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[International higher education today and tomorrow: British Council TNE conference, Manchester, 12 November 2024]

Thank you for that generous welcome. I am honoured to speak today. It is a pleasure to be with you all. It is always a pleasure to join a British Council event. Thank you to the British Council for engaging me and especially to Nishat and Sankalita who have facilitated my participation.

[International higher education today and tomorrow – contents slide]

I have the awesome challenge of providing you with an overview of the global context, prior to getting down to the serious business of exploring the issues specific to TNE. It is an awesome challenge because, well, it's complicated, and the setting for international education is changing so quickly. Every election (and we've just had a big one), and every unforeseen pandemic or extreme weather event, shifts the conditions for education and mobility around. I'm not going to try to predict the future, which never goes well. I will confine myself with the present, which is hard enough. These are my headings – following the introductory thoughts about the roots of our internationalism - multipolarity, deglobalization, assertive governments, destabilised people mobility in higher education, China/US geopolitics. I close with two constructive ways forward, two common challenges that if tackled could make internationalisation better.

[1. We are always international]

We in higher education are always international. But not *only* international. Higher education has a dual spatiality. It lives in two different kinds of space at the same time. On one hand it is local, city-based and national. On the other hand, it is international and global. It is place-bound, grounded in cities and nations. It is also universal, in the forms taken by knowledge, and in its practical reach. Its knowledge and people move freely across national borders. It

combines two heterogeneous missions, two identities. We stitch them together and pretend it's seamless, but the combination always has to be worked on.

[1. We are always international – with three extra universities in pictures]
This dual spatiality is not new. Graduates from the Imperial academies in China, the first higher education institutions, moved all over the country. Mobility was integral to the great scholarly Buddhist monasteries of Northern India, such as Taxila, Vikramashila, and Nalanda, that flourished between 500 BCE and 1200 CE, with visiting scholars and students from all over Asia. Mobility was part of the scholarly madrasses attached to mosques at Damascus, Cordoba and other centres in the medieval time, two of which are the oldest higher education institutions in continuous existence. And dual spatiality was also part of the early European universities.

[Local/national and global]
The first European university was Bologna in Italy in 1088 CE, followed, among those still going, by Paris in France, Oxford and Cambridge in England, and Salamanca in Spain. They were founded by Papal charters in a Catholic Church with European reach. Latin was the shared language, knowledge was in universal terms, and students and teachers could go anywhere. Teaching was led by 'Masters', faculty with a qualification. When the University of Toulouse opened in France in 1229 the Papal decree stated that Masters could teach in any other university without further examination. This normalised international mobility.

While the universities began in the church, they were not wholly controlled by the church. They were also connected to city authorities, and national monarchs. And they were also legally incorporated, with partial autonomy from all of the church, city and state. Their autonomy from the local authorities and from the monarchy, the nation-state, was strengthened by their universality and mobility, their other identity. Along with legal incorporation, mobility and universality grounded the partial autonomy of European universities on which

von Humboldt built with his blueprint for the University of Berlin in 1810, which was *the* shaping moment in the evolution of the research university form of institution. 66 years later the German research university spread to the United States at Johns Hopkins, and from there to the rest of the world.

[World growth of tertiary enrolment: 1970-2022]

The last thirty years have seen tremendous growth in educational participation on the world scale. The worldwide gross tertiary enrolment ratio has expanded from 15 per cent in 1994 to 42 per cent in 2022 – we are approaching a level of one young person in every two. Participation has grown rapidly in many countries and lifted in all world regions, especially East Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. The ratio has reached 72 per cent in China and 33 per cent in India. India aims for 50 per cent by 2035. The growing institutional infrastructure is a platform for not just education but research.

[Total cross border/foreign tertiary students]

The last three decades have also seen a tremendous expansion in the global and international dimensions of educational activity. The number of students crossing the border for education of a year or more has increased by more than 5 per cent a year and is approaching seven million. There has been even more spectacular growth of TNE. The Internet has opened the online dimension of learning and certification, ranging from MOOCs to doctoral programmes. As we all know, in online education the sky is the limit. A networked global science system has formed, via the Internet, and in the natural science based disciplines the work in the global journals leads much of the local and national activity. Science papers too have grown by more than 5 per cent a year and now exceed three million, and almost one in every four have international co-authors. And science systems have spread to many more countries. This brings me to multi-polarity.

[2. Global multipolarity]

Power and capability in human society is becoming more widely dispersed. To put it simply, the Euro-American West no longer controls the world, though not everyone in the West yet realises this. This is true in political economy, and in the fact of independent nation states, and becoming true of higher education and research science. The multipolar world, the post-Imperial world, is a tremendously positive development. It gives us more resources to deal with the climate-nature emergency – if we can cooperate effectively.

[The worldwide colonisation]

Let's take the multipolarity story from the beginning. The beginning is the uni-polarity that was colonialism. By 1910 Europe and the United States had controlled, or strongly influenced, almost the whole of the earth's surface. There was a wave of political decolonisation after 1945, though the newly independent countries often lacked full national agency. In the last thirty years state building all over the world has strengthened, though this process has yet to reach every country. And in the last twenty years there has been an explosive growth and spread of higher education and national science systems

[The multi-polar higher education world]

Science was once the preserve of the Anglosphere, Europe and Japan. Not any longer. More than 70 countries now have their own science systems, meaning they conduct scientific investigations, train their own doctoral students in at least some disciplines, and can effectively access global science. As the graph shows, the main growth in science papers has been China, in red, and the rest of the world, in yellow. The table on the right shows you the spectacular growth in the large non-Western science systems – China, now the number one producer of science, India, number three, South Korea, Brazil, Iran. And look at Indonesia, where science output rose from 400 to 32,000 in only 19 years.

[National science systems where *global science output grew slower* than world average rate of 5.38% per year}

Let me show you two charts that give you the full world overview. The first shows slow growing science systems. The second is fast growing science systems. The charts work like this. Only nations producing more than 5000 science papers in 2022 are included. The size of the ball is output in 2022. The US is largest here. The horizontal axis is national income per person, material resources. The vertical axis is the *annual average rate of growth* of science output – which for all the national science systems in this chart is below the world average of 5.38% a year. Mature research systems grow more slowly. These are countries with established research h at the beginning of the period, 2003. The foundational Western science countries. They all have per capita incomes above the world average except Ukraine.

[National science systems where *global science output grew faster* than world average rate of 5.38% per year}

Now let's look at the faster growing science systems. Relatively new science countries. Some have had spectacular annual growth, such as Iraq, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, Saudia Arabia. Let me point out two more things about this chart. First, the new science countries now produce almost as much science as the old science countries. Second, look at the dotted line showing world average income per person. Half of these new science countries have national incomes below the world average .Some are quite poor, such as Ethiopia. Science has spread to many middle income countries and some low income countries. Multi polarity in the economy, politics, higher education and research is not just about countries with political economies on the European scale and beyond. It is also about the ever growing group of middle countries.

[China's universities now lead in STEM research]

And multipolarity is also about the rise of China. The table on the left shows the world's top 14 universities in the production of high citation science in all fields. Eight of those universities are from China. Three are from the US, including Harvard which is still world number one because of its medical research, two from UK and one from Canada. China has risen very quickly.

Seven years ago it had no universities in this table, which was mostly US universities. China's main strength is in STEM, as you can see in the table on the right. The table for maths and computing research is similar, except that MIT is replaced by Nanyang University of Technology from Singapore. In other fields, the Anglosphere still dominates research on biomedicine and health sciences, but China now has three of the world's top 14. Last year it had none.

[3. Deglobalisation in the West]

The expansion of economic and educational capacity across the world has been fostered by economic and cultural globalisation, meaning convergence and integration at world level. Initially global free trade and the Internet were American led. But by the mid 2010s it was clear that US attitudes to globalisation were changing. There has been a flip in American values and American policy from globalisation to deglobalisation, and much of the Euro-American West has followed the US. And I think that the rise of the non-West, pushing through the old barriers of colonisation and white supremacy, has been the key factor in generating anxiety in the West about globalisation.

[Deglobalisation moves]

Officially deglobalisation begins with the first Trump presidency's tariffs. But it wasn't just Trump. In economic terms, international trade is now less profitable for American capital, the role of multinationals has declined a little, and global supply chains and offshoring are now harder to sustain. In geo-political terms, there is the levelling out of Western and especially American supremacy. For example, in the US it is widely believed that China profited more from global openness than did than the US, so closure is in American interests. In political terms, there is opposition to economic openness in manufacturing districts hallowed out by automation and austerity. The 2024 elections in the UK and US were fought as a contest for those votes. Western governments now seem to put political factors ahead of economic factors more than they did before.

Pushback against globalisation is widespread in the West, though not the world as a whole. As you know, the pushback against globalisation is often expressed in terms of singular nativist identity, which is bad for culturally mixed populations, cosmopolitan higher education, and all kinds of cross-border mobility. The issue that concentrates and amplifies nativism is migration. Opposition to migration surged in Europe after the 2015 migration crisis, and has kept on the boil since. Tough migration regimes have been introduced in Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland, and we all know what Trump has promised to do. There is no statistical evidence that migration is increasing, or that the share of migrants who are refugees is increasing. It's the politics that have changed. And when Western governments want to secure statistical reductions in migration, the easy target is international students.

[4. Stronger nation-states]

The Western flip to deglobalisation, and the surge of populist nativism, are associated with a tendency to bounded nationalism – nations that pursue their own interests and security without regard for others, or the world as a whole. Many nations are also becoming more controlling in higher education and national science, which they see as tool of global competitiveness, and/or a danger to the state. In some countries government has moved into areas long seen as part of university autonomy, such as the curriculum in Florida. In Arizona a State Senate bill prohibits the use of public funds to address climate change and allows state residents to file lawsuits to enforce the prohibition. In the second Trump presidency the US universities will be targeted. American universities may undergo interventions that other countries have experienced.

[Destabilised student mobility]

In the West nativist politics, national security and geopolitics, and the reassertion of the nation-state, together have led to unprecedented interventions in international student mobility.

[Nativism reduces student mobility into the West]

Since Brexit both sides of politics in the UK have refused to support a new inward mobility scheme from Europe to replace Erasmus +, though the government the subsidises outward mobility by UK students. Both Netherlands and Denmark are concerned about the cost of inward EU student movement and the displacement of national language in English medium courses pitched to cross-border students. Denmark has reduced incoming international students. Norway has abolished its scholarship programme in the global South. In 2023 UK, Canada and Australia all announced unprecedented reductions in international student numbers despite the major financial problems this created for universities in all three countries. The political driver is resistance to migration in the electorate. Aas I said, international student programmes are a soft target for cuts.

[4. Geopolitics in research]

Then there is geopolitics, and the sad story of US-China. Partnerships between US and Chinese researchers have been the most productive in world science, in aggregate terms. Surveys show that researchers in both countries strongly want to maintain cooperation. But the number of joint papers is falling.

['New cold war' Decoupling in science and higher education]

In 2018 Trump introduced the China initiative, which was marked by aggressive and discriminatory investigations of scientists with joint appointments and projects, many of them American citizens of Chinese descent. There were 150 cases. All but a handful of the prosecutions failed, but the innocent parties were often damaged. A survey led by Jenny Lee at the University of Arizona found that 20 per cent of American citizen scientists of Chinese descent had broken ties with China after the China Initiative began, and 12 per cent of other American scientists. Visas to enter US are restricted, especially but not only in security sensitive areas. The Biden government stopped the China initiative but maintained the hostile environment, with continuing visa blockages, and also ongoing body searches and other border harassment of Chinese faculty and students holding valid visas at the point of their return to the US.

[Problems of a zero-sum approach in research]
In 2012 China had shared in 47 per cent of all of the US's internationally collaborative science papers. In 2022 it was 32 per cent. In February 2019 there were 1,219 scheduled direct plane flights between China and the US; in February this year there were 269 such flights. Contact is breaking down. The U.S. State Department has stepped up pressure on the EU and other Western countries to monitor, securitise and restrict their China ties. Collaboration is now hedged with extra layers of risk management, which vary by country. Hostility towards China is building in the UK government. Trump will be more aggressive than Biden. Fortunately, the non-Western world has not joined the decoupling movement. But it is harming higher education and science.

Governmental interventions that destabilise or limit international mobility and cooperation are especially problematic for higher education and science, because they threaten the global identity of higher education. They undermine its essential dual spatial character, its double mission, dragging it back towards a solely local and national mission. Autonomy and the double mission are interdependent, and if one is erodes it undermines the other.

[7. Issues in a challenging time]
We face challenges in international education. Deglobalisation in the Euro-American West, though fortunately not in the world as a whole. Nativist politics that disrupts cross-border mobility, though fortunately it is less disruptive of TNE. Global geo-politics that impinges on research collaboration involving China, though not every kind of research collaboration. A greater willingness of governments to intervene in autonomous educational matters and often to take decision that impair educational mobility and cooperation.

[**Secure rights-based people mobility in higher education; epistemic justice]**
On the other hand, we have a multi-polar global setting in which an increasing number of national education systems have built capacity and international

agency. This is takes the world further from the colonial era and strengthens our resources to cooperate, on the basis of equal cultural respect, on shared problems such as the climate-nature emergency, rising sea levels, biodiversity and habitat loss, food and water security, global health, and AI.

Can I suggest two domains where we might work together to achieve common outcomes? One is people mobility. We need to collectively devise protocols on the rights and protection of mobile person in education when they leave their countries of citizenship. The second is epistemic justice. Recognising knowledge in languages other than English, which is by far the largest part of knowledge.

[Epistemic justice: opening up knowledge]

English is first language of 4.7% of global population, and the second language of 13.5%. Putonghua and Spanish have more L1 speakers. There are other major languages, and Arabic is widely used in North Africa and West Asia. Yet in Web of Science and Scopus, the repositories of global science, 97% of papers are in English. This is seen as the sole 'universal' knowledge. This does not have to go on. We have the software that would allow every major journal to be published in multiple languages. And to translate all the important work done in languages other than English, including endogenous knowledges, into the English and the other major languages. The publishers have every reason to do this. It would expand their market share. Recognition of multi-lingual science and scholarship, consistent with the diverse and multi-polar world that we share, would be a giant step away from colonialism. Knowledge is power.

[Thank you for listening]

Thank you for listening, and I look forward to the discussion!