CHAPTER 2

Internationalization, Globalization and Institutional Roles in the Face of Rising Nationalisms

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Introduction

For many years now, numerous countries, institutions, and individuals have invested in a commitment to the internationalization of higher education (HE), whether for economic/financial, political/ideological, or academic/intellectual reasons. More recently, those of us who have been so committed have felt a rising concern—one might even say a 'fear'—

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D. E. Neubauer et al. (eds.), *Contesting Globalization and Internationalization of Higher Education*,
International and Development Education,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-26230-3_2

over the appearance and strengthening of various forms and expressions of nationalism that run counter to the ideals and aspirations that commonly informed our commitment. Examples are legion and globally dispersed, but the 'Brexit' withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union and decisions by the Trump administrations to bar access to American institutions for individuals from specified Muslim countries are perhaps particularly pertinent for higher education, given the major role those two countries play in HE internationalization, notably in the international flows of students and academics. These nationalist trends have often fed on and been complemented by negative reactions in many countries—most recently and spectacularly the USA and parts of Europe—to upticks in migration triggered by those fleeing unwanted and unsafe conditions in their own countries, and (again with the USA as exemplar) a focused hostility toward issues embedded within international trade. Leading scholars of international HE, Philip Altbach and Hans de Wit, have expressed these fears of a threat to HE internationalization in various papers. In 2015, they noted the challenge posed by increased 'nationalist, religious and ideological conflicts' to 'the original ideas international cooperation and exchange in higher education' (p. 5), while in 2017 they graphically drew on Marx's terminology of a stalking 'spectre,' this time taking the form of 'xenophobic nationalism' haunting international higher education. They have repeatedly expressed the fear that many of us must feel that these nationalist movements could put an end to HE internationalism or at a lesser remove limit or distort the international options available within the broader HE community, coming as they do in what many had previously viewed as a significant and sustainable trajectory toward a creative and transformative period in the overall history of HE, but which must now undergo major 'rethinking' (Altbach and de Wit 2015, 2017, 2018).

Within the academic community, and particularly those parts of this community which have been most deeply committed to an internationalist perspective in HE, two modal responses have emerged from this apparent contest of views and orientations. One has been an all-too understandable—if limited—concern by individuals and by institutions as a whole for their very livelihoods and continued existence—a phenomenon that can present itself as yet another form of academic retrenchment. This could be presented as a pragmatic or 'realist' position that accepts the changing global context and the limited real power afforded to HE institutions and then seeks to 'make the best of it' in order to preserve institutional core business, where 'business' is the key word. The other response might

be characterized as 'the intellectual response,' a quite typical (and many would regard fitting) effort to place these events within understandable, and optimally critical, frameworks that allow further explication, analysis, and understanding to take place. Interestingly, we might present this as the 'traditional'—and, therefore, more conservative—position on the social role of HE institutions and their academic staff. Expressed in this way, the two positions appear as manifestations of a wider contest over the role and purpose of HE within contemporary society.

At this point, it is important to make a distinction between national state involvement in the direction and regulation of HE and the current rise of 'nationalism' as a state political and cultural orientation. Usher (2017) points out how, historically, universities have been co-opted into the project of building nation-states, a process he contrasts with an even earlier, perhaps over-idealized, age of university autonomy. In view of the parallels we draw below between aspects of the current state of the world and those pertaining in the late nineteenth century, it is interesting that Usher uses the emergence of a unified Germany in that era as a paradigmatic example of this linkage between HE development and nation-state construction concludes that: 'The research university is thus *at best* an instrument of the nation-state, and more often than not one of nationalism as well' (Usher, p. 1). We would argue that, as his analysis actually suggests, this relationship is historically contingent. The observation that the current rise in support for nationalist-populist political movements is often explained as a 'reaction' to preceding trends of globalization-internationalism reveals that positioning options remain contested and open.

The pitting of these seemingly polar positions may lead to an eventual 'settlement' of the contest with one side winning and the other losing, or at least a shift in the balance of institutional power between them. Various outcomes may be predicted, dependent on the particular balance achieved, leading to an overall reconstituting of many aspects of the HE community, or its fragmentation, that in the end could cost many their livelihoods. This concern appears to exist in observable contexts in which participants seek first and foremost to frame, describe, and analyze this 'confrontation' in terms of its intellectual dimensions and consequences (Usher 2017). Assuming the putative accuracy of framing this contest as such—that is, as 'separable positions'—appears to be a distressing situation in and of itself. However, the effort proceeds, 'sorting out' this seeming confrontation between nationalism and internationalism as it is emerging within HE

contexts, increasingly appears to be a continuing task for the whole of the HE community, both broadly and narrowly conceived.

Reprising 'International'

Conventional notions of 'international' as both a noun and adjective have a comfortable and familiar sense to them, ready partners as it were within everyday and even academic 'speech.' But, with a bit of closer inspection, one finds a distressing and repeated ambiguity to notions of the international. To take just two examples, Theresa May, the British Prime Minister, has described Britain as being 'profoundly internationalist' in spite of the widely held perception to the contrary signified by Britain's withdrawal from Brexit (World Economic Forum 2017). Another familiar usage comes from the influential work of Jane Knight (2004, p. 11) in which she defines HE internationalization in terms of introducing 'the international, the multicultural, or the global' into all aspects of university life. What, we might ask ourselves, could be 'wrong' with that? We ask the reader to think about a range of events, or organizations, or literally anything accepted within common usage as 'international' and ask whether these diverse events or contexts share a common meaning—and if so, what is it?

We approach an 'answer' to our own query by exploring the emergence and usage of notions of internationalization and globalization and the multiple meanings they have acquired in diverse usage over an extended period of time. What are the implications for our understanding of the current intersect between these two important 'global forces,' for example, when placed in the complex contexts as developed differentially by Rowe (2005), Ferguson (2009), or Gills (2001), which point to a distinctive former era of globalization, namely that at the beginning of the nineteenth century and well into the following twentieth (or in Gills case, well before that!). Within these earlier contexts, one would find eras of booming international trade, overall with almost as large a contribution to their own GDP as the current one. Within the nineteenth century period, in particular we find the societies of major global actors being driven by new technologies which (among other things) allowed for a much greater mobility of goods, finance (including foreign direct investment—FDI), and people—proportionately an even greater proportion of the global population than currently. Searching a bit further, we would find that the core belief system having come into vogue in the nineteenth-century occurrence was that of economic/political liberalism. Overall, people and countries were collectively motivated by the

theory that international trade led to international interdependence, which in turn led to international order, which led to peace.

So, we would ask ourselves: What happened? The answer, of course, is that two world wars happened, separated by a massive economic depression—so massive in fact that it would go down in modern world history as 'The Great Depression.' To gain some perspective on the current usages and views of internationalism, it is mindful to ask ourselves: Where did the theory go wrong?

One useful place to start is with two well-known scholars of globalization, David Rowe (2005) and Joseph E. Stiglitz (2016). Within these two powerful depictions of the current era, we find a repeated tale of identity loss/threat, feelings of disempowerment, and a loss of status and self-esteem—much the 'social cocktail' that many contemporary scholars find fueling the 'Trump phenomenon' (Williams 2017) and other 'anti-liberal' social responses in various countries.[1] Accompanying these 'outcries,' directed at what is widely perceived as 'excessive internationalism,' we observe in many countries, most specifically those commonly viewed at the forefront of contemporary globalization, a desire to return to a putative national 'golden age,' e.g., *Make America Great Again!*, restore traditional British values, the China dream—in short—echoes of the past in the present.

Having digested all of the foregoing, one might still want to ask: What does all of this have to do with 'international'? One response is that the current emphasis on 'international' is a form of response to globalization, in whatever manner people perceive it, but often with a sense that as a process, it in some way 'stands above' nations and what they have come to mean—most importantly to those who look to that identification. Globalization in this view is often viewed as outside conventional and accepted notions of restraint and character—a term that for many calls forth a process that is proceeding recklessly and without measure or control. Or, framed somewhat differently, one can suggest that the ideological drivers of globalization in turn also influence the ideological interpretations of the international or internationalization. We may wish to ask in this regard after some notion of historical continuity: Are these notions and attributes of the international essentially what they also meant in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries? What, let us ask, were some of the less fortunate connotations of internationalism in that period, to wit: national hubris, cultural arrogance, racist hierarchies, the 'white man's burden,' colonialism…economic liberalism? What, we may ask again, has

been bundled together into this hodge-podge of meanings and implications to which we may have indiscriminately added such 'vectored' terms as neoliberalism, markets, and even democracy itself. The essential issue in all of this conjecture is what we mean and can mean by the language we use in our contemporary contexts and what can and does this imply both for how we seek conceptual clarification within HE contexts and where universities come to play a significant and defensible role in this overall tangle of discourse(s).

Here, we can raise a small, but important set of questions about the varied and emerging roles of HE. First maybe the range of implications touched off by prevailing notions of mass versus elite education. On the one hand, any number of commentators have opined on both the value and implications of this development, especially when placed (as it perhaps most often is) within the context of viewing the massification of HE as being essential to broadening the democratic capacities of societies, but also as essential to maintaining a current and competitive posture as a nation within the realities of emergent, technologically driven societies. Indeed, in what is perceived as an increasingly permeable global market for talent, some such as Michaels et al. (2001) have gone so far as to see this as a 'global war for talent'—with the inescapable implication that a nation either competes effectively in such a context or loses. Universities, as key producers of both human 'talent' and 'marketable' new knowledge, have found themselves recruited into this 'war.' This induction has been made easier to the point of inevitability by a series of changes in HE policy and management environments that includes: massification more-or-less forcing the need for user fees where they did not exist before, and the subsequent emergence of students as 'customers'; increased reliance on government funding and hence direction for research; closer links with business and industry and the commodification of 'intellectual property'; and the growth of 'new managerialism' in university governance, borrowed from the corporate world and with its culture and practices of 'accountability,' performance targets, and other increasingly bureaucratic control paraphernalia. Binding much of these trends together is that set of ideologies and practices covered by the all-embracing but difficult to define term 'neoliberalism' (Ball 2015, for example, but accounts are legion). In fitting with the influence of neoliberalism, the roles of the university have been relentlessly and not always so gradually modified. HE has increasingly come to be valued as a private rather than a public good, as a tool to enhance individual economic positioning through enhancing personal 'employability.' Collini opines that

as a result of these and other changes, the universities of Britain 'are now principally centres of scientific and technological research and, increasingly, of vocational and professional training' (2012, pp. 30–31). Although the United Kingdom might be seen as more willingly embracing neoliberalism than many other countries, these trends in HE are to be observed in many national systems.

Is it the case, we need to ask again, whether the current rationales and/or drivers of the current attitudes toward and practices in the internationalization of HE lie within these frameworks? If so, one might argue, much of what we do as academics has come to fall within the intent of providing HE graduates with the international communication skills perceived to be required for enhanced employability. Or…to suggest even more instrumental purposes served by these HE processes, is the move toward 'the international' currently fueled primarily by the need to recruit such students to meet financial shortfalls, to fill gaps in local skills provision, or to enhance global esteem and/or even as a means of projecting 'soft power'? Once again, all of these goals are readily identifiable in national systems and institutions, although some emphasized more than others in different contexts.

Within this complex and perhaps equally confused setting, it is appropriate in our view to raise the primary question of what the possibilities are for HE in what has become this highly instrumentalized context. Certainly, one response, admittedly conservative given the context outlined above, is to reaffirm the university's commitment to its traditional 'core business.' In our view, this consists both simply and importantly in a commitment to rigorous, unhampered, informed, critical study. Of necessity, this involves an equal commitment to what continues to be held as 'the disciplines' essential to a liberal education. Within this received notion, we see a justly inherited obligation to 'speak truth to power' especially in the sense of allowing critical inquiry to follow its course(s) wherever it (they) lead. In this received view of the liberal arts tradition, we see equally embedded the effort to develop throughout such institutions and all their participants the notion of a social conscience and a sense of purpose beyond the production of a 'disciplined' workforce and marketable technology. This course is undergirded, importantly and perhaps irreducibly, by the notion that a core purpose of such an education is the broadening of minds, not their limitation through specialization. And, given the many received notions of how HE is required to 'adapt' to the current many and varied contexts of

globalization, one can ask whether the emphasis on this role in and for HE may in effect constitute a new and urgent role for the liberal arts.

In this regard, let us briefly quote Robert DiNapoli (2017) in his comment to an article by Tom Abeles on the necessary conjunction of HE and gaining access to work.

> Frankly, it is time that universities started to have more agency in leading the world instead of being led in a fast race towards self-destruction. This discourse about 'change' and the 'future' is tiring, often simply empty rhetoric used by managers to impose 'change'. And it robs academic life of its vital lymph: thinking time! Is the latter not a good to be pursued in everybody's interest, instead of racing at an ever-increasing pace towards ways of life whose dubious ethos is now imposed onto universities? Shouldn't we perhaps educate society to think more and more effectively?

It is both worthwhile and perhaps our obligation at this point in our history to ask ourselves a fundamental question, namely what 'space' have we been left with as HE practitioners to address the kinds of issues that surround our notions of 'the international' and the role of international students within the broader purview of HE? Do we, for example, see this latest 'nationalist turn' primarily as presenting a recruitment challenge to be met with greater marketing cunning to maintain our institutional income and not lose out to rising competition, as Marguerite Dennis (2017), for example, skillfully advises us to do? As an experienced university administrator, she is perhaps obliged to do so, but we wonder what space remains for us in our (traditional?) role as academics to raise and perhaps to challenge the underlying nationalist ideologies that are driving the current situation she addresses—perhaps, indeed, whether we are discouraged from doing so for fear of appearing too radical in questioning or challenging political and ideological positions, and thereby potentially jeopardizing our position in the market for international students. Earlier definitions of HE internationalization often included the comment that it could be regarded as a 'response' to globalization. We might ask whether this response has turned out to be more of a 'reaction,' determined by imperatives other than those that would constitute the critical and analytical 'response' of academia in its most distinctive role. On the other hand, we might argue that we should go beyond this and turn our critiques into something more active, taking a position and fighting a 'war' of our own choosing rather than one in which we may have been forced to participate against our professional instincts.

If the world is indeed facing the sort of existential crisis that we suggested in our comparison with the early twentieth century, but also crises associated with the rejection of scientific research such as that on climate change, then it is our duty in universities as providers of public goods rather than merely personal or commercial goods to take an action.

Finally, we wish to 'turn the discourse on its side' (as it were!). Where in fact are *international students* within this overall consideration and reconsideration of contemporary internationalism? The data tell us that for many years, despite the overall growth in their numbers (an average annual increase of 5.5% since 1999, reaching over 5 million by 2016—UIS 2019), they remain a very small portion of our overall worldwide student bodies, something in the nature of 2%. Perhaps our concern within HE should be to promote a far broader familiarity with and sophistication about internationalization by making it available to a majority of our students. It seems to us that in that context raising issues within HE about the intersect(s) between globalization and internationalization can become a primary discourse within the whole of the HE experience for all concerned.

Note

1. See, for example, Uuriintuya Batsaikhan and Zsolt Darvas (2017) for the point of view that has Europeans rediscovering the virtues of continued globalization.

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