martin: Oh! I think I understand. The potential for mischief varies inversely with one's proximity to the authority figure!

Bart: Yeah. But don't say it like THAT.



The implication of Brad's Law—or yes, perhaps it's better as "[Bart's Law](#)"—is that freedom movement organizations like Atlas Network are naturally inclined to be good stewards of your gifts.

We sincerely respect our donors and are devoted to our mission; additionally, we know to expect non-stop scrutiny from statist centers of power.

Nevertheless, it's always smart to have checks and balances within a governance structure. All Atlas Network donors benefit from having thoughtful people like Dan Grossman on the board of directors, operating as a stand-in for your donor intent and being vigilant about how we pursue efficiency and impact.

Highlights from The Atlas Network Experience in Belgium

Since I wrote to you last, our team has held our Africa Liberty Forum in Nairobi and our Europe Liberty Forum in Brussels.

We annually hold a special donor retreat/tour, called The Atlas Network Experience, alongside one of our Liberty Forums, and this year we explored Belgium.

For those who enjoy international travel and the community you find among other friends of the liberty movement, these trips are wonderful. This year, we used Ghent as our home base to also explore the beauty of Bruges and the history of Antwerp.



We had the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Bart De Wever, who gave us an incredible tour of City Hall in Antwerp and explained the classical liberal lessons in the art on the walls there.

"There's a message here that our ancestors sent us, which is still very relevant today," said PM De Wever: "If ships can sail over the River Scheldt without barriers, without tariffs, without religious tensions, without wars, if we stay open to new people and new commerce, this city will produce riches and plenty."

We were accompanied on our travels by Atlas Network's own Tom Palmer; one of the top classical liberal historians and legal minds in Belgium, Professor Boudewijn Bouchaert; and Lord Daniel Hannan (brilliant on many topics, but one unexpected one was the famous Ghent Altarpiece by Flemish artist Jan van Eyck).

Next year, The [Atlas Network Experience](#) will again be paired with our Europe Liberty Forum, and will take place in Germany, over May 23-28.

Content You'll Enjoy

If you haven't already used the QR code on the front of this document to register your interest in joining The Atlas Network Experience in 2026, you'll certainly want to use it now to get links to videos, podcasts, and articles that you might have missed from Atlas Network.

The most recent edition of our *Freedom's Champion* magazine includes a cover story I wrote on [the influence of Milton Friedman on the freedom movement](#). This led to an invitation to guest on The [Liberty Exchange podcast](#) that Cato Institute hosts at [Libertarianism.org](#).

I hope you're also subscribed to our podcast, [Atlas Network with Michael Carnuccio](#), which has produced 13 episodes since our launch in May. The podcast brings you inspiring voices from around the world who are advancing liberty, sometimes under remarkably difficult circumstances.

Guests have included Nataliya Melnyk from Ukraine, working to educate young people about free-market economic principles and rebuild amid war; Mohamad Machine-Chian, whose story from Iran reveals the stakes of dissent under authoritarianism; and Svetla Kostadinova, who quietly helped shape Bulgaria's economic policy for two decades.

You'll also hear from champions of civil society in Syria, an expert on how Bitcoin protects economic freedom, and Atlas Network's leadership team sharing what drives our work—from South Sudan to Venezuela to the streets of New Delhi.

Another wonderful conversation you'll want to check out occurred on my colleague Tom Palmer's Freedom Worldwide webinar to discuss a new book, *Peak Humanity*, by Cato scholar [Johan Norberg](#). Johan and Tom are two of liberty's most erudite and eloquent defenders, and I appreciated Johan's "qualified optimism" about the state of the world.

Optimism is often misunderstood as some sort of complacency: you think things will just work out well in the end, whatever people do.... That's not really my kind of optimism. It's a qualified optimism. It comes from history. It tells me that, if people have a certain degree of freedom and agency, they will surprise us by coming up with new novel solutions to our old problems, and they will be able to deal with new challenges that they are facing. But they need that freedom in order to do that.... And that's why I write my book.

And that's why we work hard every day at Atlas Network to see that your support translates to a stronger movement for human liberty, across the United States and throughout the 100+ countries where we have active partners.

Thank you for being an engaged donor.

I hope that I'll see you in person at our [Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner](#) in New York City on November 12–13 of this year. That's such a great opportunity for you to meet the people who benefit from your generosity. I think you will find it to be a very fulfilling experience.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brad". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "B" and a simple "rad" following it.

Brad Lips
Chief Executive Officer