



# GEO-POLITICS AND HIGHER EDUCATION: PAST AND PRESENT

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CGHE East Asia at RIHE, Hiroshima

24 March 2023

# THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF DIVERSE PRACTICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

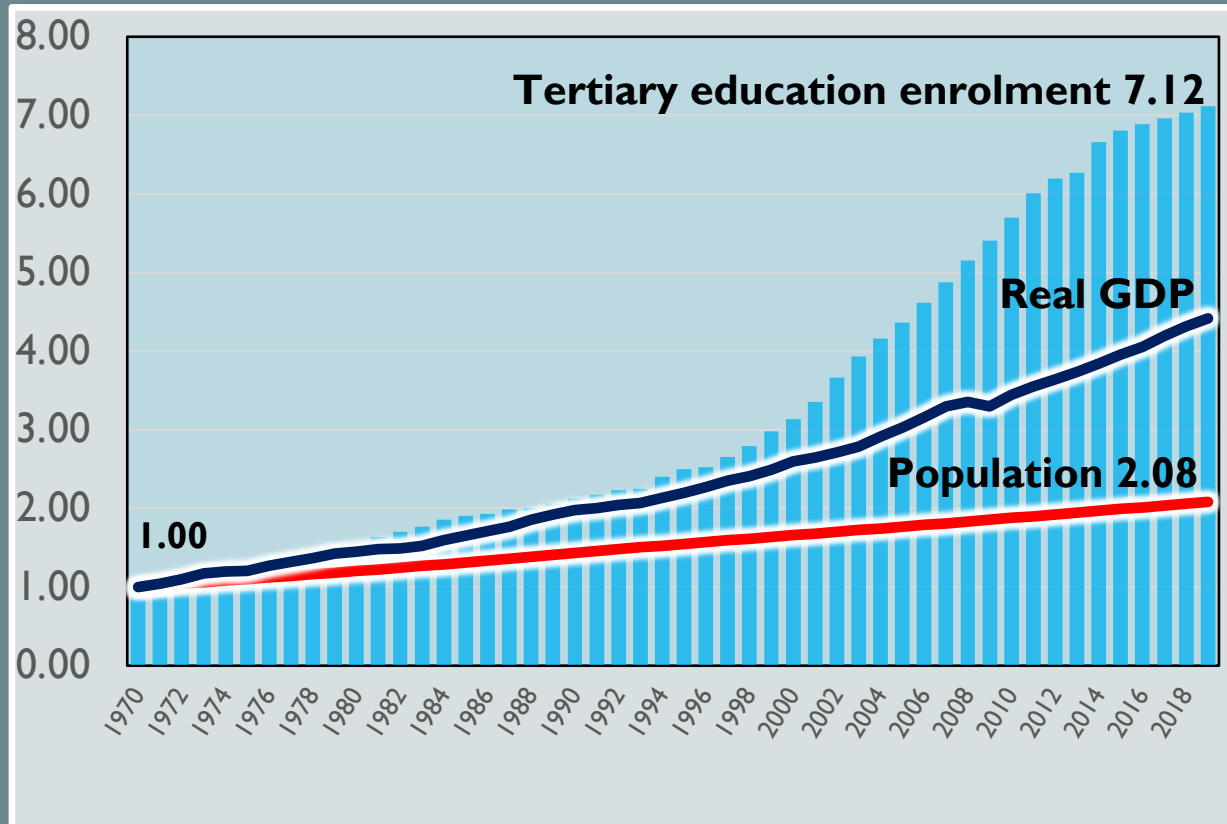
- China's Imperial academies, training scholars in statecraft, began in Western Zhou (1046-771 BCE)
- The great scholarly monasteries of Northern India
- Library and Mouseion at Alexandria, 270 BCE
- The golden age of Islamic scholarship, 7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> CE
- Medieval European universities, Bologna 1088 CE
- Von Humboldt's teaching/research university in Berlin 1809 CE, followed by the comprehensive US science university that has spread everywhere

University of Al-Qarawiyyin (Fez, Morocco) founded 859 CE



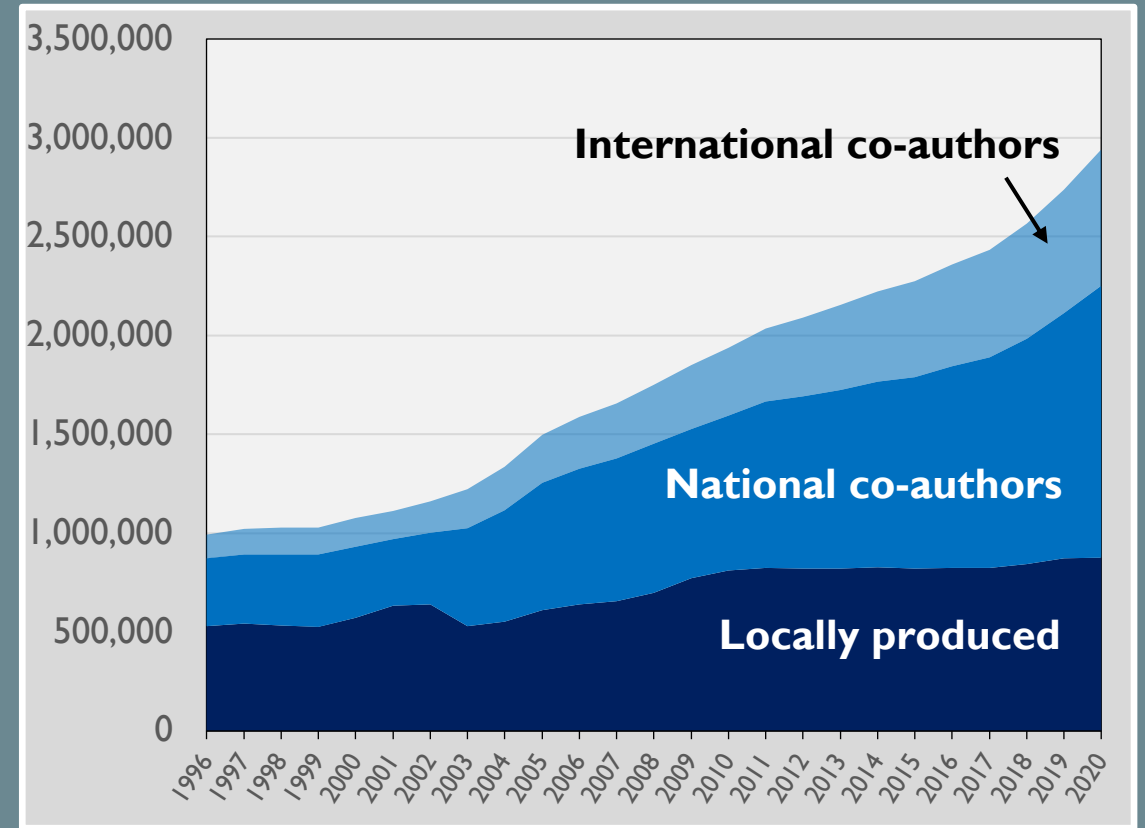
# THE EUROPEAN-AMERICAN SCIENCE UNIVERSITY HAS SPREAD ACROSS THE WORLD: IT SEEMS UNSTOPPABLE

WORLD TERTIARY PARTICIPATION RATE NOW OVER 40%: Growth of tertiary students worldwide since 1970



UNESCO and World Bank data

OVER 65 NATIONS HAVE SCIENCE SYSTEM: science papers have grown by 5.2% p.a. since 2020



US Science Board data, derived from Scopus

# BUT ALL PREVIOUS FORMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION WERE SUPPRESSED OR LOST SUPPORT

- Vikramshila, Nalanda and other Indian monasteries were brutally suppressed with everything lost. It is said eight million books burned at Nalanda
- Scholars in Alexandria were driven into exile and the library defunded
- Cosmopolitan medieval Islamic scholarship, and the scholar-officials in China have given way to more Westernised universities

The end of Nalanda, 1193 CE



AND GERMANY  
HOUSED THE  
WORLD'S LEADING  
SCIENCE  
UNIVERSITIES  
BEFORE 1933



Students collecting 'Un-German'  
books and papers for burning, 1933



# KARAZIN KHARKIV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, UKRAINE



Karazin Kharkiv was Ukraine's second ranked university. Since February 2022, 10% of all Ukraine's universities have been completely destroyed



# GLOBAL GEO-POLITICS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Geo-politics combines geography, power, politics and international relations in a multi-lateral (nation-state) world. It brings forward spatial thinking and space making strategies, territories, places, resources, and ecological issues that spill across borders. While dividing the global space it has both positive and negative effects in specific countries



- In higher education geo-politics affects the capacity of people to cross borders, and shape alliances and cooperation. It may trigger restrictions on free communications, and can become associated with inter-national antagonism and conflict
- Past examples include the nuclear race and space race in the US/Soviet Cold War, the US engagement with China in 1985-2015 in universities and science, the emergence of close cooperation between higher education systems and researchers in Europe





What geo-political  
flashpoints are currently  
disrupting cross-border  
collaboration and  
knowledge flows?



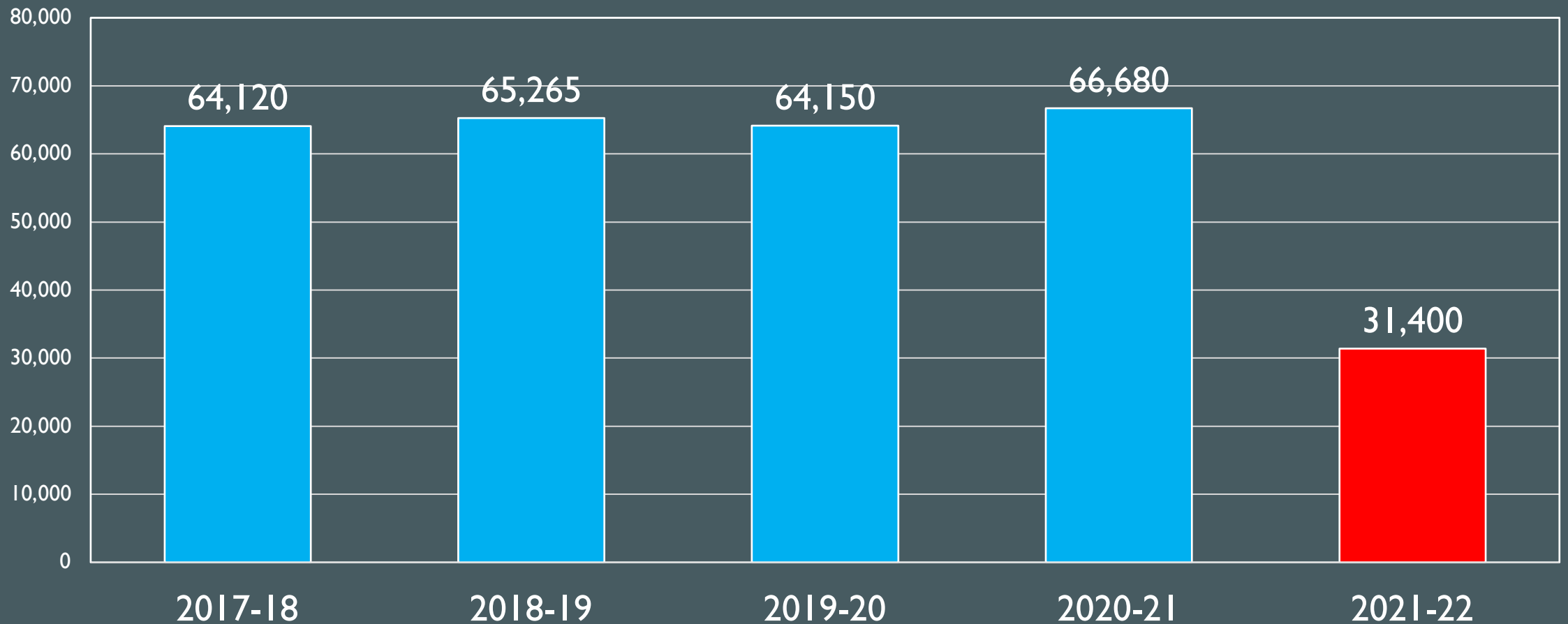
# FLASHPOINTS AFFECTING HIGHER EDUCATION

Geo-political conflicts that impair higher education cooperation and global knowledge flows include

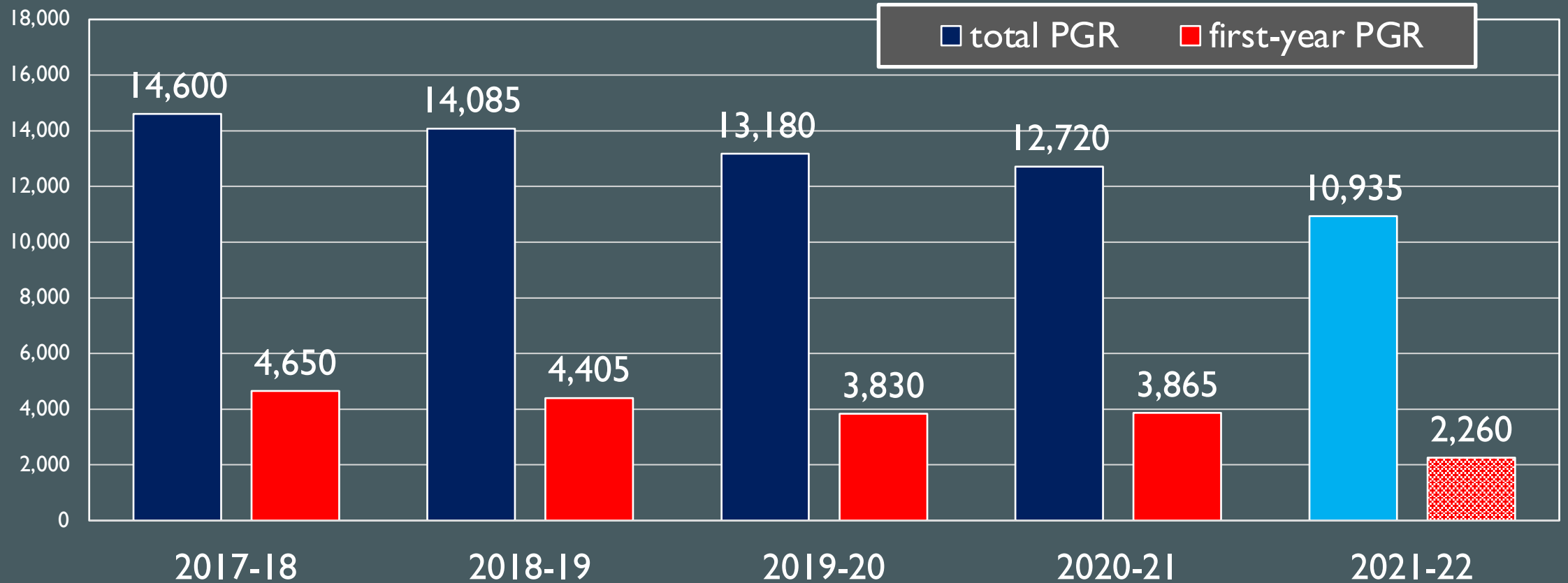
- 'Decoupling' of US and China, with flow on effects in relations between China and allies of US including in Europe, East Asia and Australia
- Russia versus Ukraine (and versus US-Europe)
- Long antagonism between Pakistan and India
- Tense relations between China and India
- Brexit has generated a partial decoupling between UK and European Union countries



# ERASMUS STUDENTS NO LONGER ENTER UK, AND FIRST YEAR EU STUDENTS IN UK DEGREES ARE DOWN SHARPLY: CHANGE FROM 2017-18 TO 2021-22



# POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS FROM EU IN UK DEGREES, TOTAL NUMBER AND FIRST YEAR STUDENTS 2017-18 TO 2021-22



# THE U.S.-CHINA DECOUPLING

- U.S./China engagement in higher education and knowledge (mid 1980s to mid 2010s) was a tremendous step forward. Two large, fertile and different civilisations coming together opened the way to a diverse multi-polar world of mutual learning
- But the two parties had different expectations. The U.S. expected China to transform along 'superior' Western lines. China saw it as capacity building and catchup, without China ceasing to be China. China achieved its goals, the U.S. did not
- China's economy, society and higher education transformed but it did not become a U.S.-style democracy. The U.S. little changed and learned much less about China than China learned about it
- Frustrated, resentful and suspicious of China, the U.S. moved to confrontation in the economy, military, science and technology, despite the efforts of U.S. universities to sustain engagement
- Responding, China began to impose its own restrictions ...



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## Schisms in research collaboration risk worsening global crises, OECD says

16 Mar 2023 | News

*Barriers being put up by the US, China and the EU could hinder scientific progress at a time when it is most urgently needed, according to OECD's latest report on the global R&D outlook*

By [Thomas Brent](#)



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## DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL GEO-POLITICS

- 2023 survey, 15 countries by European Council on Foreign Relations: 'Many people in the West see the coming international order as the return of a cold war-type bipolarity between west and east, democracy and authoritarianism. But people in India, China and Turkey see themselves very differently. They do not expect Western domination to continue. The independent powers are not a new third bloc, they don't have a common ideology, but nor are they 'content to adjust to the whims and plans of the superpowers'.
- Brazil's new president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva also emphasises multipolarity and wants to build good relations with both the USA and China

**Brazil President Lula**

# CARING FOR THE WORLD AS A WHOLE

‘... with respect to the political, only nation-states are deemed significant. It is for this reason that the world has only been exploited as a “common” resource and treated as a domain to be fought over and abused ... This is especially the case within ideologies of hegemonic nation-states, where other nation-states and even the high seas are conceived of as just so much territory to be dominated’

- Zhao Tingyang 2021, pp. 185, 187

# All under Heaven

THE TIANXIA SYSTEM FOR A POSSIBLE WORLD ORDER

Foreword by Odd Arne Westad





# QUESTIONS

- How can we advance peace and cooperation and diminish militarism?
- How can we maintain academic cooperation between systems amid geo-political tensions?
- How much autonomy do universities have to operate outside government?
- How can we protect and advance academic freedom in all East Asia?
- What other issues should we discuss?

