

UNIVERSITY AS A NATIONAL DISGRACE



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The lack of a university in Russian politics – in any role, even as a public commentator – brings us within an inch of national disgrace.

Modern Russian universities are not at all connected with the public political field (with the possible exclusion of the State University – the Higher School of Economics); they have dissociated themselves from politics entirely. And today, both Russian politics and the universities are reaping the fruits of that voluntary retreat from the public field. Universities have traded in their political participation for the right to a falsely determined autonomy in order to please their domestic managers.

The outcome in the public sphere has been the abrupt and sharp decline in the quality of political discussion and decision-making. Universities are increasingly seen as corrupt as they further wed themselves to corporations. In so doing, universities are also deprived of their autonomy, with rectors of the biggest Russian universities today now all being

appointed from the outside.

For the domestic labour market, a university seems to be an extremely redundant project. **A university produces manpower junk.** These people can not even find low-paying jobs in their profession, and so most university graduates face fierce competition in the human resources market even outside the strict borders of their profession. A university diploma confers almost no advantages.

For example, the MSU has to choose what human resources market to play on. Since it is built on the international production of intellectual manpower, it has to play a game that takes international rules and standards into consideration in some sectors. And what should be done if all graduates of a year go abroad? If they hold reunion parties in Austria or Holland? Political conservatives demand the MSU to be oriented only by the rules of the domestic labour market. But if that's the case then we might as well close up the university for good. ■

PAKISTANI UNIVERSITIES PRODUCE MEDIOCRE TYPE OF PEOPLE



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Universities play a central role in the modernization process, especially in developing societies because the role and status of the educated elite is far more pronounced in such societies than in societies where modernization has already permeated society in general and created attitudes and values consistent with a rational society.

When we speak of the role of universities in formulating the principles of policy in today's world, I would ask, **if the universities are not producing anymore the political cadres then who are?** I think the universities continue to be the producers of both the intelligentsia as well as intellectuals and political leaders.

I live in Singapore and here the classic role of creating a class of qualified people that would serve the state is given top priority.

I do not think there is anything in the 21st century which suggests that the role of universities and their status have changed fundamentally as compared with the 20th century.

If we speak about the situation in my native country, Pakistan, I must say that Pakistan's universities were never strong. And whatever they had attained in terms of academic and intellectual excellence was wasted when under General Zia-ul-Haq Pakistan was made into an ideological Islamic state. An ideological state does not encourage free thinking; hence nothing like a workshop for the opposition exists.

Today, Pakistani universities are controlled by the rightwing Jama'at-e-Islami Party and they represent a Third World type cultural fascism.

Therefore the **Pakistani universities have produced mediocre type of people.** And that is why Pakistan's upper classes send their children to Western universities. Then the graduates of Western universities come back with skills and training that are comparable with the rest of the world. ■