

Reconceptualizing Regional Geopolitics in Global Higher Education: The East-West Intersections of Higher Learning in the Context of the Ukrainian Crisis



Prof. Anatoly V. OLEKSIYENKO

Centre for Higher Education Leadership and Policy Studies

The Education University of Hong Kong

anatoly@eduhk.hk



Presented on 25 March 2024

UCL – IoE Faculty of Education and Society
Conference

“Rethinking the Geopolitics of Higher Education”



- Investigate the impact of geopolitics on international academic relations;
- Explore the complexities and limitations of university manifestations of transnational solidarity in the times of war and terror;
- Elaborate on geopolitical forces affecting knowledge production within the context of super-complex cultural and political legacies affecting societies and universities in crises.

PREMISES

- “it is important to **distinguish between solidarity and compassion** and to be aware that humanitarianism is less an analytical category than **a context-dependent, social and political argument of historical actors**” (Lohr, 2014:235)
- “Building solidarity demands **laborious reflection on the vicissitudes of intimacy and indifference that move or immobilize us as political subjects.**” (Korkman, 2022:162)
- “a starting point is to admit transnational solidarity demands **labor from allies**” (Korkman, 2022:169)
- “..solidary actions are often related to **struggles for a collective goal, affective mobilization and the creation of a shared value-horizon** (Bayertz, 1998a; Della Porta, 2018; Honneth, 1992, p. 208; Lynch & Kalaitzake, 2020)” (Kneuer et al. 2022: 370)
- “As Michael Geyer has put it, **«knowledge regimes»** do not have «the same effect» everywhere but create various spatial regimes of science and knowledge” (Lohr, 2014:244-245)

PREMISES

“The appeal to human solidarity, as well as to the related moral idea of common interests of humanity, is meant to bridge **the gap between universal and particular moral appeals. Solidarity involves the linking of individuals by a common bond of fellow feeling and reciprocity of attitude.** If one feels connected to another through common interests, then one also will tend to support the other similarly to how one would want oneself supported. In particular, there will be **a close association between self-defense and defense of the other with whom one is bound in solidarity.**”

(May, 2007:198)

STUDY

- **Case of Ukraine: Higher Education and War**

- Russia's annexation of Crimea and invasion of Eastern Ukraine – 2014
- Full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Armed Forces on 22 February 2022
- Genocidal war (Russian president and governmental officials denying Ukrainian existence, identity, agency) – past two years
- Acts of transnational solidarity against the aggressor-state

- **Focus: Solidarity Under Scrutiny**

- How do universities express transnational solidarity to their counterparts in war zones?
- Does geopolitics play a role in how universities reach out and help others?

“...in international criminal law, at least since the time of the Nuremberg trials, **only waging aggressive war is seen as unjustified waging of war. What makes a war aggressive is an unprovoked attack by one State against another.**”

(May, 2007:185-186)

STUDY

- **Methods**

- Review and analysis of textual and graphic manifestations of transnational solidarity on flagship university websites in Poland, Czechia, Kazakhstan, China, and Japan;
- Thematic analysis and classification of transnational solidarity manifestations;
- Juxtaposition and comparison of manifestations on a proxy scale measuring different levels of support and solidarity: i.e., HIGH; MEDIUM; LOW; NIL.

- **Limitations**

- Flagship universities - do they represent the whole system?
- How much does the institutional manifestation account for individual manifestations in the same university or system? To what extent are the corporate manifestations reflective of academic ones?
- Not all acts of transnational solidarity are expressed through websites. Yet, the institutional websites are significant discursive interfaces and symbolic representations in that regard.

SAMPLE

#UKRAINE ABOUT STRUCTURE RESEARCH ADMISSIONS STUDENTS INTERNATIONAL ALUMNI CAREERS

Tragedy at the Faculty of Arts, CU, on December 21, 2023
History of Charles University
University Management
Organizational Structure
Charles University Regulations
Facts and Figures
Press Releases
Strategic Plan
Major Research Areas
Development Strategies
Lifelong Learning
Accreditation Procedure
Diploma Recognition
Academic Calendar
CU Sustainable development
Equal Opportunities
Code of Ethics
Sexual and gender-based violence
CU Ombudsman
Single Digital Gateway

Charles University for Ukraine

I want to study at CU

I search a job at CU

I'm a student at Charles University

I'm an academic at Charles University

Events to support Ukraine

Assistance coordinators at faculties

I want to help / donate

Welcome!

Follow the links in the signpost above for more information on **scholarships**, possibilities to **pause your studies** or **Czech language courses** for foreigners. Here you will also find other forms of assistance that Charles University offers to all of you who have found yourselves in a difficult situation as a result of the war in Ukraine.

We believe that this is the least we can do as Charles University to offer a helping hand and alleviate the suffering that the Ukrainian people are currently experiencing.

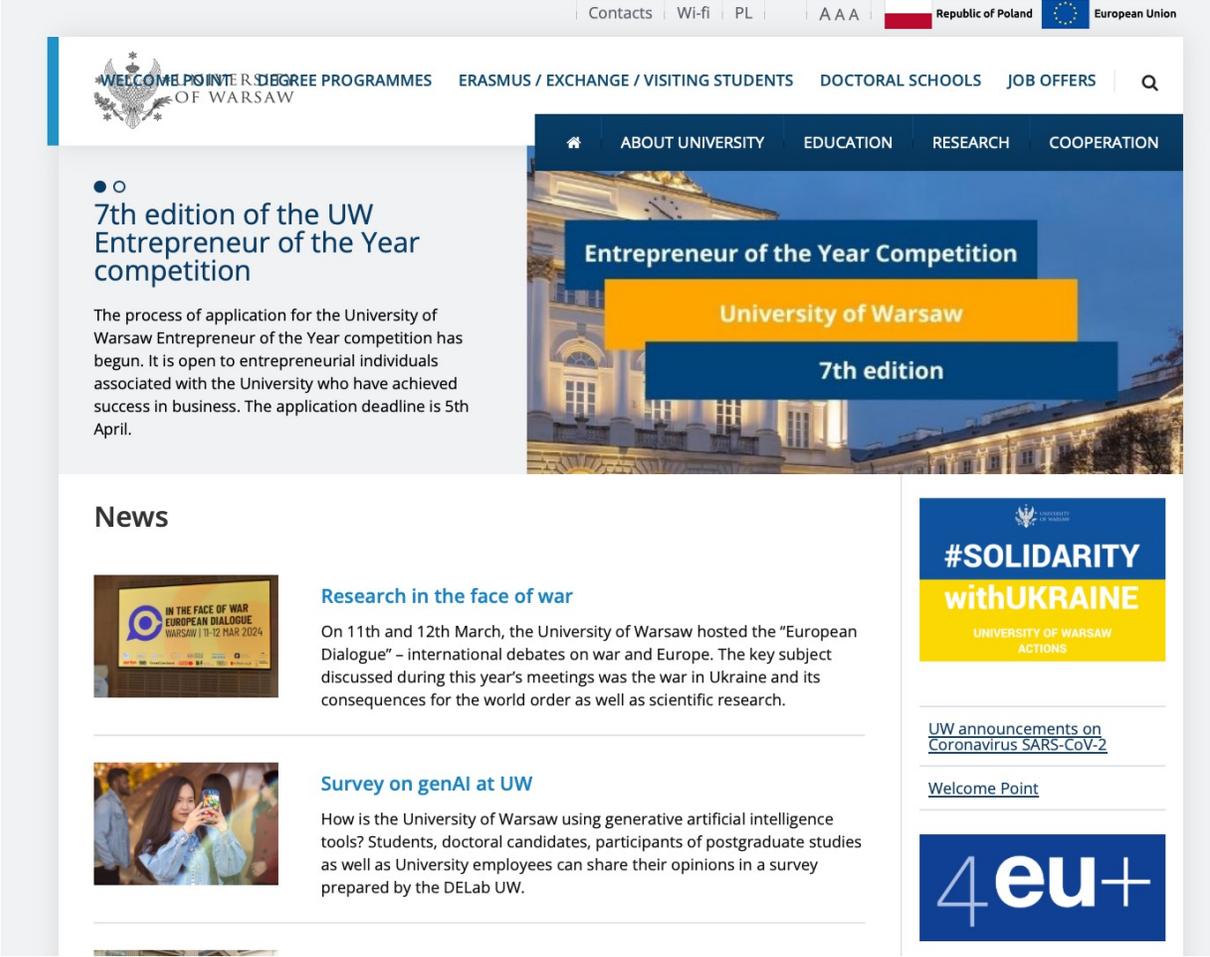
Stránky v češtině / українською мовою

Source:

<https://cuni.cz/UKEN-1548.html>

[Accessed: 14.03.2024]

SAMPLE



The screenshot shows the University of Warsaw website. At the top, there are navigation links for 'Contacts', 'Wi-fi', 'PL', 'A A A', 'Republic of Poland', and 'European Union'. Below this is the 'WELCOME POINT' logo and a menu with 'DEGREE PROGRAMMES', 'ERASMUS / EXCHANGE / VISITING STUDENTS', 'DOCTORAL SCHOOLS', and 'JOB OFFERS'. A search icon is also present. The main content area features a large banner for the '7th edition of the UW Entrepreneur of the Year competition'. The banner includes the text 'Entrepreneur of the Year Competition', 'University of Warsaw', and '7th edition'. Below the banner is a 'News' section with two articles: 'Research in the face of war' and 'Survey on genAI at UW'. On the right side, there is a blue and yellow banner for '#SOLIDARITY withUKRAINE' and a link for 'UW announcements on Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2'. At the bottom right, there is a 'Welcome Point' link and a '4eu+' logo.

Source:

<https://en.uw.edu.pl>

[Accessed on 14.03.2024]

SAMPLE

Source:

<https://en.uw.edu.pl/ukraine/>

[Accessed on 14.03.2024]



Students, doctoral candidates and employees of the University of Warsaw join actions to help the Ukrainian community. This support is provided both to refugees from Ukraine and to those who have long been members of our academic community. Below you will find tabs with information on the initiatives undertaken at our University. Information is updated on a regular basis.

News	Current information is published on the University's homepage. Important announcements and statements. News is arranged from the latest on and is updated regularly.
Social support	Support available to students and doctoral candidates at the University of Warsaw.
Free legal assistance	Legal assistance, provided free of charge by University units, as well as other organisations cooperating with the university.
Psychological assistance	Support groups, list of organisations providing free help, educational videos.
Translations	University support for translation Ukrainian-Polish-Ukrainian.
Educational activities	Open meetings, debates, webinars prepared by University experts.
Donations	Information on emergency collections to help provide humanitarian aid for Ukrainian refugees, organised by the UW units.
Agency support for the employment of researchers from Ukraine.	



Submission of the initiative

Any information on the initiatives undertaken by the UW students, doctoral candidates and employees should be reported via [media\(at\)uw.edu.pl](mailto:media(at)uw.edu.pl). Updates about the current actions are provided on the UW website regularly.

SAMPLE

AsiaGlobal Voices

Trending Opinions From Across the Region

Countries/Regions Issues

AsiaGlobal Voices is a curated feed of summaries of opinion articles, columns and editorials published in local languages in media from across Asia.

The publication of AsiaGlobal Voices summaries does not indicate any endorsement by the Asia Global Institute or AsiaGlobal Online of the opinions expressed in them.



SOUTH KOREA

Wednesday, March 9, 2022



The Ukraine War is a Tragedy That Could Have Been Avoided

Moon Chung-in, Chairman, Sejong Institute, in *Hankyoreh* (March 6, 2022)

Summary by Alejandro Reyes (Photo credit: President of Ukraine)

The primary cause of the war in Ukraine is the military adventurism and the victim mentality of a cold-blooded dictator. But can the US and the West be completely absolved of responsibility?

Harvard University scholar Stephen Walt had predicted that the US and the West's aggressive values-based foreign policy could provoke Russia to invade Ukraine. Walt said that while security reasons were given for the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) eastward, in reality, it was oriented toward spreading the values of



Ease Tensions in the South China Sea by Adopting Cooperative Mechanisms

Wednesday, August 9, 2023

The recent altercation in the South China Sea between Chinese and Philippine vessels underscores the need for science diplomacy and cooperation in fisheries management

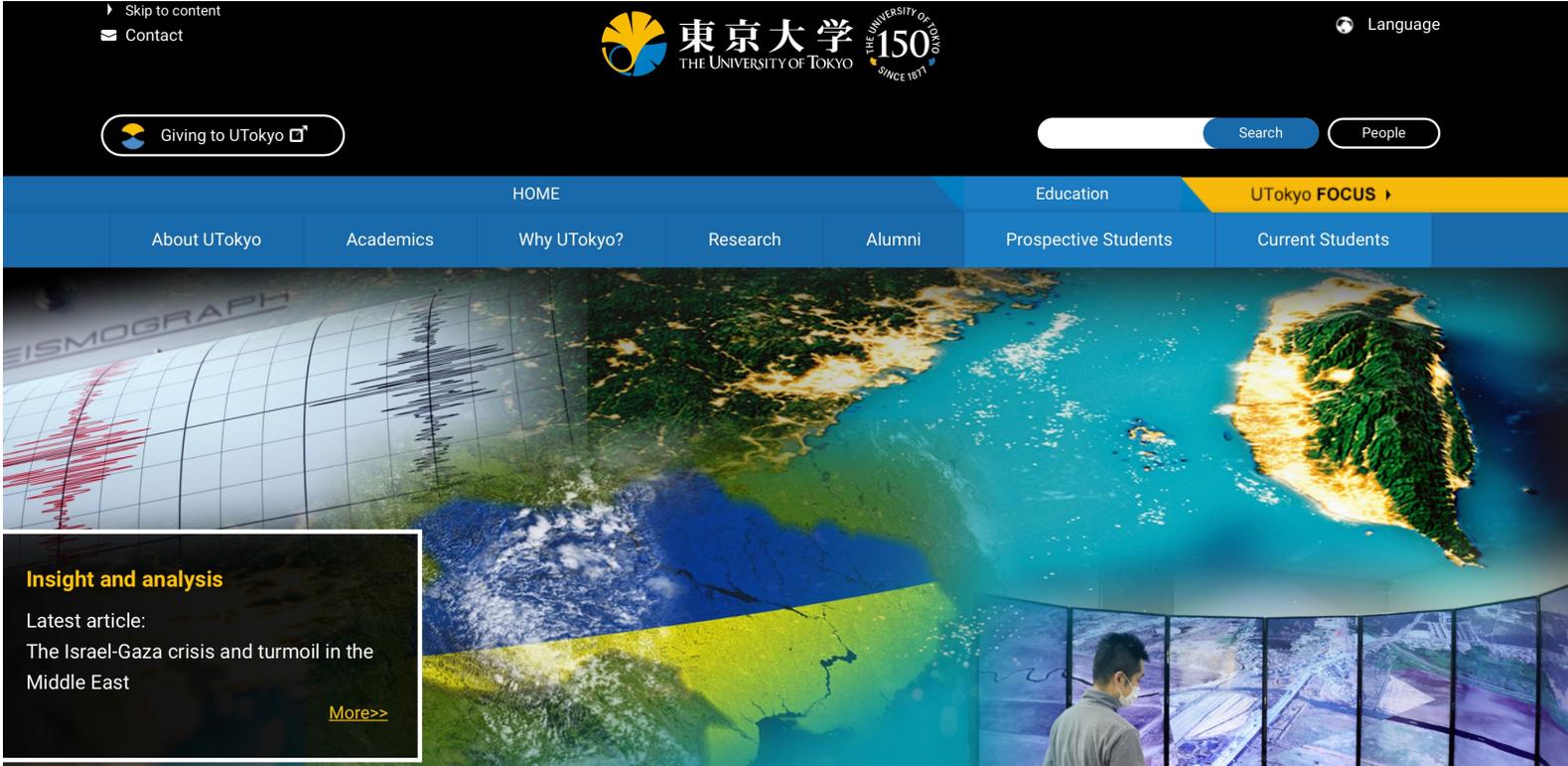


Source:

<https://www.asiaglobalonline.hku.hk/asia-global-voices/ukraine-war-tragedy-could-have-been-avoided?page=34>

[Accessed on 14.03.2024]

SAMPLE



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the University of Tokyo website. It includes a search bar, a 'People' button, and a 'Language' dropdown. The main navigation menu is divided into 'HOME', 'Education', and 'UTokyo FOCUS'. The 'UTokyo FOCUS' menu is expanded, showing sub-items: 'About UTokyo', 'Academics', 'Why UTokyo?', 'Research', 'Alumni', 'Prospective Students', and 'Current Students'. The main content area features a large image of a globe with a seismic graph overlay. A text box in the bottom left corner of the main content area contains the following text:

Insight and analysis
Latest article:
The Israel-Gaza crisis and turmoil in the
Middle East
[More>>](#)

Source:
<https://www.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/>
[Accessed on 16.03.2024]

SAMPLE



Image: iStock

Join us on **Facebook**
Follow us on **Twitter**

Related Links

CHINA-UKRAINE

Academic dissent emerges on war in Ukraine but is censored

Yojana Sharma 09 March 2022

 Share  Post  Share 39

As China steers an ambiguous path on Ukraine – refusing to condemn Russian aggression yet supporting Ukraine’s right to exist – Chinese academic dissent is emerging against the official government line, albeit quickly censored.

At the same time academics in China are scrambling to understand the fast-changing international landscape, with restrictions on international academic contacts still in place.

Source:
<https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20220309155414980>
[Accessed on 16.03.2024]

The letter, signed by Nanjing University’s Sun Jiang, Peking University’s Wang Lixin, Hong Kong University’s Xu Guoqi, Tsinghua University’s Zhong Weimin, and Fudan University’s Chen Yan, described the Russian invasion as a “war that began in the dark”, and for an immediate end to the fighting.

“We emphatically call on the Russian government and President [Vladimir] Putin to stop the war and resolve any dispute through negotiations,” it said, despite Beijing’s ban on airing views on Russia in Ukraine, outlined in instructions from the government in late February.

RESULTS (PRELIM.)

University	Manifestation examples
Charles U (Czechia)	Rector's directives (3/13): Fee relief for Ukrainian students; provision of funding for CU researchers working in Ukraine; extension of inter-institutional agreements
Warsaw U (Poland)	Ukraine: front page solidarity expression; practical guidance: social support; free legal advice; psychological assistance; translations; educational activities; donations; university job offers
Nazarbayev U (QZQ)	Nothing on Ukraine or Russia; except for ref. to Russian in the department of languages.
HKU (China)	Asia Global Institute: analytical reviews and publications on Ukraine-Russia war; "a cold-blooded dictator" response to the spread of "the values of freedom and democracy" vs. "NATO expansion"
National Taiwan U (China)	Faculty of law discussing crimes prosecution in Ukraine; mentioning of students affected by the war.
Peking U (China)	Seminars by Stanford Centre or Institute of International and Strategic Studies.
Tokyo U (Japan)	President's statement about the war; graphic symbols in support of Ukraine; analytical seminars; "emergency relief program for scholars and students at risk following the invasion of Ukraine by Russia"; financial support

Note: review of institutional websites took place between 15 November 2023 and 15 March 2024

RESULTS (PRELIM.)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Charles U (Czechia)	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Warsaw U (Poland)	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH	HIGH
Nazarbayev U (Qazaqstan)	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
HKU (China)	LOW	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
National Taiwan U (China)	LOW	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	LOW
Peking U (China)	MED	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	0.0
Tokyo U (Japan)	HIGH	HIGH	LOW	NIL	HIGH	NIL

Note: Institutional web-based manifestations: (1) (inter-)disciplinary analytics; (2) social/financial support to refugees and scholars; (3) fee-waivers for students; (4) donations; (5) symbolic manifestations of solidarity; (6) re-instatement of inter-institutional collaborations and student exchanges.

DISCUSSION

- The university is **a geopolitical place** (see more in O'Brien, 2022);
- Its relations and narratives are part of **a conceptual (as much as physical) geography of economic dependencies, cultural legacies, and security concerns** (previously discussed by Chankseliani 2018; Oleksiyenko, Shchepetylnykova and Furiv, 2023);
- **Variances in degrees of institutional manifestations** of solidarity and support in times of crises (Oleksiyenko, 2023);
- **Discursive solidarity in institutional media** can be a useful source for understanding geopolitics in global higher education; yet, the institutional manifestations do not represent a full spectrum of solidarity discourse;
- For globally-engaged universities, **openly manifesting university positions** to local and international stakeholders becomes important in the post-neoliberal times.

REFERENCES

- Chankseliani, M.** (2018). The politics of student mobility: Links between outbound student flows and the democratic development of post-Soviet Eurasia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 62, 281-288.
- Kneuer, M. Corsten, M., Schammann, H., Kahle, P., Wallaschek, S., and Ziegler, F.** (2022). Claiming solidarity: A multi-level discursive reconstruction of solidarity. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 25 (3), 366-385.
- Korkman, Z. K.** (2022). Transnational solidarity? Academia and the politics of knowledge, translation, and (im) mobility. *Feminist Formations*, 34(1), 166-190.
- Löhr, I.** (2014). Solidarity and the academic community: the support networks for refugee scholars in the 1930s. *Journal of Modern European History*, 12(2), 231-246.
- May, L.** (2007). The International Community, Solidarity, and the Duty to Aid. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 38(1), 185-203.
- O'Brien, S.** (2022, December 15). Higher education and science: geopolitical tools or actors in their own right? King's College London, available at <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/higher-education-and-science-geopolitical-tools-or-actors-in-their-own-right>
- Oleksiyenko, A. V.** (2023). Geopolitical agendas and internationalization of post-soviet higher education: Discursive dilemmas in the realm of the prestige economy. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 102, 102857.
- Oleksiyenko, A., Shchepetylnykova, I., & Furiv, U.** (2023). Internationalization of higher education in tumultuous times: Transformative powers and problems in embattled Ukraine. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(5), 1103-1118.