

THE ISRAEL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



The Challenges of Liberal Democracy

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Lecture Summaries

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Democracy: In Search of a Strategic Perspective



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All liberal democracies are facing great challenges – from without as well as from within. Take the changing power architecture of world politics:

The USA,
China, India, Russia,
the Arab world.

Take the populist movements in almost every democracy, and see the tendency towards autocratic states.

See, for example, Eastern Europe:

They celebrated the birth of their democracy 30 years ago, and now they are distancing themselves from it, in Hungary, in Poland.

The status quo is: Cultural erosion –

Trust erodes.

Distrust grows.

Alienation dominates.

Structural Problems:

globalization,
internationalization,
cyber-developments,
digitalization.

I call it “the Era of Complexity”

Cultural developments:

With the development of a growing division of labor,
you need people to trust in the competence of others, but, in reality, more than
70% of the people say that they don't understand anything. →

“ So the Era of Complexity is combined with the Era of
Confusion. The consequence is: Liberal democracy
has big problems.”





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I call this cultural development “the Era of Confusion.”

So the Era of Complexity is combined with the Era of Confusion.

The consequence is: Liberal democracy has big problems.

What might the strategic answer be?

One answer that worked for many decades is no longer available:

During the East–West conflict

the western democracies,

when they were challenged, could answer:

Look to the east.

Go to the east.

So, in order to overcome this historic crisis, there must be a reorientation!

This reorientation will require several steps:

(1) Develop a "culture of democracy."

This is more than knowing the legal framework: It is a spirit.

Develop this culture on different levels:

- in schools and educational frameworks,
- at universities,
- in mass media,
- in the social sciences.

(2) Develop the “culture of democracy” wherever power decisions are happening:

- on the village level,
- on the level of the nation state,
- on the international level. →



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(3) To develop democracy, a common perspective is needed.

For example: new representative elements or repressible elements; new direct democracy, to learn from the Swiss example of popular referenda.

(4) Develop a practical strategy:

We must overcome our strategic speechlessness.