

Roger Ver, Free Society Foundation Plan to Found New Libertarian Country

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[Liberty Under Attack](#)

Many strategies have been pursued by libertarians/anarchists over time to increase personal freedom and minimize the influence of States. One such strategy is the founding of a new libertarian country, wherein private property is respected and the efficacy of the free market can be proven once and for all.



Roger Ver speaking at the Nexus Conference, Aspen 2017

The first such attempt that I have been able to come across was [Preform-Inform](#), a group of southern California freedom seekers in the 1960s, who investigated the prospects of founding a new libertarian country on a floating artificial platform or on an uninhabited ocean island somewhere. After a handful of years, the members gave up, citing the many (to them) unsolvable obstacles, as well as disagreements upon the size and scope of government to be erected.

Other such projects include Operation Atlantis, Michael Oliver's "The Capitalist Country," Sea City "Taluga," the Dupont-Caribbean Freeport Resort, and Oceania, all of which failed for one reason or another. [Click here](#) for a complete analysis of those projects.

Roger Ver and the folks at the [Free Society Foundation](#) plan to do something similar and have [allegedly already raised \\$100 million](#).

They claim that the solution "to really gain sovereignty...is to negotiate with an existing government" by outright buying a piece of land from them.

Their criteria for a location are: "proximity to existing economic powerhouses, accessibility by water, located in a safe, conflict-free area, stable existing government, nations with a significant national debt, a flexible constitution that allows granting sovereignty, [and] acceptable minimum size for the land."

As expected, the rule of law will be based on libertarian principles and free markets.

That all seems well and good, except for the fact that this *has* been tried before and to no avail. For example, Werner Steifel, the founder of Operation Atlantis, negotiated a 220-year lease for land on the Haitian Island, Tortuga, and not long after they settled, President Jean-Claude Duvalier expropriated the project once he discovered their plans.

Similarly, [Dupont Caribbean Inc. of Texas](#) made an agreement with the Haitian government to build a freeport-resort on the same island and Duvalier, again, expropriated the project in favor of the Gulf Oil Corporation.

Not to mention, the founders (or, in some cases, CEO's), all scoured the Earth in search of a government that would sell them a piece of land, and they had to settle on leases.

Erwin S. Strauss, the "authority" on new country projects in the 20th century, offers some valuable insight into the potentiality for a nation-state or country selling a piece of land to freedom seekers in his book [How to Start Your Own Country](#) (1979).

First off, he says:

"One approach to avoiding the need for a military establishment...is buying the territory in question from the nation that currently has it...But this is basically a secondary matter, meaningless until the military situation has been provided for. If the new country lacks the willingness or ability to defend the purchased territory by force of arms, the selling country will have a strong incentive to repudiate the sale as soon as the purchaser's check clears...In any case, without being backed up by **force of arms**, any bill of sale or title deed held by the new country **would be a worthless scrap of paper.**" pp. 11-12 [Emphasis added]

And that makes perfect sense—this strategy essentially puts the faith in the State to actually uphold their contractual agreement and not exercise their fundamental task – to use initiatory force.

Consider a hypothetical, non-libertarian drug-dealer—if he can run away with the money *and* the drugs, why wouldn't he?

Although, let's take a step back—why would a nation-state or country even consider selling a portion of their land to freedom seekers? Chances are, they won't.

Strauss continues:

“The closest thing to a sale of sovereignty that is conducted routinely is the sale of corporation charters and ship registrations to all comers – with minimum strings attached – by tax-haven countries...But ***any number of those can be sold without reducing the size of the country doing the selling***...once [the country] is sold, there is no further income to be had...” p. 12 [Emphasis added]

In other words, a country or nation has no financial incentive to actually sell a piece of their land when they can ensure continued payments via the aforementioned methods, and even taxation, while still retaining sovereignty. I suppose if a country/nation was in such dire straits financially, maybe they would, but that first excerpt from Strauss comes into play – why wouldn't they just send their military to re-take it over, after the fact?

Strauss provides another interesting reason why countries are de-incentivized from selling pieces of their land to country builders:

“There is also the great-power influence... They have networks of grants-in-aid, favorable trade terms, military assistance programs, etc., to make it worth any small country's while to accommodate one or more of them. These great powers want to see the status quo maintained. Especially, ***they want to see the number of countries held down***, because the fewer the players there are...the easier it is for the great powers to manage things to their own advantage.” pp. 12-13 [Emphasis added]

So, small countries are even further dissuaded from selling off a portion of their land, since they could face potentially deadly ramifications from the great powers. And, the \$100 million dollars Ver and the Free Society Foundation has to work with is likely a drop in the bucket considering how much aid the great powers can provide.

Also consider the fact that there would be no vice crimes in AnCapistan, Libertopia, or whatever hypothetical free society. If it touched borders with an existing country or nation-state, you can guarantee there would be black marketeers running drugs, weapons, and other contraband into the abutting country.

The established country with tyrannical laws on the books would not be pleased with that prospect, and it would definitely be something they would take into account when deciding whether or not to sell land to country builders.

So, now that Strauss has probably put a damper on your day with reality, what solutions does he offer to make this solution more likely to be a success?

Well, to paraphrase Strauss, a significant enough military force would be required “to head it off [the threat], neutralize it, defeat it, turn it away, or otherwise insure that great-power intervention won’t do them in.”

Keep in mind that attacks from small countries aren’t all the new country founders will have to concern themselves with — it’s also the great powers that are always looking to advance their interests. To defend against that seems impossible — no new country would initially have the money or men to build a military to turn away the massively-funded nation-state armies.

Additionally, no private security firm would be stupid enough (or well-equipped and manned) to agree to such a job.

Strauss proposes the solution:

“Now, however, a new factor is entering the equation: **cheap weapons of mass destruction**...Even with these weapons, a small unit cannot expect to win outright a war with a large one. However, it can threaten **to inflict serious damage** on the large unit in the process...by promising to inflict grievous injury in the process of being crushed, they can give the larger units incentive to make detours around the smaller ones; to pursue their great-power interests somewhere else.” p. 19 [Emphasis added]

As an anarchist, pondering that causes extreme uneasiness, but Strauss is simply laying out the reality of the situation.

He continues:

“Now, some new-country organizers will recoil at the thought of inflicting large numbers of casualties...But the fact is **that war**, and the inflicting of such number of casualties, lies **at the heart of statecraft**, and he who has no stomach for it needs to look for another line of work. The only way that a nation can avoid having to inflict such causalities is to convince all...that it is **ready and willing to inflict them**...” p. 19 [Emphasis added]

So, the recommendation is that new-country organizers first take steps to make or acquire weapons of mass destruction. If they don’t, the chances of the libertarian free society surviving (or even coming into existence) are slim to none.

It goes without saying that if any new country project decides to go this route, it must be done with the utmost secrecy and security. Remember when Iraq was even *accused* of having WMD’s? Keep it a secret.

Nonetheless, I wish Ver and the Free Society Foundation the best of luck. One of the major hurdles is funding; it appears they’re off to a swell start there. Though, I sincerely hope the capital investment put into this project doesn’t end up expropriated by a State, but we’ll just have to see.

In summation, I truly am happy to see the focus moving away from political crusading into direct action-oriented strategies, even if they are unlikely to ever come into fruition.

But, that's not grounds for pessimism.

After continued failures, I do believe that individuals will decide to take steps themselves to [increase their personal freedom](#), whether that take the form of van nomadism, intentional communities, minimalist sailboating, perpetual traveling, or whatever.

The outlook for personal freedom has never looked better.

