



Defending the Open Societies

17 September – 29 September 2023

Gummersbach, Germany

Abstract

The unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine, the continued rise of populist (and even authoritarian) leaders, a looming global recession, the heartfelt effects of climate change, and more and more protest movements rioting on the streets: With so many urgent issues, it seems hard to justify for liberals to go back to the drawing board. We think it is an important strategic task for liberals and this is exactly what this seminar is about: Taking a step back and bringing liberal intellectuals from all over the world together to reflect and update the foundations of the Open Society™—liberalism's very own utopia. This is crucial, as the threats to liberalism have piled up over time without liberals really sprinting to action. With 17 (!) years of continuous democratic decline in the Freedom House Index, the dream of global liberalism is just about to slip away from our fingers. That is why it is high time to revitalize this project of the Open Society™.

This seminar will tackle the most serious challenges that the Open Society™ faces on a global level: the rollback of liberal democracy in countries, such as Turkey, Brazil, India or the Philippines; the rise of political cynicism through fake news and disinformation; the re-emergence of nationalism, xenophobia, and fundamentalism; the rise of hate speech online and the backfiring of cancel culture; increasing skepticism about markets and re-appearance to large-scale state interventions, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic; the decline in trust in experts and scientific knowledge; and the general lack of enthusiasm for progress and the achievements of humanity in the liberal democratic age.

The entire event will attempt to treat the above-mentioned subject matter from philosophical, empirical, and political perspectives and will cover a variety of standpoints. There are also less obvious threats to an open society that need to be considered, those that limit the room for rational discourse and discussion: fake news and malicious propaganda, hate speech, political correctness and the growing phenomenon of “safe spaces” in academic and other institutions. They prepare the ground for bigotry and misinformation and hence for populism and authoritarianism.

The entire event will attempt to treat the abovementioned subject matter from philosophical, empirical and political perspectives and will cover a variety of standpoints, some of them highly controversial. For instance, does an open society:

- require or allow for positive discrimination?
- or it to function smoothly and resolve conflict, require assimilation of immigrants or “multiculturalism”?
- require more participation (e.g., more elements of direct democracy) or more centralised and streamlined governance?
- require more surveillance for purposes of security or a greater protection of privacy?

FOUNDATIONAL THEMES

The Concept of the Open Society™: Updating Popper & Arendt in 2023+
The Politics of the Open Society™: Liberal Democracy vs. Populism
The Economics of the Open Society™: XXX is Great but Have You Heard about Markets?
The Culture of the Open Society™: Pluralism, Migration, and Toleration
The Episteme of the Open Society™: Enlightenment, Rationalia, and Scientism
The Tensions of the Open Society™: Ahem, what about Social Justice?

TARGET GROUP

Participants in this workshop should have an **advanced understanding of liberal principles** and display curiosity for liberal intellectual history and its contemporary application. Moreover, they would need a sufficient command of English to engage in in-depth discussions about political theory, economics, and philosophy and to be able to contribute to the development of policy and vision papers. This means that this seminar would be suitable for those that play an active role in developing liberal thought in their home society, especially in politics or the intellectual realm.

This includes politicians and political strategists from political parties, intellectuals (writers, journalists, cartoonists, lecturers, etc.), policy analysts and think tankers, civil society leaders, human rights lawyers, entrepreneurs, and pedagogues.

METHODOLOGY

Besides input sessions from the facilitators and experts, the seminar will aim at best-practice sharing and active exchange between participants. In order to enhance the learning experience and emphasise the wide-ranging nature of the workshop, the seminar will rely on non-formal education methods, such as debate clubs, case studies, and hackathons.

OBJECTIVES

The workshop provides participants with an opportunity to:

- familiarise themselves with the concept of the Open Society™ and its major characteristics
- consider the inherent links between the various institutions of the Open Society™, such as liberal democracy, the market economy, free speech norms, open science, and/or a robust conception of toleration
- assess the current challenges to core pillars of the Open Society™, such as populism, deglobalisation, and/or economic interventionism
- develop ideas on how to effectively counter attempts by various actors to diminish not only the liberties of individual citizens but to backslide and reverse engineer societies as a whole
- devise ways of countering relevant threats in a robust manner, especially through the strengthening of institutions—in order to make the Open Society™ sustainable

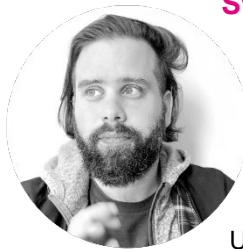
Facilitators



Bican Şahin

Bican Şahin is a professor of political science in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Hacettepe University, Ankara. He is the President of Freedom Research Association. He received his Ph.D. at the University of Maryland, College Park in 2003. Among his research topics are classical liberal and libertarian philosophy, the relation between liberal democracy and Islam, and the relationships between state and civil society in Turkey. Some of his publications are

- Toleration: The Liberal Virtue, Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2010.
- "Cultural Diversity and Toleration in the Nation-State", Co-authored with Peter Mentzel, Hacettepe University Journal of Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. Vol. 35, Issue 3, 103-124, 2017.
- "Two Understandings of Law: Hayek vs Schmitt in the Context of Turkey", Turkish Studies, Vol. 18, Issue 3, 2017.
- "Between Enlightened Exclusion and Conscientious Inclusion: Tolerating the Muslims in Germany," coauthored with Dr. Nezahat Altuntaş, Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs Vol. 29 no. 1, pp. 27-41.
- "Toleration, Political Liberalism, and Peaceful Coexistence in the Muslim World," The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, vol. 24, no.1, Winter 2007, pp-1-24;



Sven Gerst

Sven Gerst is a PhD Student in Political Philosophy at the Department of Political Economy at King's College London. His research mainly focuses on matters of global justice, democratic responsibility, and individual accountability. At King's College London, Sven also teaches courses on political and economic philosophy, environmental economics, metaethics, and contemporary issues in applied ethics. He holds a M.Sc. in Philosophy from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), as well as a M.Sc. in Management from the University of Mannheim. Previously, he also studied at Harvard University, St. Petersburg State University and at National Taiwan University.

The Foundation

We, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, promote individual liberty, free and open societies and free markets in Germany and throughout the world. To us freedom is the guiding principle in policy making. We believe that free and open societies are the only societies that allow human beings to decide for themselves what is best, to develop their full potential and to pursue their dreams. This is what we mean when we claim to value human dignity. And it is freedom that produces prosperity. Together with our counterparts – who all share a similar set of values – we support initiatives in Germany and abroad that serve to enhance respect for the rule of law, private property and human rights, that foster tolerance and that strengthen economic freedom rights and democracy.

The programs of the Foundation's International Academy for Leadership (IAF) form an integral part of our international work and offer Liberals from all parts of the world opportunities to engage in dialogue, an exchange of ideas, networking and cooperation. We aim to inspire.

Venue: **International Academy for Leadership (IAF)**
Theodor-Heuss-Straße 26
51645 Gummersbach
Germany

Language: English

Registration: 23 June 2023

Registration fee: 260.00 €



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