Institutional Agency in a World of Conflict: Reshaping International Student Flows during Geopolitical Crises

Author Details:

Dr. Arlien V. Moreshaw
Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS), University of Twente, Enschede, Netherlands

Dr. Tenric S. Malvoir
School of International Service, American University, Washington, D.C., United States

ABSTRACT

For decades, the free movement of students across borders has been celebrated as a cornerstone of global higher education, promising academic collaboration, cultural exchange, and economic growth. Today, that promise is being tested like never before. This article explores how higher education institutions (HEIs) are navigating a world of intensifying geopolitical crises, from armed conflicts to resurgent nationalism. It challenges the view that universities are merely passive victims of these global shocks. Instead, drawing on a synthesis of existing research and a detailed analysis of institutional responses in Israel during the Israel-Hamas war, it reveals how university administrators become active agents, engaging in intense "institutional work" to salvage and reshape international student mobility (ISM). The findings show that administrators grapple with severe war-induced impacts across academic, political, economic, and social spheres. In response, they deploy a range of creative and intensive strategies, from rapid resource mobilization and flexible academic policies to profound relational and emotional support. A key insight is the "affective turn" in this crisis environment, where international students are reframed as agents of solidarity and vital emotional resources who help sustain institutional resilience. Beyond just keeping things afloat, the crisis is shown to be a catalyst for a deeper strategic reconfiguration of ISM, pushing recruitment towards diaspora communities and forcing a reassessment of global partnerships based on political alignment. Ultimately, this article argues that geopolitical crises are forcing internationalization to evolve from a market-driven enterprise into something more politically conscious, ethically complex, and deeply human, highlighting the critical role of universities and their people in navigating a turbulent world.

Keywords: International student mobility, Geopolitical crisis, Institutional work, Higher education internationalization, Conflict, War, Forced mobility, Diaspora internationalization.

INTRODUCTION

The story of higher education over the past half-century has been, in many ways, a story of opening borders. International student mobility (ISM) became more than just a policy; it was a promise of a more connected world, a vehicle for fostering intercultural understanding, cultivating global citizenship, and even building peace [33, 24]. Alongside these lofty ideals, a powerful market logic took hold, with universities competing to attract global talent, enhance their prestige, and generate revenue [32, 68]. But today, this entire paradigm—built on a foundation of relative stability and openness—is fracturing. The world is increasingly defined by polarization, resurgent nationalism, and overt military conflict, forces that are challenging the very logics that have long governed the flow of students across the globe [41, 28].

Events like the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise of protectionist policies in key host nations [5, 49], and escalating military conflicts have created what the scholar Robert Cowen (2000) calls "transitologies"—critical, disruptive moments that expose and radically shift the political, social, and institutional DNA of our education systems. The wars in Syria [26, 37], Ukraine [14, 56], and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict [9, 62] are stark, painful examples of such ruptures. These crises do more than just create logistical hurdles; they politicize the very act of crossing a border for education, creating profound disruptions that demand immediate adaptation and long-term strategic repositioning [7]. The impact is a paradox: on one hand, conflict acts as a powerful deterrent, scaring away students from affected regions [11]; on the other, it creates tragic new waves of "forced internationalization," as students and scholars flee violence in a desperate search for safety and a future [30, 55].

While the destructive power of conflict is clear, the human response from within higher education remains a critical blind spot. Most research has rightfully focused on the harrowing experiences of students fleeing conflict [38, 31] or the devastating "brain drain" that hollows out war-torn

nations [26]. With a few important exceptions, like the emerging research from Ukraine [56], we know very little about how wars impact the flow of students *into* a country experiencing conflict. More importantly, we lack a deep understanding of how the people on the ground—the university administrators and professional staff—struggle to hold their international programs together amidst the chaos.

This article challenges the idea that international mobility is something that is simply *done to* universities by geopolitics. Instead, it argues that HEIs, through their people, are active and strategic agents in this story. It explores how university administrators perceive and respond to the immense disruptions of an acute geopolitical crisis. Using the theoretical lens of "institutional work" [45]—which focuses on the purposeful, often invisible, day-to-day efforts people make to create, maintain, or change the institutions they are part of—this study shines a light on the agency of these administrators. It examines how, embedded within powerful structures and facing immense pressures, they work to preserve the continuity and relevance of internationalization [1, 10].

Using the vivid case of Israeli higher education during the Israel-Hamas war that began in October 2023, this article seeks to answer three central questions:

1. When war erupts, how do university administrators experience its multifaceted impact on the international students and programs they oversee?

2. What kinds of "institutional work"—from the practical to the political—do these administrators undertake to manage the crisis and adapt?

3. How are these crises fundamentally changing the nature of international student mobility, and what does this mean for the future of global higher education?

By focusing on the human agency at the heart of the institutional response, this study aims to paint a richer, more nuanced picture of how internationalization is sustained in a conflict zone. It argues that geopolitical crises are not just disrupting ISM but are actively remaking it, pushing it in directions that are more selective, more politically charged, and more deeply tied to national identity, revealing the complex and evolving role of the university in a volatile world.

METHODS

To understand this complex picture, this article takes a two-pronged approach. It begins with a broad synthesis of existing research to build a solid theoretical foundation. This analysis draws from the 73 scholarly sources provided, covering the key literature on international student mobility, the intersection of geopolitics and education, and the concept of institutional work.

This foundation is then brought into sharp focus through a detailed qualitative case study. The article integrates insights from a recent study based on 14 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with senior international education professionals at nine Israeli universities [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. Conducted just two to three months after the war began in October 2023, these interviews offer a raw, immediate account of how the crisis was perceived and managed on the front lines. The institutions in the study were diverse, including some with centralized international offices and others with separate, self-funded international schools that often cater more to diaspora student populations.

The analysis itself is thematic and was carried out in three stages. First, the broad body of literature was reviewed to identify the key concepts and running themes. Second, the case study material was systematically analyzed to pull out the specific, lived experiences of the administrators—their perceptions of the war's impact across academic, political, economic, and social domains, and the concrete strategies they employed in response. Finally, in the third stage, these two streams were woven together. The theoretical ideas from the literature (like "forced internationalization" or "soft power") are used to frame and make sense of the real-world examples and paraphrased quotes from the administrators. This approach, known as the constant comparison method [35], creates a rich dialogue between theory and practice.

The concept of "institutional work" [45] acts as the central organizing principle for the analysis. It provides a powerful framework for categorizing the wide-ranging activities of the administrators—from the material and logistical to the symbolic and emotional—and helps reveal how these micro-level efforts can lead to macro-level institutional change, especially in moments of profound crisis [42, 61].

Throughout this process, ethical considerations are paramount. This article deals with sensitive material about people and institutions operating under the extreme duress of war. Following the ethical principles of the source material [20], all specific examples are presented in a way that protects the anonymity of the individuals and their universities. The analysis remains deeply conscious of the precarious human realities that lie at the heart of the data.

RESULTS

The Anatomy of Crisis and Response

The analysis reveals a dynamic process in which the severe disruptions of war necessitate a complex and multifaceted response from institutional actors. The findings are presented in two main parts: first, an examination of the perceived impacts of the crisis, which created the conditions for action; and second, a detailed account of the specific institutional work strategies deployed by administrators to manage the fallout and reconfigure ISM.

3.1 The Geopolitical Rupture: Perceived Impacts of Wartime Disruption

The outbreak of war was perceived by administrators not as a singular event but as a cascading crisis that permeated every domain of international activity. These perceived impacts created the urgent conditions that necessitated institutional work.

3.1.1. Academic Impacts: The Empty Laboratory

The most immediate and tangible impact was the disruption of academic research. With the sudden departure of many international students, particularly at the graduate and postdoctoral levels, research labs faced a critical loss of personnel. Administrators described this not merely as an inconvenience but as a fundamental threat to the continuity and progress of science. One administrator characterized international research students as the "workhorses of a lot of our laboratories," highlighting their integral role in the research ecosystem [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. The impact was especially dire in experimental faculties, where the physical presence of researchers is non-negotiable. The halt in lab work was seen as having a direct effect on research output and project timelines, with some administrators expressing concern that this would ultimately weaken global scientific progress. This loss was perceived as an existential threat to the viability of research-intensive universities, for whom a steady pipeline of international talent is essential for maintaining a competitive edge [70].

3.1.2. Political Impacts: Reputational Damage and the Shrinking Space for Collaboration

Administrators perceived the war as triggering an intense wave of global hostility and reputational damage. This manifested in a tangible "shrinking space" for academic cooperation, particularly with partners in North America and Western Europe. While most core institutional partnerships held, there were concrete instances of cancelled summer programs and collaborations due to pressure from student protests and faculty advocacy abroad [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. This fueled pervasive anxiety about future recruitment and the long-term viability of international engagement. The Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, a long-standing concern, was seen as gaining strength in the new political climate, threatening to isolate Israeli academia [8]. The situation led some administrators to question the university's traditional role as a site for peacebuilding, noting that the academic world seemed to be "fuelling the conflict more than it's supporting a peace solution" [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. This profound sense of political precarity and eroding legitimacy served as a powerful catalyst for institutional work aimed at shoring up international relationships and countering perceived delegitimization.

3.1.3. Economic and Financial Impacts: From Immediate Losses to Long-Term Threats

The economic impacts were felt differently across institutions. For non-budgeted international schools reliant on full-fee-paying students, the cancellation of programs led to immediate and acute revenue loss, impacting salaries and operational viability. However, for the large research universities where most international students are on scholarships, the primary economic concern was less about lost tuition and more about the long-term strategic consequences. The loss of government subsidies tied to international student numbers was a factor, but the greater fear was the impact on research itself, which underpins Israel's high-technology economy. As one administrator noted, "If we don't have enough international postdocs, then we don't have enough postdocs full stop" [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. This highlights a strategic economic threat: without international researchers, the innovation pipeline that fuels the national economy is compromised. Furthermore, administrators pointed to the long-term economic risk of domestic students losing opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration, which is essential for working in a globalized economy.

3.1.4. Socio-Cultural Impacts: The Loss of Diversity

While discussed less frequently, the erosion of campus diversity was a significant concern. Administrators emphasized that international students, particularly non-Jewish students, bring a different background and an "important perspective" that enriches the campus environment [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. Their presence in multicultural labs and classrooms was seen as crucial for developing the "global skills" and "cultural intelligence" of domestic students. While Israel is an internally multicultural society, administrators distinguished this from the unique contribution of students from abroad, who are often framed as "cultural resources" [48]. The absence of this diversity was seen as a loss for the entire academic community, diminishing the cross-pollination of ideas and perspectives that is a core tenet of internationalization. This perceived socio-cultural deficit created a strong impetus to not only retain the current international student body but also to think strategically about future recruitment.

3.2 Institutional Work Strategies: Maintaining and Reconfiguring Mobility in Crisis

In response to these profound disruptions, administrators engaged in intense and multifaceted institutional work. This work was not merely reactive but strategic, aimed at both immediate maintenance and long-term reconfiguration.

3.2.1. Relational and Emotional Work: Communication as a

Lifeline

From the first moments of the crisis, administrators launched a coordinated strategy of intensive communication and relational support. Recognizing their profound responsibility for the physical and emotional well-being of students, they worked around the clock, often balancing these duties with the needs of their own families in a crisis. This "mom for all" role involved establishing emergency communication channels—daily briefings, WhatsApp groups, Zoom forums—to locate every student and provide a constant stream of verified information and safety instructions [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. This was critical for managing anxiety and countering misinformation. Beyond logistics, this was deeply emotional labor. Administrators organized mental health sessions with counselors, created peer support networks, and made themselves personally available 24/7, effectively becoming primary caregivers. This intensive relational work [63] was crucial for maintaining trust and ensuring students—both those who remained and those who departed—felt supported and connected to the institution. By showing professionalism and care, they sought to preserve the long-term viability of their international partnerships and the loyalty of their students.

3.2.2. Material Work: Mobilizing Resources for Retention

Administrators engaged in rapid material work to shield ISM from collapse. This involved mobilizing significant financial and logistical resources to ensure student safety and retention. For students who needed to depart, universities facilitated evacuations, packed and shipped belongings, and communicated with embassies. For those who remained, they fortified dormitories and secured alternative housing for those in apartments without bomb shelters. Critically, to retain the research students essential for lab continuity, institutions made extraordinary financial commitments. They continued paying scholarships and stipends even to students who were abroad, covered dual housing costs, and in some cases, even secured spots in kindergartens to ensure the families of PhD students could return seamlessly [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. This material work demonstrates a clear strategic decision to absorb significant costs to preserve the core functions of research and maintain the international student pipeline, reinforcing the status of ISM as an essential institutional practice worth sustaining even under extreme duress.

3.2.3. Academic Work: Flexibility as a Cornerstone of Continuity

A key pillar of the institutional response was the rapid implementation of flexible academic policies. Drawing on lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, universities quickly pivoted to hybrid and online learning models to accommodate students who had left the country, ensuring they would not lose their semester. Administrators negotiated with partners like the Erasmus program to have the war recognized as force majeure, allowing for flexibility in deadlines and requirements. In a remarkable example of adaptive curricular work, one program leader secured emergency funding to launch an improvised, condensed "mini-semester" for stranded students, starting classes early to "keep them busy" and prevent attrition [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. This suite of flexible measures—from modified grading schemes to extended deadlines—demonstrates the significant adaptive work undertaken to uphold educational commitments and maintain student engagement amidst the chaos of war.

3.2.4. Political and Symbolic Work: Reconfiguring Recruitment and Reframing Roles

The crisis catalyzed a profound strategic and symbolic reconfiguration of ISM. This involved two interconnected forms of institutional work: a reorientation of recruitment and a normative reframing of the international student's role.

- **The Pivot to Diaspora Internationalization:** Faced with a hostile global environment and the anticipation of declining interest from traditional markets, many administrators began a strategic pivot towards recruiting from the global Jewish diaspora. This was framed dually: as a civic and ethical duty to offer a safe academic refuge for Jewish students facing rising antisemitism abroad, and as a pragmatic strategy to maintain enrollment numbers. New programs were rapidly developed, particularly for Russian and English speakers, and marketing efforts were redirected towards Jewish communities [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. This shift reflects a move towards "diaspora internationalization" [57], where international education becomes closely tied to national identity projects. While many administrators expressed ambivalence about this narrowing focus, it represents a significant reconfiguration, pulling ISM into closer alignment with ethno-national priorities in response to geopolitical pressures.

- **The Affective Turn: Students as Agents of Solidarity:** The war prompted a powerful normative reframing of international students, particularly those who remained. They came to be seen not just as academic participants but as crucial agents of solidarity and sources of emotional support. Administrators recounted how small gestures—students lighting candles for hostages, filming videos of support, or simply checking in on staff—were deeply meaningful and served to boost morale [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. This represents an "affective turn," where students were valued as emotional resources whose

presence provided reassurance that "we're not alone." This reframing also intensified the well-documented role of students as informal ambassadors [2, 12]. In the context of what was perceived as a hostile international media environment, students' first-hand experiences were seen as a vital, "authentic" counter-narrative. Some institutions actively supported student-led task forces to "tell our story to the world" [Bamberger, 2025, from PDF]. This symbolic work, while empowering for some students, also risks placing significant political and emotional labor on them, instrumentalizing their presence to serve institutional and national reputation management.

DISCUSSION

What this analysis ultimately shows is that when geopolitical crises strike, international student mobility doesn't just stop—it gets remade. Far from being passive victims of global events, university administrators emerge as crucial, if often overlooked, architects of this new reality. The case of Israeli higher education provides a powerful window into how these professionals, through dedicated and often exhausting institutional work, navigate the profound disruptions of war to both maintain and fundamentally reconfigure internationalization.

The concept of institutional work is key to understanding this story. It allows us to see beyond the headlines and macro-level political forces to the concrete, human practices on the ground [45]. The political, material, relational, and symbolic efforts detailed in this article are tangible manifestations of human agency. Administrators are not just managing a crisis; they are purposefully working to preserve their institution's legitimacy, secure vital resources, and redefine the very meaning of international education in a time of war. This highlights what scholars call the "paradox of embedded agency" [10]: it is precisely within the immense constraints of a crisis that new spaces for strategic action and transformation can, and do, emerge.

A central finding here is the significant reconfiguration of ISM towards patterns that are more selective, more politically aware, and more deeply tied to national identity. The pivot towards "diaspora internationalization" [57] is especially telling. While driven by a complex mix of pragmatic necessity and a genuine sense of national duty, this strategic shift shows how geopolitical crises can pull internationalization away from purely cosmopolitan ideals and into closer alignment with a state's identity projects. This trend is almost certainly not unique to Israel. As great-power competition and nationalist sentiments rise globally, there is a clear danger that international education will be increasingly instrumentalized for political ends, with partnerships and student flows shaped by ideological alignment rather than academic merit [5, 28]. The reassessment of international partnerships based

on perceived political friendliness, as noted by the Israeli administrators, is likely a process unfolding in many countries, leading to a more fragmented and politically bordered global academic landscape.

Furthermore, this study reveals a notable "affective turn" in how international students are valued. The emphasis on students as agents of solidarity and sources of morale—a finding that echoes research from wartime Ukraine [56]—points to a significant shift. In a crisis, students are no longer seen only as economic or academic assets but as emotional and symbolic resources whose presence and perceived loyalty become vital for institutional resilience. This raises critical questions about the student experience and their own agency. While gestures of solidarity may be entirely genuine, the highly charged environment of a conflict zone creates subtle and overt pressures to align with the host institution and its national narratives. This places a considerable, and often unacknowledged, burden of emotional and political labor on students, transforming them from academic participants into actors in a geopolitical drama.

The implications for the future of internationalization are profound. The traditional, often market-driven model is being tested and, in some cases, supplanted by a more politicized logic. This does not necessarily mean a return to a purely state-controlled model, but rather a more complex environment where universities must navigate the competing demands of market forces, national interests, and a renewed sense of ethical responsibility. The humanitarian efforts to support students, the flexible academic arrangements, and the intensive relational care demonstrate a powerful ethical dimension of institutional work. However, this is often in tension with the strategic pivots that align internationalization with national agendas.

This study is not without limitations. As a synthesis, it relies on the interpretations of the original authors and the perspectives of the administrators interviewed in the case study. The voices of the students themselves are mediated. The term "geopolitical crisis" is also broad, and institutional responses will undoubtedly vary based on the specific nature of the conflict and the local context.

Future research should build on these findings by exploring the lived experiences of international students who choose to remain in or travel to conflict zones. What are their motivations, and how do they navigate the pressures and expectations placed upon them? Comparative research is also needed to understand how different types of institutions in various geopolitical contexts are reconfiguring their internationalization strategies. Is the pivot towards diaspora or ideologically-aligned recruitment a widespread phenomenon? Finally, more research is needed on the long-term impacts of these reconfigurations on academic collaboration, knowledge production, and the role of the university in a divided world.

CONCLUSION

The remaking of international student mobility in a world of crisis is a complex and contested process. This study reveals that it is being actively shaped by the institutional work of dedicated professionals who strive to uphold the values of academic exchange in the most challenging of circumstances. Their actions, however, are also inevitably shaped by the powerful political and ideological currents of our time. The findings from Israel, echoed by experiences in other conflict zones, suggest that we are witnessing a fundamental shift. Internationalization is moving away from a primarily market-driven or cosmopolitan ideal towards a model that is more politically fraught, ethically complex, and strategically aligned with national narratives. As the world navigates an era of increasing instability, the true test for higher education will be its ability to look beyond the barricades of the present. The challenge is to resist the pull towards political closure and to fight to keep its doors open—not just as a strategic asset, but as one of the last, best hopes for fostering critical dialogue, mutual understanding, and a shared sense of humanity.

REFERENCES

1. Adler, C., & Lalonde, C. (2020). Identity, agency and institutional work in higher education: A qualitative meta-analysis. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal, 15*(2), 121–144.

2. Akli, M. (2012). The role of study-abroad students in cultural diplomacy: toward an international education as soft action. *International Research and Review, 2*(1), 32–48.

3. Ari, L. L., & Laron, D. (2014). Intercultural learning in graduate studies at an Israeli college of education: attitudes toward multiculturalism among Jewish and Arab students. *Higher Education, 68*, 243–262.

4. Bamberger, A. (2020). *Diaspora, state and university: An analysis of internationalisation of higher education in Israel* (Doctoral dissertation, UCL (University College, London)).

5. Bamberger, A., & Huang, T. Y. (2025). From irreversible openness to protectionism: geopolitics and international research cooperation in the European Union. *Journal of Education Policy, 40*(1), 19–43.

6. Bamberger, A., & Kim, M. J. (2023). The OECD's influence on national higher education policies: internationalisation in Israel and South Korea. *Comparative Education, 59*(4), 602–619.

7. Bamberger, A., Kim, M. J., Lee, S. S., & Yan, F. (2025). Politicizing Mobility in the COVID-19 Pandemic: International Student Mobility in Israel, China, and the United Arab Emirates. *Social Justice Research*, 1–22.

8. Bamberger, A., Morris, P., Weinreb, Y., & Yemini, M. (2019). Hyperpoliticised internationalisation in a pariah university: An Israeli institution in the occupied West Bank. *International Journal of Educational Development, 66*, 119–128.

9. Bar-Tal, D. (2024). Daniel Bar-Tal, on the Israeli-palestinian conflict, before and after October 7, 2023: In conversation with James Liu and Veronica Hopner. *Political Psychology*.

10. Battilana, J., & D'Aunno, T.A. (2009). Institutional work and the paradox of embedded agency. In T.B. Lawrence, R. Suddaby, & B. Leca (Eds.), *Institutional work: actors and agency in institutional studies of organizations* (pp. 31–58). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

11. Ben-Tsur, D. (2009). The impact of conflict on international student mobility: A case study of international students studying in Israel. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 19*(2), 135–149.

12. Bislev, A. (2017). Student-to-student diplomacy: Chinese international students as a soft-power tool. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs, 46*(2), 81–109.

13. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57–71). American Psychological Association.

14. Brooks, R., & Rensimer, L. (2025). Higher education actors' responses to the Ukraine-Russia conflict: an analysis of geopolitical spatial imaginaries. *Journal of Education Policy, 40*(1), 111–129.

15. Brunner, L. R. (2022). Towards a more just Canadian education-migration system: International student mobility in crisis. *Studies in Social Justice, 16*(1), 78–102.

16. Bryła, P. (2015). The impact of international student mobility on subsequent employment and professional career: A large-scale survey among Polish former Erasmus students. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 176*, 633–641.

17. Castro, P., Woodin, J., Lundgren, U., & Byram, M. (2018). Student mobility and internationalisation in higher education: perspectives from practitioners. In *Study abroad and interculturality* (pp. 106–124). Routledge.

18. Chankseliani, M. (2018). Four rationales of HE internationalization: perspectives of UK universities on attracting students from former Soviet countries. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 22*(1), 53–70.

19. Cowen, R. (2000). Comparing futures or comparing pasts? *Comparative Education, 36*(3), 333–342.

20. Crow, G., Wiles, R., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2006). Research ethics and data quality: the implications of informed consent. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 9*(2), 83–95.

21. Crumley-Effinger, M. (2024). ISM policy pervasion: visas, study permits, and the International student experience. *Journal of International Students, 14*(1), 78–96.

22. Dacin, M. T., Munir, K., & Tracey, P. (2010). Formal dining at Cambridge colleges: linking ritual performance and institutional maintenance. *Academy of Management Journal, 53*(6), 1393–1418.

23. Deuel, R. P. (2023). International education as an ethical practice: cultivating a care of the self. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 44*(4), 579–594.

24. de Wit, H. (2020). The future of internationalization of higher education in challenging global context. *Educacao Tematica Digital, 22*, 538–545.

25. de Wit, H., & Altbach, P. G. (2021). Internationalization in higher education: global trends and recommendations for its future. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education, 5*(1), 28–46.

26. Dillabough, J. A., Fimyar, O., McLaughlin, C., Al-Azmeh, Z., Abdullateef, S., & Abedtalas, M. (2018). Conflict, insecurity and the political economies of higher education: the case of Syria post-2011. *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development, 20*(3/4), 176–196.

27. Donitsa-Schmidt, S., & Vadish, M. (2005). American students in Israel: an evaluation of a study abroad experience. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad, 11*(1), 33–56.

28. Douglass, J. A. (2021). *Neo-nationalism and universities: populists, autocrats, and the future of higher education.* Johns Hopkins University Press.

29. El-Ghali, H. A., & Al-Hawamdeh, A. (2017). *Higher education and Syrian refugee students: the case of Jordan. Policies, practices, and perspectives.* Beirut: UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States/Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs.

30. Ergin, H., de Wit, H., & Leask, B. (2019). Forced internationalization of higher education: an emerging phenomenon. *International Higher Education, 97*, 9–10.

31. Fincham, K. (2020). Rethinking higher education for Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. *Research in Comparative and International Education, 15*(4), 329–356.

32. Findlay, A. M., McCollum, D., & Packwood, H. (2017). Marketization, marketing and the production of international student migration. *International Migration, 55*(2), 139-155.

33. Haigh, M. (2014). From internationalisation to education for global citizenship: A multi-layered history. *Higher Education Quarterly, 68*(1), 6–27.

34. Hatum, A., Pettigrew, A., & Michelini, J. (2010). Building organizational capabilities to adapt under turmoil. *Journal of Change Management, 10*(3), 257–274.

35. Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277–1288.

36. Jafar, H., & Sabzalieva, E. (2022). Faculty experiences of higher education internationalization in post-conflict Iraq and Tajikistan. *Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education, 14*(2), 47–65.

37. Kayyali, M. (2024). The impact of war on higher education: the context of wars in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, and Afghanistan. In *Rebuilding higher education systems impacted by crises: navigating traumatic events, disasters, and more* (pp. 275–284). IGI Global.

38. Kirkegaard, A. M.Ø., & Nat-George, S. M. L. W. (2016). Fleeing through the globalised education system: the role of violence and conflict in international student migration. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 14*(3), 390–402.

39. Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of studies in international education, 8*(1), 5–31.

40. Kot, V., Yemini, M., & Chankseliani, M. (2020). Triple exclusion: life stories of Jewish migrant academics from the former Soviet Union at a contested university under siege. *International Journal of Educational Development, 76*, 102191.

41. Kushnir, I., & Yazgan, N. (2024). Shifting geopolitics of the European higher education space. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 1–22.

42. Lawrence, T. B., Leca, B., & Zilber, T. B. (2013). Institutional work: current research, new directions and overlooked issues. *Organization Studies, 34*(8), 1023–1033.

43. Lawrence, T.B., Suddaby, R., & Leca, B. (Eds.). (2009). *Institutional work: actors and agency in institutional studies of organizations.* Cambridge university press.

44. Lawrence, T., Suddaby, R., & Leca, B. (2011). Institutional work: refocusing institutional studies of organization. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 20*(1), 52–58.

45. Lawrence, T. B., & Suddaby, R. (2006). Institutions and institutional work. In S. Clegg, C. Hardy, T. B. Lawrence, & W. R. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of organization studies* (2nd ed., pp. 215–254). Sage Publications Ltd.

46. Li, W., Zhao, S., Lu, Z., Yu, W., & Li, X. (2019). Student migration: evidence from Chinese students in the US and China. *International Migration, 57*(3), 334–353.

47. Lo, W. Y. W. (2019). Beyond competition: A comparative review of conceptual approaches to international student mobility. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 17*(3), 261–273.

48. Lomer, S. (2017). *Recruiting international students in higher education: representations and rationales in british policy.* Springer.

49. Lomer, S. (2018). UK policy discourses and international

student mobility: the deterrence and subjectification of international students. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 16*(3), 308–324.

50. Maoz, L. (2016). *Internationalism in higher education: international students in israel. suggestions for policy*. Jerusalem, Israel: Israel Council for Higher Education [Hebrew].

51. Meyer, J. W., & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutionalized organizations: formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology, 83*(2), 340–363.

52. Mulvey, B., & Lo, W. Y. W. (2021). Learning to 'tell china's story well': the constructions of international students in chinese higher education policy. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 19*(5), 545–557.

53. Nghia, T. L. H. (2019). Motivations for studying abroad and immigration intentions: the case of Vietnamese students. *Journal of International Students, 9*(3), 758–776.

54. Nicholls, S. (2018). Influences on international student choice of study destination: evidence from the United States. *Journal of International Students, 8*(2), 597–622.

55. Oleksiyenko, A., & Shchepetylnykova, L. (2024). International students and precarious societies: the complexity of mobility rationales in a war-torn higher education. *International Journal of Educational Research, 128*, 102464.

56. 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.

57. Pries, L. (2009). Transnationalisation and the challenge of differentiated concepts of space. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische en Sociale Geografie, 100*(5), 587–597.

58. Scott, W. R. (2013). *Institutions and organizations: ideas, interests, and identities*. Sage Publications.

59. Shahjahan, R. A. (2025). Unpacking the velcro of 'Internationalisation': the nation-state ontology and its implications for global higher education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 1–13.

60. Streitwieser, B., Leontiyeva, A., & Yakavets, N. (2017). International students and higher education in post-Soviet contexts: adaptation, integration, and impact. *European Education, 49*(4), 304–321.

61. Suddaby, R., & Viale, T. (2011). Professionals and field-level change: institutional work and the professional project. *Current Sociology, 59*(4), 423–442.

62. Tessler, M. (2009). *A history of the israeli-palestinian conflict*. Indiana University Press.

63. Topal, C. (2015). A relational perspective of institutional work. *Journal of Management & Organization, 21*(4), 495–514.

64. Trahar, S. (2017). Learning to see the person, not the culture or the faith": Critical reflections on internationalizing higher education in Israel. *European Education, 49*(4), 276–292.

65. Tran, L. T. (2016). Mobility as 'becoming': A Bourdieuian analysis of the factors shaping international student mobility. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 37*(8), 1268–1289.

66. Van Mol, C., Caarls, K., & Souto-Otero, M. (2021). International student mobility and labour market outcomes: an investigation of the role of level of study, type of mobility, and international prestige hierarchies. *Higher Education, 82*, 1145–1171.

67. Wang, X. (2024). Caught in the geopolitical tensions between China and the United States: impacts on Chinese students pursuing American higher education. *Journal of International Students, 14*(4), 1009–1028.

68. Weber, T., van Mol, C., & Wolbers, M. H. (2024). International students as sources of income? Moving beyond the neoliberal framing of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 28*(4), 526–545.

69. Weimer, L., & Barlete, A. (2020). The rise of nationalism: The influence of populist discourses on international student mobility and migration in the UK and US. In *Universities as political institutions* (pp. 33–57). Brill.

70. Weinreb, Y., & Yemini, M. (2023). Navigating academic habitus in a higher education system that prioritises external funding–the case of Israel. *Studies in Higher Education, 48*(7), 995–1006.

71. Wilson, I. (2015). Ends changed, means retained: scholarship programs, political influence, and drifting goals. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 17*(1), 130–151.

72. Yemini, M. (2017). Internationalization under intractable conflict: the influence of national conflict on Israeli higher education institutions' internationalization efforts. *European Education, 49*(4), 293–303.

73. Yemini, M., Hermoni, J., Holzmann, V., Shokty, L., Jayusi, W., & Natur, N. (2017). The implementation of internationalisation in Israeli teacher training colleges. *European Journal of Education, 52*(4), 546–557.