

# Higher Education in Russia Since the War Began

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A banner supporting the invasion in Ukraine at Ural State University of Economics  
Source: <https://www.usue.ru/>



A Ukrainian flag in the window of the student dorm at Novosibirsk State University  
Source: <https://ngs.ru/>

# The 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Started on February 24, 2022.

Ukraine's losses (UN OHCHR, 6.22.2022):

**10,403** civilian casualties:

**4,634** killed (including **320** children)

**5,769** injured

**>5M** refugees

**>7M** internally displaced

**209** schools and universities are destroyed and **1,819** are damaged (Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science)

Science

Some university researchers are among the thousands of civilians who have been killed in Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

NAME	Specialty	Affiliation	Cause of death
Oleksandr Korsun	Chemistry	V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University	Shelling
Oleg Amosov	Economics	V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University	Shelling
Yulia Zdanovska	Math	Taras Shevchenko National University, Kyiv	Shelling
Yevhen Khrykov	Education research	Taras Shevchenko National University, Luhansk	Shot
Oleksandr Kysliuk	Law	Drahomanov National Pedagogical University, Kyiv	Shot
Vasyl Kladko	Physics	V.E. Lashkaryov Institute of Semiconductor Physics, Kyiv	Shot
Andriy Kravchenko	Chemistry	Chulko Institute of Surface Chemistry, Kyiv	Land mine
Iyona Kurovska	Law	Legislation Institute of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Kyiv	Unclear
Maksym Pavlenko	Engineering	Institute of Molecular Biology and Genetics, Kyiv	Unclear

Source: <https://www.science.org/content/article/ukraine-s-mounting-death-toll-includes-growing-number-researchers>



Kharkiv National University, March 2, 2022.  
Source: REUTERS/Oleksandr Lapshyn.

# The Timeline of Russian Higher Education since the War Began

**Feb 24:** Russia starts the invasion of Ukraine

**Feb 24-28:** Hundreds of students and faculty are arrested at the anti-war protests

**Feb-Mar:** Series of anti-war letters signed by Russian academics and students

**Mar 4:** New Russian laws establishing war censorship

**Mar 4:** 300+ Russian university rectors sign a letter endorsing the war

**May:** Russian universities are "strongly encouraged" to introduce vice-rectors for student moral development (*vospitatel'naya rabota*)

**May 9:** Admission preferences to the children of the military participating in the war

**May 25:** Russia's Ministry of Higher Education and Science declares the departure from Bologna Process to create a unique national system of higher education

**March:** University rankers suspend all business with Russia

**March:** English language tests (IELTS/TOEFL/GRE) pull out of Russia

**Mar 4:** MOOC platforms shut off access to Russian content

**April:** Subscriptions to Web of Science citation databases are unavailable in Russia

**Feb-Jun:** Universities and research organizations abroad terminate partnerships and double degree programs with Russian universities

**April 11:** Russia's representation in Bologna Process Support Group is terminated

**June 9:** Ukraine imposes sanctions on 200+ Russian universities and rectors

# The Support of the War among Russian Faculty and Students

Fig. 1-2. The support of the war in Ukraine by type of employment

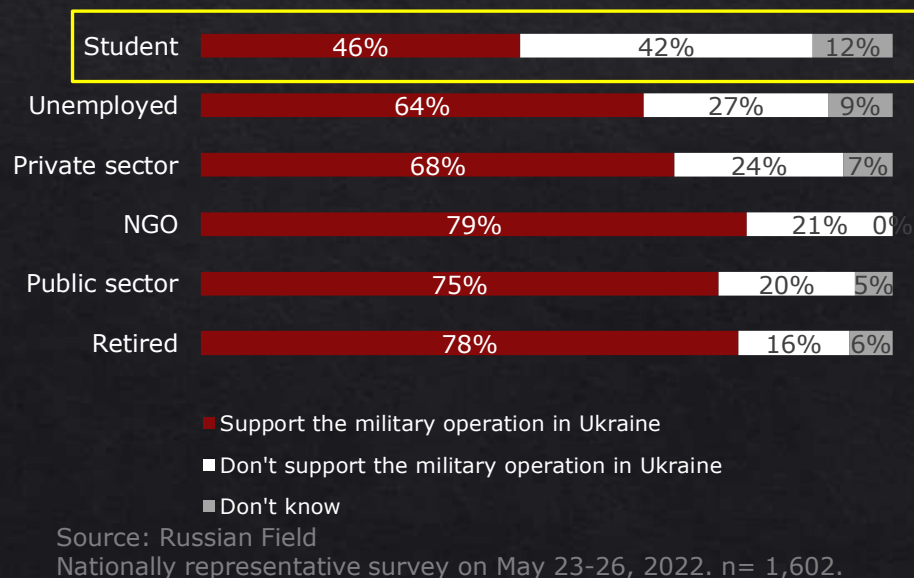
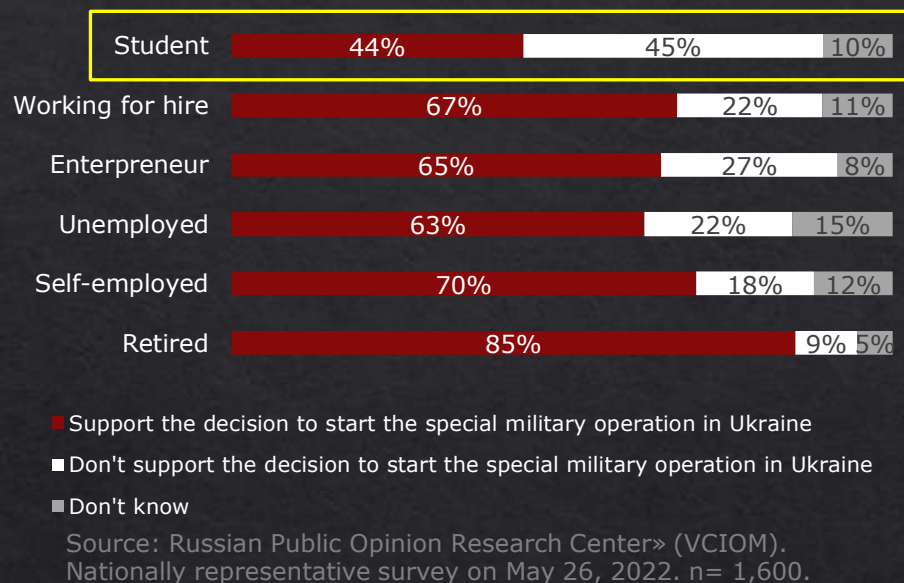


Fig. 3. The support of the war in Ukraine by sector of employment



Source: Russian Field  
Nationally representative survey on May 2-5, 2022. n= 1,609.

# Russian Students during the War



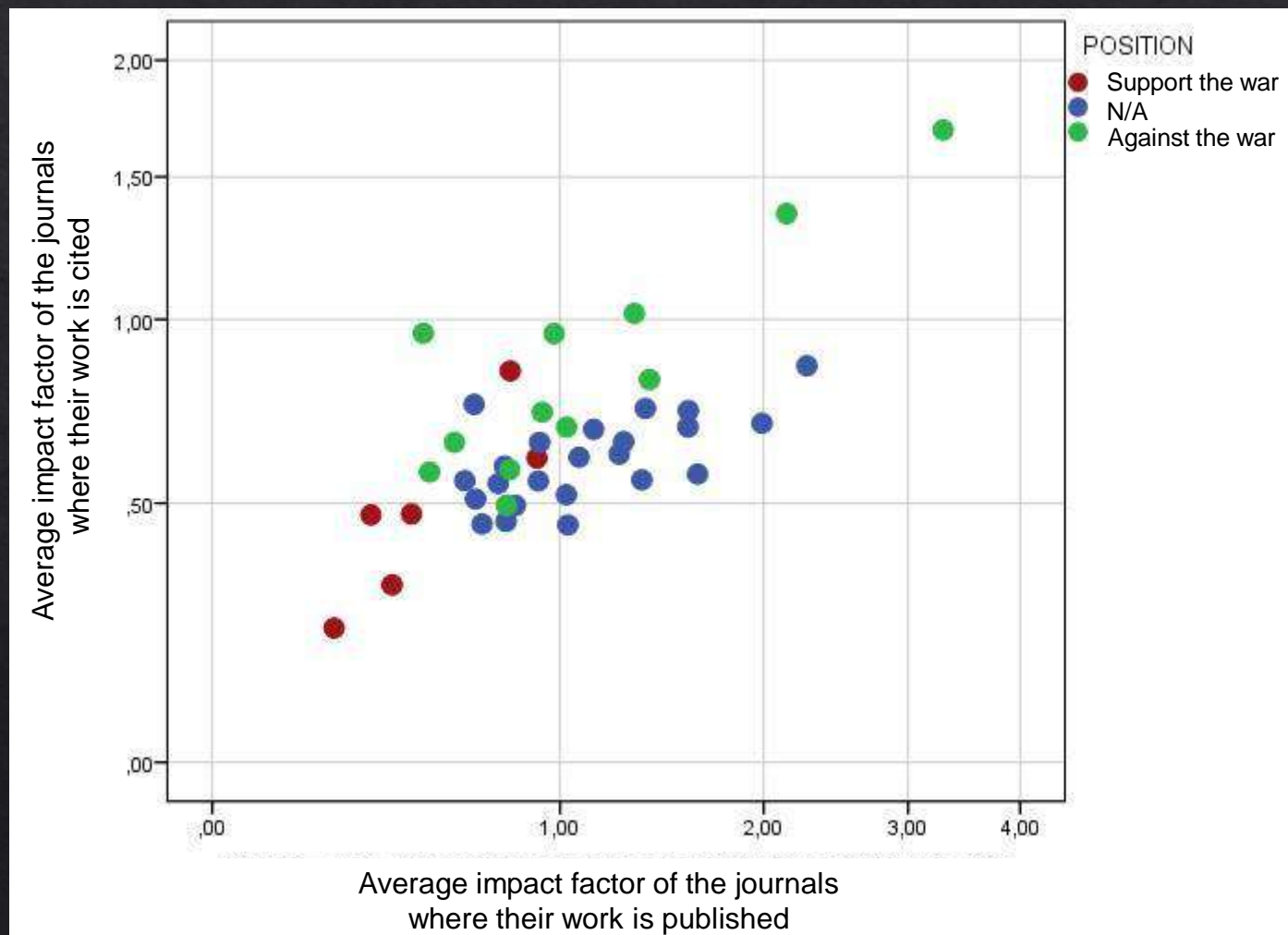
Source: [www.roundtable.io/](http://www.roundtable.io/)

- Less exposed to state propaganda
- High level of stress and anxiety
- Top-3 concerns:
  - The war will affect themselves and their relatives (49%)
  - They will face financial difficulties (37%)
  - Hardships and suffering of the people affected by the war (33%)
- Low level of political or anti-war mobilization
- Growing disparities in international mobility

# Russian Academics during the War

- Demotivated and perplexed (especially true for young and internationally connected scholars)
- Social sciences, humanities and law are at higher risk of nepotism/cronyism and ideologization
- Exodus of international and domestic faculty

Top-20 Russian scholars in economics and political science and their position on the war in Ukraine (Rostovtsev & Sokolov, 2022)



Source: Rostovtsev & Sokolov, 2022

## **How Russian Universities Support the War:**

- Military research
- Developing and promoting pro-war ideologies
- Institutional endorsements (Rectors' Union Letter)
- Repression of anti-war faculty and students

## **How Russian Universities Protest the War:**

- Anti-war letters signed by academics and students
- Sporadic anti-war initiatives by students and faculty
- One institutional and multiple personal anti-war statements from universities' leadership
- Academics and students leave universities in protest

# The Future of Russian Higher Education: Emerging Trends



- Rapid isolation
- Accelerating brain drain
- Decreased funding
- Diminishing autonomy and academic freedom
- Re-Sovietization



# Russian higher education after 24 February 2022

Anna Smolentseva

# Post-Soviet transformations

	Soviet period	Post-Soviet period
Purposes of HE: instrumental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• economic (training for national economy)</li> <li>• social (new Soviet person)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• economic (training for labour market)</li> </ul>
Academic culture: weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• instrumentationsation of knowledge;</li> <li>• Soviet free HE became a service in late Soviet time and laid foundations for further commodification and marketisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• instrumentalisation and commodification of knowledge (no intrinsic value), academic degrees, academic work;</li> <li>• priority of applied knowledge;</li> <li>• partial marketisation of the sector at intra-institutional level (dual-track tuition fee model)</li> </ul>
Academic autonomy: weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• education as an instrument of the state (a short period of late Soviet liberalization)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a short period of liberalization in 1990s gave rise to new initiatives, but all lost: HE has no agency, no power, no instruments of protection of academic values, culture, students, faculty</li> </ul>
Governance: top-down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soviet bureaucracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• neoliberal NPM/technocratic managerialism</li> </ul>

Source: Author

# Outcomes by 2022

- High participation system but question of quality and content
- High stratification of the HE system reproduces and amplifies existing social and cultural divisions
- Stratification and deprofessionalisation of the academic profession
- Education as an instrument of the state
- Instrumentalisation and commodification of knowledge: focus on applied research and consulting, academic papers market (dissertations, student papers, journal articles)
- Ongoing brain drain

# What happened after 24 February 2022

- ◇ 300+ (out of 700+) rectors sign letter of support; thousands of students, faculty, alumni sign anti-war letters
- ◇ Oppression and sacking of oppositional students and faculty
- ◇ Another wave of brain drain
- ◇ National and institutional anti-war student groups
- ◇ Suspension from EHEA (member 2003 – April 2022), end of Erasmus+ program
- ◇ Declaration of development of a unique educational system
- ◇ Sanctions create difficulties in research and education; international collaborations decrease
- ◇ Discontinuation of access to several international publications databases
- ◇ Academy of Sciences as a political actor: science needs relationships with ‘unfriendly’ countries as their share in global R&D is much higher (HE is silent or supporting the government)

ALL leads to weakening and insulation of the system

**BUT how has higher education contributed to current situation in the Russian society?**

# Lessons to be learnt from Russia

- ◆ Markets and economy are secondary to the social and political relations. Efficiency - technocratic managerialism - by itself also does not work.
- ◆ Economic perspective on a human being and social relations creates dangerous oversimplifications. Purposes of HE are not purely economic but should be humanistic.
- ◆ Education and research should not be an instrument of the state. Academic culture, academic values, academic freedom, academic autonomy, academic collegiality (not competition) are vital.
- ◆ Knowledge and academic work have an intrinsic value. They are not a commodity for sale, they are not instrumental.
- ◆ Higher education and research can only be open and international.
- ◆ Marginalisation of the academic profession + commodification of knowledge + underfunding of education and research + stratification of HE + poor quality of secondary education = not a good HE system
- ◆ Anything is possible but needs time and supportive environment