

## The New Protocols

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Professors Stephen Walt and John I Mearsheimer's recently disseminated **anti-Semitic screed** has been ripped apart by both prominent scholars and literary figures showing it to be an **intellectual fraud** being passed off as serious scholarship. The scholarly **issues** surrounding the Walt and Mearsheimer piece are now part of the **public discussion**. What has been far and away less discussed is how it is possible for two scholars to produce with the imprimatur of two great universities—an imprimatur since withdrawn—a study that is so patently racist that David Duke, the Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, displays it prominently on his **website**. And therein lies another story, one about political science specifically and social science generally in the contemporary university.

In the late 1960's, the social sciences became divided between those who sought the creation of a "scientific" study of politics and those who saw the study of politics as indistinguishable from social action. The social action imperative, of course, came principally from the far left, but its critique of the absence of a study of **conflict** and the discipline's infatuation with the scientific approach was not without merit.

Amid the political and social upheaval of the turbulent sixties political science was largely off in a rarefied intellectual world devoid of any engagement with reality. As the inner cities burned and protest movements sprouted up on issues ranging from the war in Vietnam to the women's movement, inquiry in political science and the social sciences generally revolved around questions of social order and balance. So prevalent were studies of social equanimity and democratic pluralism that some asked where were the inquiries into the sociology of conflict and the politics of revolutionary movements?

In short order, the federal government, seeking to explain the sudden transformation of America from the placid years of the fifties to the turbulent sixties, launched the Kerner and Eisenhower Commissions whose research agendas transformed academic political and social inquiry.

It was possible, of course, to study issues of violence and civil unrest while being personally disengaged, but that did not happen. Armed with an arrogance and self-righteousness alleging that they could readily discern not just the afflictions of the social order but cures for its ills, social scientists embarked on using their credentials, their skills, and their research findings to change society.

At the same time, from San Francisco State University (College at that time) to Berkeley and beyond there were calls for Black Studies and Women's Studies departments. These were hardly departments in the traditional sense of the term but political interest groups masquerading as scholarly academic entities.

Denial of demands for "studies" departments led to protracted conflict and even **violence**. University administrators played triage, letting such departments on campus so that the real work of the university could continue.

In actuality, universities are well-organized pecking orders where the natural and biological sciences along with mathematics, followed by engineering, are considered the places where the serious work of the university takes place.

The social sciences and humanities are considered areas created by a lesser deity and to many an administrator whose intellectual lineage comes from the hard sciences or mathematics, there is no difference between a department of political science and a department of ethnic studies, both are made up of people of inferior intellect who do “pretend” scholarship.

Witnessing campus violence in behalf of studies programs and viewing them as no different than the “soft” existing programs readily found in the social sciences and humanities, university administrators quickly capitulated to incorporating these interest groups as academic departments.

As universities once thought that a small but localized academic corruption could be confined to the needs of the athletic programs without tainting the larger university community; so too, they thought that studies programs also could be incorporated into the university without tainting its larger mission.

They were wrong, decidedly so. Such programs further led to the politicization of the university and the pursuit of a left-agenda.

During the Vietnam War, some political science departments proudly subjected potential faculty to a political litmus test. One of my colleagues who served in Vietnam talked of erasing four years of his life from his vita so that he could get an academic appointment. The reality of his life was that he had a better chance of getting a faculty position as a convicted felon than as a Vietnam veteran. The practice of a **political test** for new hires persists to this day.

Bureaucracy by its very nature clones itself. But academic bureaucracy is even more insidious because it creates the pool of its own recruits. Graduate programs in the social sciences, humanities and even more so in education became openly hostile to those who did not share a left mindset; consequently, the emerging pool of applicants quickly began to reflect the ideological mindset of those hiring. In the space of a decade those who had charged into the dean’s office screaming, “Up against the wall Mother F\*\*\*er,” now sat comfortably ensconced behind his desk.

Since the early seventies, the academic marketplace has been in decline. A position in international relations, for example, would easily draw a hundred applicants. The emphasis on affirmative action hiring significantly upped the difficult odds for white males securing positions.

University administrators attempted to placate government bean counters by collecting affirmative action hiring statistics by academic unit, usually defined as a college rather than a department. In this way, the administrators played academic triage, for an affirmative-action hire in international relations, for example, could free up a competitive hire in chemistry. This meant, as I was to learn first hand, that given the triage model of academic administration, some departments were always seen as dumping grounds for affirmative action hiring while others—especially if they brought in substantial amounts of grants and contracts—were entirely exempt from the process.

With academic pay scales not keeping up with those in the private sector and a general politicization of the intellectual environment followed by the waning probabilities of securing meaningful employment, it became clear to many a hiring committee that as a discipline we were producing inferior stuff. We had de facto replaced achievement with ascription. And the consequences were as predictable as the fall of l’ancien regime in France, a society whose ruling elite was deprived of talent because of a dysfunctional ascriptive system.

In an environment such as this, the best people, especially if they possess the wrong ascriptive characteristics, go elsewhere. They simply seek other careers.

As a field increasingly recruits from the bottom of the intellectual food chain and from people who share a common mindset, there is both less intellectual diversity and less intellectual challenge. Insularity grows. Independence of thought ceases to exist. And the consequences are felt dramatically from the most prominent people in the field right down to the undergraduate students.

In this environment, having the appropriate political attitudes even encourages the tolerance of personal excesses. Courses in women's studies became therapy sessions for miscreants who wanted to vent their anger at men for all the ills that personally befell them, beginning in many cases with a set of bad phenotypic genes. Men were supposed to sit silently in these classes and become the brunt of aggression. Those who did not oblige were often removed from the class, sometimes by calling campus security.

In Black studies courses, white students were at times told they could remain as long as they did not participate.

When I confronted one Black administrator that a planned seminar restricted to "women of color" violated numerous civil rights laws, she responded that since she did not intend to violate anyone's civil rights she wasn't violating anyone's civil rights. The logic of the newer generation entering academia was the strongest indicator of what we had created.

In Black studies there emerged the notion of "true truth," meaning that an idea commonly held by a people was true because it was commonly held.

In one psychology course, the students were told that **Beethoven was Black** and any departure from that was a denial of Black history and an affront to Black people.

An award given to a woman scholar cited as fact that women pursue knowledge in breadth instead of depth, as if these were mutually exclusive; breadth was better than depth, and, of course, this is what "women" did, something better.

There is the obvious question of what could students possibly learn from this, a question for another time and place. But for now, more important, are the implications and consequences of this insular culture with its insidious and incestuous ideology in creating the mindset where Walt and Mearsheimer's Anti-Semitic screed could take hold.

A culture that indulges intellectual narcissism and stupidity, as if they were a substitute for knowledge, would inevitably believe its own nonsense, in a fashion so strikingly similar to the quip about politicians being so stupid and narcissistic as to believe their own press releases.

The Walt and Mearsheimer piece resurrecting the great myth of a worldwide, Jewish conspiracy is such an indulgence. If you can turn your course into a therapy session, push ideology as if it were knowledge, and never have to confront a dissonant opinion, then finally you cannot tell the difference between your research and your hatreds, between fact and emotion. They merge. They achieve a mindless sanctification in footnotes, and the benediction of the Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, who finds in your screed affirmation for his own racism.

But there is yet another aspect of academic research in political science that results in the production of such drivel. Political science suffers from being decidedly irrelevant. No one needs to read the *International Studies Quarterly* to conduct international relations or for that matter does one need a degree in international relations to fashion foreign policy.

Walt and Mearsheimer will never create foreign policy, and outside of academia, no one gives a hoot about their opinions or cares who they are. Were it not for compulsory reading lists imposed on graduate students, there would not even be an audience for their rather turgid and repetitive writings.

By engaging in infamy and racism, they have accomplished what academicians salivate after, some recognition that they are not irrelevant. Indeed, they no longer are. Hate websites from Mecca to Damascus and those of various racial supremacy groups from Sweden to New Orleans will now make them relevant far beyond the mere fifteen minutes of fame they craved. Anti-Semites have now found the new Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

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