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## *Misinterpretations of US trends (1/2)*

We see that Donald Trump's arrival in the White House is upsetting the rules of the international game. However, we often misinterpret his actions: we ignore the habits and customs of his country, and we project our own political debates onto him. We are all the more at a loss because, over the past few years, we have more or less adhered to the ideology fashionable in Washington. We've considered it to be the American doxa, even though it was only a moment in its history, and we've forgotten its many schools of thought.

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**We were all astonished by President Trump's chain-signing of executive orders immediately after his inauguration. The European press saw him as an autocrat**

**asserting his power. Not so! In fact, many of these documents limit the power of the federal state for the benefit of the federated states. Errors of interpretation of this kind are now legion between the United States and Europe.**

The arrival of Donald Trump in the White House is reshuffling all the ideological, geopolitical, economic and even military cards. Indeed, for the first time in almost two centuries, a Jacksonian is once again in power in the United States. We had forgotten this way of thinking (except in Westerns) and are no longer able to anticipate it. Yet Trump has already held power for four years, but back then he was largely prevented from implementing his policies by his own Republican allies, while the Democratic press assured us he was mentally ill or a fascist.

Strangely, the social network influencers who defend his point of view only inform us about his ideological fight against wokism, never about his conception of international relations and even less about his political ambitions. This is all the more strange given that, since the November 5 election, Donald Trump's team has canvassed numerous influencers in the European Union and the UK, and started paying them handsomely.

There are several ways of looking at this contradiction. Either Donald Trump intends to mislead Europeans about his true intentions, or he considers that they can only understand one thing at a time. For our part, we shall continue our work by describing the different facets of the character without forgetting any.

#### *THE FIGHT AGAINST WOKE IDEOLOGY*

Wokism is generally presented as a reaction to slavery and racial segregation. European settlers, now aware of the horrors they had committed, would try to make amends.

That's not my opinion at all. As far as I'm concerned, wokism has nothing to do with these crimes. If we take an anthropological view, we have to recognize that identical phenomena exist in all the major religions. In Christianity, it was embodied by Origen, the third-century father of the Church who castrated himself to avoid sinning, or more recently by Jean Calvin, famous for having applied the same methods as the Spanish Inquisition in the theocratic Republic of Geneva.

The United States grew out of the Puritan colony of Plymouth (New England, Massachusetts to be precise). They were Puritans, i.e. Calvinists. The Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, had sent them as missionaries, not so much to convert the Indians as the Europeans of the very Catholic King of Spain. In their colonies, women had to be veiled and prayer obligatory. Homosexuals were subject to whipping, etc. These fanatics are known as the "Pilgrim Fathers" (not to be confused with the "Founding Fathers", who are jurists). They

are celebrated every year on the national holiday of Thanksgiving. It was they who imported the idea that politics should be "pure" and that statues of heretics should be destroyed.

Since 2014, the term "woke" has been used to designate people who are aware of the social consequences of slavery and racial discrimination, -or, convergence of struggles obliges-sexual orientation and even gender. This movement seeks "purity", in the religious sense of the term, and has set itself "good practices" aimed at combating racial discrimination, whether overt or "systemic". In practice, it pushes for "positive discrimination" in favor of all minorities.

It's obvious that slavery was a reality in the United States, and that this past reality conditions current behavior. But it's doubtful that destroying anything that recalls that era will solve the problems of our time, and even more doubtful that favoring black candidates will enable them to free themselves from the condition of their forebears. Everyone knows instinctively that the remedies are worse than the problems they claim to combat. At least, that's what the Woke residents of Los Angeles thought when their homes were ravaged by fire. They reflected on the inefficiency of firefighters hired on the basis of affirmative action rather than competence. This movement had lost popularity in the U.S. in previous years, as evidenced by the expression get woke, go broke! ("get woke, go broke!").

Wokism is a modern adaptation of the Puritanism of the "Pilgrim Fathers". But the United States is a composite country in which many cultures have blended together.

Admittedly, just as the Republican Party absorbed by the Trumpists has become Jacksonian, so the Democratic Party absorbed by Obama and Biden has become woke. This has led to many misunderstandings, as Washington as a whole has ideologically abandoned its traditional behavior, to which it is now returning.

During the presidential election campaign, two young influencers denounced wokism at length. Black journalist Candace Owens (who now attacks the Macron couple [1]) called Black Lives Matters "a group of whiny toddlers, pretending to be oppressed for attention". While gay Milo Yiannopoulos (married to another man) has made a name for himself with his parodies of lesbian feminism and the LGTBQIA+ movement. These two influencers have led many black and gay people not to vote for the Democratic Party, like their elders, but for Donald Trump.

As early as his inaugural speech, Donald Trump announced the end of affirmative action policies and stated that, from now on, the federal state would recognize only two genders. This is spectacular, but it comes at a time when the vast majority of US voters are already convinced [2].

## *AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM*

Donald Trump is a proponent of "American exceptionalism" [3]; a doctrine according to which the United States is "the light on the hill", willed by God to enlighten the world.

This doctrine, also directly derived from the example of the "pilgrim fathers", asserts that their journey was comparable to that of the ancient Hebrews. They came as a "chosen people" because they fled Pharaoh (the British monarchy that had just been overthrown by Lord Cromwell), crossed the Red Sea (the Atlantic Ocean) and discovered a promised land (North America). Every one of the 47 presidents of the United States, without exception, has laid claim to this mythology. It is the basis of their rejection of the principles of international law and their support for the State of Israel.

From a U.S. perspective (this has nothing to do with Donald Trump), Washington will never accept accountability from anyone, least of all the United Nations or its agencies. Sure, they recycled many Nazi criminals during the Cold War, sure, they massacred Koreans, Vietnamese, Afghans, Iraqis, Libyans, Palestinians, Syrians, etc., but none of their presidents should be indicted by any international tribunal.

In an op-ed published in 2013 by the *New York Times*, Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed that "it is extremely dangerous to encourage people to consider themselves exceptional, whatever the motivation" [4]. This doctrine in fact induces a difference and a hierarchy between men, as when we apply the theological concept of "chosen people" to a political reality.

Throughout its history, Washington has never agreed to be accountable to outsiders. We mistakenly attribute some of its recent decisions to current ideologies, when they would have been made anyway. For example, we mistakenly think that Donald Trump has disengaged from the Paris Accords on combating global warming because he thinks they're silly. True, he doesn't believe the IPCC is an academy of science. But, in any case, the United States could not agree to sign agreements that subjected it to the judgment of others. Obama and Biden took a stand against their country's tradition out of ideology, while Trump took a stand in line with his own tradition, which also happens to correspond to his own ideology.

## *THE WESTERN VERSION OF FREEDOM*

When the United States was founded in 1776, 13 years before the French Revolution, the founding fathers disagreed on their conception of liberty and human rights. Unlike the French Voltairians, they did not think of these issues from both an individual and a collective point of view. For them, freedom simply meant being able to do what you wanted at home. That's why, for example, they are allergic to the principle of compulsory social contributions.

This way of thinking is not without its drawbacks. For example, their concept of "human rights" is in total contradiction with the French concept of "droits de l'homme et du citoyen". From an Anglo-Saxon point of view (referring to the British tradition), it's all about protecting oneself from the *raison d'État*. On the contrary, from the point of view of French revolutionaries, it's less a question of not being tortured in a police station than of participating in the drafting of laws [5].

The debate on freedom of expression is distorted by overlapping reading grids. The Biden administration considered, from a woke point of view, that it had a responsibility to inform the public about the dangers of COVID and to save them from the disease. For this reason, it banned all scientific debate and censored all dissenting opinions. In the tradition of the "founding fathers", the federal government had no business interfering in social networking. According to the Voltairian tradition, the state had the right not to prohibit anything, but to have the courts prohibit messages that misled Internet users and harmed their health (in this case, it was messages on the universal compulsory purchase of certain drugs that should have been targeted).

(To be continued...)

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Translation

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[1] [“After the United Kingdom, Germany and Denmark, the Trump team prepares an operation for France”](#), Translation Gregor Fröhlich, *Voltaire Network*, 18 January 2025.

[2] Donald Trump did not seek to deny that a few rare members of the human species have neither the chromosomal characteristics of males nor those of females. He attacked the fact that the federal state had imposed on society to organize itself as if these exceptions were the rule.

[3] Read absolutely the proceedings of the conference organized by the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy: *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, Michael Ignatieff, Princeton University Press (2005).

[4] [“A Plea for Caution From Russia”](#), by Vladimir Putin, *New York Times* (United States), *Voltaire Network*, 12 September 2013.

[5] The British Thomas Paine, who started the American War of Independence, was elected representative of Pas-de-Calais to the French National Convention of 1792. He refused to vote for the death of the king because, according to him, making one man responsible for injustices would put an end to the process of transforming society. He wrote a book on the

two contradictory conceptions of Human Rights. It was the most widely read book during the French Revolution.