

War against Ukraine: Humanitarian aid and how much morality can science bear

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Editorial

An unprovoked war has impacted Ukraine. “*Humanity and peace initiatives should have top priority now*” [1]. The resulting outrage by the Western world together with a global alliance has imposed economic sanctions on Russia [2]. Though moral, the efficacy of economic sanctions are known to be limited as earlier shown by an empirical cross-national, time-series data analysis of 133 countries during the period from 1970 to 2005 [3]. The Theodor-Billroth-Academy® with its International Consortium of Research Excellence (INCORE) have so far in solidarity with the Ukraine and with scientists and Board members of 4open realized several projects for active humanitarian aid in a very short time [1]. This included medical transports to the Ukraine which were carried out by pro bono by Veterans from Germany through the Recondo Vets MMC Germany, Military Motorcycle Club (Fig. 1) and from Austria through the Green Knights, Military Motorcycle Club, Chapter 147, Austria as they work closely with the Territorial Defense Forces (of the Ukraine) (Війська територіальної оборони) and the International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine (Ukrainian Foreign Legion) (Інтернаціональний легіон територіальної оборони України) to ensure that transports arrive where and when needed (Figs. 2–4).

Furthermore, medical refugee students from the Kharkiv National Medical University (KNMU) and the Bogomolets National Medical University (NMU) were offered cost-free living along with a German language course, academic lecture and medical internship financed by the Carl-Thiem-Klinikum (CTK) in Cottbus, Germany. The TBA® and INCORE continuously encourage (and demand) that European and German-speaking universities to set an example and open their doors to Ukrainian refugee medical students during the war so that they can have the opportunity to continue their studies. Finland on March 9, 2022 provided strong leadership in this regard [4]. So far,

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only one German University partially opened their doors as suggested, although the primary conditions will only be achievable by a minority of students because students need a valid Test for Medical Studies (TMS) result notification. Soon, **Theodor Billroth’ lectures** of various themes in science, education, training for students and physicians (independent of their level and stage of career), a project which originally was planned to be realized in 2023, will be realized soon (Fig. 5). This will be cross-linked by the support of 4open and EDP Sciences as increasingly students and physicians should actively be encouraged to publish their thesis also at no cost. Thus, the proposed scientific, humanitarian and peace initiatives of our colleagues provide Ukraine with much-needed assistance.

Next to humanitarian aid, it is being demanded to expel Russian culture and science from the fine arts and science. Today’s science (and medicine) is changed from a compassion-based profession into a corporate-greed driven industry why halting and expelling of economy related science is seen as an act of humanitarian aid. However, culture and science need to be independent and should not become weaponized. Whether neither culture [5], nor science have prevented any violence or war revealing that such demands correspond more to a pronounced overconfidence but reflecting an utopian idealism. Can culture or science be completely separated from politics? No as both are also economic factors. Science has power and with power comes responsibility and also here silence is also not an option in the war against the Ukraine [6]. Many Russians of various professions opposed this war, even though this meant being regarded as a threat by their government [7–9]. Of course, there were some Russian scientists supporting the war [10] which clearly reveals the nationalistic views abused the term patriotism which is usual in totalitarian regimes. However, the European University Association (EUA) directly suspended the membership of 14 Russian universities whose leaders signed a pro-war statement [11]. The governments of various countries asked their universities to halt academic (government funded) collaboration or to



Figure 1. Ralf Bartzsch, German Veterans, Recondo Vets MMC, Military Motorcycle Club (MMC), Germany at the Interim storage of Ukraine aid goods to the International Legion of Territorial Defense of Ukraine (Ukrainian Foreign Legion) (Інтернаціональний легіон територіальної оборони України). Ralf Bartzsch gave permission that this picture is published.

cut ties with Russia in Germany [12], Denmark [13], The Netherlands [14], United Kingdom [15, 16]. The German-Turkish journalist, publicist and former President of the Poets, Essayists, Novelists (PEN) Center, Deniz Yücel, who was imprisoned under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, made a wise statement “*The enemy’s name is Putin, not Pushkin*” [17]. Only few journals banned Russian scientific submissions [18] and followed others appeal [19] although this can “*divide the global research community and restrict the exchange of scholarly knowledge*” [20]. The decision of an Editor of *Journal of Molecular Structure*, Elsevier, was brought public ([21] reviewed in [22]). Later this was put into a grey perspective, as Rui Fausto, the Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Molecular Structure*, stated “*I shall stress that there are not here any political judgment. . .*” [23]. This was a political statement in the attempt to wriggle out of a sticky situation.

However, moral perspectives are influenced by emotions which are a part of being human. A Ukrainian colleague explained to me his perspective why any kind of science from Russia should be expelled [*personal communication*]. By personal morality I understood this view. On the one hand site, the world should refrain from pointing the index finger at Ukrainians what they have to do or not to do.



Figure 2. Maksymenko Bohdan and Igor Volkov from Bogomolets National Medical University (NМУ) Kyiv, Ukraine with the received osteosynthesis material. From left to right: Maksymenko Bohdan, resident, and Igor Volkov, Chairman, Oncology Orthopedic Department, National Cancer Institute, Kyiv, Ukraine. Both physicians gave permission that this picture is published.

The Ukraine fight for their existence, experience the dropping of bombs on their heads, women and children who are killed and raped, and many other war crimes. In such a condition no differentiated view should be expected or demanded, as they fight for their survival. This means that anyone who is directly verbally targeted by Ukraine should not be personally offended. Otherwise I asked myself, is the demand by Ukraine to stigmatize one profession from one country justified? Economic sanctions on an aggressor should not be automatically taken as a kind of blueprint to stretch out how much morality science can bear by trying to ban a complete science species from one country. Science needs to stay above the fray and be independent from politics. It may even be seen that a blanket exclusion of others by the mainstream may later lead to a kind of fascism. Thus scientists can recognize how important their socio-cultural effects can be even as nonsensical mainstream views may create unpleasant effects for societies and science in general at the level of the individual. It is not the duty of science to adhere to an established conformity and the



Figure 3. Handing over the medical equipment in Kharkiv, Ukraine. In the middle sitting Professor Dr. Igor A. Kryvoruchko, Kharkiv National Medical University, Kharkiv, Ukraine. From left to right: Vladimir S. Poltavets, Head Economic Service, Ivan G. Fursov, resident, Oleg V. Volchenko, resident, Professor Dr. Igor Kryvoruchko, Head of Department of Surgery, and Rostyslav M. Smachylo, Head of the Department of the Liver and Pancreas Surgery, Institute of General and Emergency Surgery, each Kharkiv University. In accordance to personal communication with Professor Dr. Igor A. Kryvoruchko, Kharkiv National Medical University, Kharkiv, Ukraine, each individual at the picture gave permission, that the picture is published.



Figure 4. Handing over chemotherapy at Bogomolets National Medical University (NMU) Kyiv, Ukraine by Austrian Veterans. From left to right: Professor Dr. Anatolii Shudrak, Deputy Chief Physician of National Cancer Institute, and Professor Dr. Andriy Beznosenko, Director National Cancer Institute, and Max Pollak, Veterans, Green Knights MMC, Chapter 147, Austria. Each individual at the picture gave permission, that the picture is published.

Editor's primary job is to address science and scientific issues which explain why a nuanced view is needed and why stigmatizing of one country's scientific community is

not justified. Next to necessary humanitarian support and to resist any kind of cancel culture, science needs to stand above things, as well as above from governments or

Theodor BILLROTH' *lectures*



coming soon

Figure 5. Theodor BILLROTH's lectures, which will be cost-free for students and residents and which will arrive soon.

institutions. This means that science should not stigmatize in regard to origin, citizenship, gender, religion or color and many aspects are of importance in this regard.

We at the 4open Life Sciences – Medicine Editorial Board care primarily about science, and distance ourselves from war, and support humanitarian initiatives [1], but reject any attempt at alienating anyone (government or policies) and/or global citizens or scientists of a country, as well as any kind of racism and/or anti-Semitism and/or prejudices based on ethnic, religion, language, politics, gender, sex or age and therefore reject the wholesale stigmatizing of one profession from one country. Editors should not abuse their authority to play on the political stage.

If politics successfully coopts science, then science would be lost.

Nomenclature of abbreviations

CTK	Carl-Thiem-Klinikum, Cottbus, Germany;
EUA	European University Association;
INCORE	International Consortium of Research Excellence of the TBA®;
KNMU	Kharkiv National Medical University;
NMU	Bogomolets National Medical University;
PEN	Poets, Essayists, Novelists;
TBA®	Theodor-Billroth-Academy;
TMS	Test for Medical Studies.

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Conflict of interest

Björn LDM Brücher is Editor-in-Chief in Life Sciences-Medicine of 4open by EDP Sciences. The author alone is responsible for the content and writing of the manuscript. The opinions or assertions contained herein are the private ones of the author and are not to be construed as official or reflecting the views of the Publisher or the employers.

Ethics

This article and its content are not sponsored.

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