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Trump gegen Harvard: Kampf der Giganten

Elemente zum Verständnis der US-Hochschulpolitik

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Donald Trump's confrontational strategy against Harvard University symbolizes a broader cultural and political clash in the United States, highlighting tensions between populist politics and elite academic institutions. This fundamental conflict reflects deep societal divides over education, ideology, and social mobility.

- **Trump's strategic campaign:** Trump has methodically targeted Harvard as part of a long-term strategy to assert political dominance over elite educational institutions, portraying the battle as a fight between conservative values and progressive academia.
- **Symbolic choice of Harvard:** Harvard's historic status as the oldest and most prestigious U.S. university makes it a potent symbol of liberal elite culture and the political influence of education, especially given its role in shaping government leadership.
- **Universities' societal role in the U.S.:** American universities play an even more critical role in social mobility and status than their European counterparts, making them central to broader societal power dynamics and cultural identity.
- **Ivy League and globalism:** Harvard leads the Ivy League, a coalition of elite universities with liberal and globalist orientations, heavily reliant on international students and financial models akin to global corporations. That is why they are a convincing symbolic target of Trump's anti-globalism.
- **Internal conflicts and ideological battles:** Some Harvard alumni in Trump's administration openly criticize the university's liberal agenda, reflecting internal divisions and intensifying the cultural war over university policies and values.
- **Conservative critiques and cultural shifts:** Political figures like J. D. Vance and Ron DeSantis criticize Harvard for ideological homogeneity and elitism, framing it as disconnected from mainstream American values and calling for reforms and funding restrictions. Media influencer Steve Bannon calls for a complete end to public funding of independent private universities.
- **Structural challenges in U.S. higher education:** Rising tuition costs, dependence on foreign students, public funding despite vast endowments, affirmative action policies, and perceived politicization fuel public discontent, including by parts of the middle class, and provide grounds for Trump's attacks.
- **Technological disruption prospects:** Emerging views from tech leaders suggest that AI and digital tools such as AI and Chatbots may diminish the traditional university's role, potentially making higher education less relevant in the future. Some see this as grist on Trump's mill, others as prove why his battle has become unnecessary in the meantime.
- **European perspectives and implications:** Europe sympathizes with Harvard but recognizes differences in university roles and societal functions, making a similar populist assault on higher education less feasible there.

Walking through these points, the article highlights the fundamental problems of the politicization of higher education in the US, comparing it with Europe. It also points out some undesirable developments in the US that the higher education sector in Europe should avoid.

Keywords: Donald Trump, Harvard, university policy, university culture, ideological polarization, US universities compared to European universities.

Zusammenfassung

Donald Trumps Konfrontationsstrategie gegen die Harvard Universität symbolisiert einen breiteren kulturellen und politischen Konflikt in den Vereinigten

Staaten, der die Spannungen zwischen populistischer Politik und akademischen Eliteeinrichtungen verdeutlicht. Dieser Grundsatz-Konflikt spiegelt gesellschaftliche Gräben in Bezug auf Bildung, Ideologie und soziale Mobilität wider.