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## **MODERN UNIVERSITY AS AN IDEOLOGICAL BATTLEGROUND: MAJOR CONFLICTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS**

All the recent decades have been witnessing the rise of populist politics on the one hand and the political polarization on the other. These trends are mutually reinforcing and the other certain points when they intersect. As far as developed world—the world of consolidated democracy, vibrant market economy and robust rule of law—is concerned, these trends have been epitomized by such events as Brexit and election of Donald Trump as the US President.

How do you spell ethically ones have reinforced-and to set an extent have been an outcome Dash the clashes in intellectual and ideological spheres. In fact, witness and your stage of culture wars taking place not just inside the United States but across the developed world. A case in point, our discussions are taking place in imaginary ivory tower of academia, more realistically speaking, on the university campus.

American university campus often been space for a political action aimed at the word German sociology stance philosophy Axel Honneth defined as a “struggle for recognition”. What are the major points of contention? These ideologically laden debates revolve around such issues as “woke ideology,” cancel culture and social movement Black Lives Matter. Let us discuss every point at length, keeping in mind that they are tensely intertwined. The term “woke” is a shorthand of woken and is rooted in African-American spoken English. It is often demonized by politicians and ideologues of conservative / right-wing bent. In eyes of its supporters the “woke” just means staying alert to the racist practices still interwoven into fabric of the American society<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> see: Wacquant L. From Slavery To Mass Incarceration // New Left Review. 2002. No 13

These debates have had a spill over not just for politics but for policy making as well. The debates themselves intensified under Trump presidency.

Remember Trump's 1776 commission aimed at countering New York Times 1619 project. The former initiative was bent on promoting the glorious interpretation of the American history. The 1776 commission aimed to take to task those failing to appreciate the uniqueness and inherent goodness of American social and political trajectory. In words of president Trump's executive order establishing the said commission "The American founding envisioned a political order in harmony with the design of "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God," seeing the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as embodied in and sanctioned by natural law and its traditions.

The formation of a republic around these principles marked a clear departure from previous forms of government, securing rights through a form of government that derives its legitimate power from the consent of the governed. Throughout its national life, our Republic's exploration of the full meaning of these principles has led it through the ratification of a Constitution, civil war, the abolition of slavery, Reconstruction, and a series of domestic crises and world conflicts. Those events establish a clear historical record of an exceptional Nation dedicated to the ideas and ideals of its founding.

Against this history, in recent years, a series of polemics grounded in poor scholarship has vilified our Founders and our founding. Despite the virtues and accomplishments of this Nation, many students are now taught in school to hate their own country, and to believe that the men and women who built it were not heroes, but rather villains. This radicalized view of American history lacks perspective, obscures virtues, twists motives, ignores or distorts facts, and magnifies flaws, resulting in the truth being concealed and history disfigured. Failing to identify, challenge, and correct this distorted perspective could fray and ultimately erase the bonds that knit our country and culture together.

The recent attacks on our founding have highlighted America's history related to race. These one-sided and divisive accounts too often ignore or fail to properly honor and recollect the great legacy of the American national experience — our country's valiant and successful effort to shake off the curse of slavery and

to use the lessons of that struggle to guide our work toward equal rights for all citizens in the present. Viewing America as an irredeemably and systemically racist country cannot account for the extraordinary role of the great heroes of the American movement against slavery and for civil rights — a great moral endeavor that, from Abraham Lincoln to Martin Luther King, Jr., was marked by religious fellowship, good will, generosity of heart, an emphasis on our shared principles, and an inclusive vision for the future.

As these heroes demonstrated, the path to a renewed and confident national unity is through a rediscovery of a shared identity rooted in our founding principles. A loss of national confidence in these principles would place rising generations in jeopardy of a crippling self-doubt that could cause them to abandon faith in the common story that binds us to one another across our differences. Without our common faith in the equal right of every individual American to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, authoritarian visions of government and society could become increasingly alluring alternatives to self-government based on the consent of the people. Thus, it is necessary to provide America's young people access to what is genuinely inspiring and unifying in our history, as well as to the lessons imparted by the American experience of overcoming great national challenges. This is what makes possible the informed and honest patriotism that is essential for a successful republic.

A restoration of American education grounded in the principles of our founding that is accurate, honest, unifying, inspiring, and ennobling must ultimately succeed at the local level. Parents and local school boards must be empowered to achieve greater choice and variety in curriculum at the State and local levels"[1].

This Trump's initiative was condemned by academic community represented by American historical association. Earlier the New York Times launched the 1619 project which "is a long-form journalism endeavor developed by Nikole Hannah-Jones, writers from The New York Times, and The New York Times Magazine which "aims to reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the very center of the United States' national narrative"<sup>2</sup>. The first publication stemming from the project was in The

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<sup>2</sup> "The 1619 Project". The New York Times. Cited in: The 1619 Project. Wikipedia. URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_1619\\_Project](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_1619_Project) (accessed 01.11.2021)

New York Times Magazine of August 2019 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in the English colony of Virginia<sup>3</sup>. These were also the first Africans in mainland British America, though Africans had been in other parts of North America since the 1500s. The project later included a broadsheet article, live events, and a podcast”<sup>4</sup>[3].

Against this backdrop arrived the news on establishing new institution of higher learning— the University of Austin (TX). In words its founding president literary scholar Pano Canelos the proposed university is dedicated to fearless pursuit of the truth. One of the most prominent speakers on behalf of the new university is a prominent Scottish historian Niall Ferguson who has taught at top US universities, including Harvard. Ferguson has observed that one can speak more freely in a local diner than on contemporary western university campus [4]. In his programmatic article for Bloomberg he claims that “Something is rotten in the state of academia and it’s no laughing matter” [2]. Worth noting the article’s ambitious title: “I’m Helping to Start a New College Because Higher Ed Is Broken.” Scottish historian asks his readers rhetorically: “Would the democracies have won the world wars and the Cold War without the contributions of their universities? It seems doubtful. Think only of Bletchley Park and the Manhattan Project. Sure, the Ivy League’s best and brightest also gave us the Vietnam War. But remember, too, that there were more university-based computers on the Arpanet — the original internet — than any other kind. No Stanford, no Silicon Valley” [2]

Ferguson cites surveys of students to buttress his claim about the infringements on academic freedoms and freedom in general on contemporary campus: “In Heterodox Academy’s 2020 Campus Expression Survey, 62% of sampled college students agreed that the climate on their campus prevented them from saying things they believed, up from 55% in 2019, while 41% were reluctant to discuss politics in a classroom, up from 32% in 2019. Some 60% of students said they were reluctant to speak up in class because they were concerned other students would criticize their views as being offensive” [2]. The only cure would be

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<sup>3</sup> Silverstein J. "Why We Published The 1619 Project". The New York Times Cited in: The 1619 Project. Wikipedia. URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_1619\\_Project](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_1619_Project) (accessed 01.11.2021)

<sup>4</sup> In '1619' Project, the Times Puts Slavery Front and Center of the American Experience. WNYC News. Cited in: The 1619 Project. Wikipedia. URL: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_1619\\_Project](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_1619_Project) (accessed 01.11.2021)

to restore the tradition of liberal art education which is true to its name is to establish an institutional alternative focusing on promoting unfettered search of truth. And of course the major enemies of the freedom of academic pursuit is political correctness and the attempts at rewriting history from the perspective of oppressed strata. Under current ideological climate social scientists with conservative convictions feel threatened and consider their academic freedoms to be curtailed. Conservative views are a serious handicap on one's career and that's the reason why the number of left-learning academics had increased twofold from 1960s to late 1990s.

Critics of this initiative interpret it as an attempt at solidifying exciting inequalities and elitists nature of modern (American) university. They claim that universities exposing libertarian values practice censorship on their own.

Thus, we witness the conflict between two major communities of discourse / ideology. This is the conflict since these communities tend to live in their own information bubbles, rarely engaging in independent minded trespassing. On the top of that the conflict and general sense I'd crisis is exacerbated by the death of traditional university under the blows of economic forces unleashed by neo-liberal commercialization of higher education as acculturation observed by Terry Eagleton.

For Ukraine these debates and initiatives are a lesson at the importance of education and ability of civil society / academic community to come up with big ideas — however controversial— and act upon them.

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