

NEW DIMENSIONS OF SOLIDARITY IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was one of the most profound external shocks to the European political order since the end of the Cold War, bringing to the fore the fundamental problem of solidarity. In the context of modern global transformations and security crises of the 21st century, this war not only brought back to the agenda the issues of territorial aggression, military security and nuclear deterrence, but also tested of the ability of European societies to act as a single community in the face of an external threat. The study of solidarity has become increasingly relevant, as it allows us to understand: who, for whom and under what conditions is ready to share cross-border risks, economic costs and political responsibility^{1 2 3}. Historically, the understanding of solidarity has undergone a complex evolution. From its original meaning in Roman law as a joint, indivisible responsibility (in solidum), the concept transformed into a moral and philosophical category that denoted the interdependence of members of society and the ethical duty of mutual support. At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, based on the sociological justification of Emile Durkheim, the political and legal doctrine of solidarity by Léon Bourgeois transformed solidarity into a key intrastate instrument. Through the concept of "social debt", it became the foundation of the social state (the welfare state), embodied in the systems of progressive taxation and social insurance. However, in the 21st century, the understanding of solidarity goes far beyond the boundaries of an ethical category or national social policy, becoming a key factor in international politics and geopolitics. In modern conditions, solidarity is considered not as an abstract moral

¹ Börzel T. A., Risse T. *From the euro to the Schengen crises: European solidarity under stress*. Journal of European Public Policy. 2018. Vol. 25, No. 1. P. 83–101.

² Gerhards J., Lengfeld H., Ignác Z. S., Kley F. K., Priem M. *European Solidarity in Times of Crisis: Towards an Evolution of European Citizenship*. London: Routledge, 2019. 248 p.

³ Krastev I., Holmes S. *The Light that Failed: Why the West is Losing the Fight for Democracy*. New York: Pegasus Books, 2019. URL: <https://books.google.com.ua/books?id=B5eGDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=uk#v=onepage&q&f=false>

virtue, but as a practical political choice ⁴. It transcends the boundaries of formal institutional membership in supranational structures (e.g., the EU or NATO) and extends to external communities that are perceived as close, vulnerable, and strategically important. The geopolitics of solidarity implies that support for another state acquires instrumental significance:^{5 6} it ceases to be a mere humanitarian gesture and becomes a form of self-defense, a way of deterring aggression and protecting a common political order and international law.

Against this background, the chapter addresses the following research question: how has the concept of solidarity transformed under the conditions of global security crises, and how does the case of European support for Ukraine demonstrate the emergence of solidarity as a mechanism of cross-border risk sharing, political responsibility, and collective self-defence?

Accordingly, the aim of this chapter is to trace the evolution of the concept of solidarity and to explore the mechanisms of its formation at the international level, using European support for Ukraine as a case study. The chapter applies a conceptual-historical approach combined with secondary analysis of public opinion studies and policy discourse on European support for Ukraine. It argues that solidarity in the 21st century is constructed not only as a moral response to human suffering, but also as a political, historical, and emotional response to a common existential threat.

1. Etymology and conceptualization of the concept of solidarity

The concept of “solidarity” is a multidimensional phenomenon, therefore, for a correct scientific analysis, it is necessary to clearly distinguish four interrelated terms that differ in the level of generalization. Solidarity can be understood as a foundational social phenomenon, an objective state or a psychological feeling of unity, interdependence and common interests that naturally arises in human communities. The concept of solidarity denotes a theoretical, philosophical or sociological understanding of the nature of this phenomenon, that is, the idea of how and why social unity works. In turn, the principle of solidarity refers to a normative requirement or a rule established in ethics, law or politics, which

⁴ Gerhards J., Lengfeld H., Ignác Z. S., Kley F. K., Priem M. *European Solidarity in Times of Crisis: Towards an Evolution of European Citizenship*. London : Routledge, 2019. 248 p.

⁵ Andor L. *Europe in the shadow of war in Ukraine*. Foundation for European Progressive Studies. 2023. URL: <https://feps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/5.-Europe-in-the-shadow-of-war-in-Ukraine-by-Laszlo-Andor.pdf>

⁶ Hoffmann I., de Vries C. E. *Under Pressure: The War in Ukraine and European Public Opinion*. eupinions / Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2022. URL: <https://eupinions.eu/de/text/under-pressure-the-war-in-ukraine-and-european-public-opinion>

obliges subjects to act on the basis of mutual assistance. Finally, solidarism emerges as a coherent, systematized political and social doctrine (ideology) that offers a concrete model of social organization based on the idea of the common good and social partnership^{7 8}.

Historically, the term originates from Roman law, where the legal concept of *in solidum* meant the joint, undivided responsibility of several persons for an obligation or debt⁸. Each of the participants was responsible «for the whole» and not only for his own share, therefore, in its original meaning, solidarity had a purely legal character. Subsequently, especially during the period of intense social transformations of the 18th–19th centuries, caused by industrialization and the disintegration of traditional communities, this legal concept went beyond the law. The term *solidarité* began to be used in social philosophy to denote the general interdependence of members of society, the commonality of their fate and the moral duty of support⁹.

The transformation of solidarity into a powerful philosophical concept took place thanks to the French thinker Pierre Leroux⁷. It was he who introduced the term «solidarism» into wide circulation in the 1840s, giving it the status of a philosophical doctrine. Leroux proposed solidarism as an alternative to two extremes: destructive liberal individualism and coercive dogmatic collectivism. In his view, individualism leads to social atomization and economic selfishness, while collectivism levels the individual and suppresses freedom.

The thinker saw a way out of this dilemma in the principle of solidarity, which functions as an objective “law of humanity”. This law organically combines individual freedom with mutual responsibility and covers three key dimensions of human existence: material (interdependence in work and production), intellectual (inheritance and transfer of knowledge) and moral (compassion and support). Through Leroux’s work, solidarity ceased to be understood as mere Christian charity and began to be perceived as a fundamental social connection – brotherhood based on the awareness of the common fate of humanity^{10 11}.

⁷ Leroux P. *De l’humanité, de son principe, et de son avenir*. Paris : Perrotin, 1840. 948 p.

⁸ Sangiovanni A. *Solidarity in the European Union*. Oxford Journal of Legal Studies. 2013. Vol. 33, No. 2. P. 213–241.

⁹ Stjernø S. *Solidarity in Europe: The History of an Idea*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2005. 396 p.

¹⁰ Kiel Institute for the World Economy. *Ukraine Support Tracker Data*. 2026. URL: <https://www.kielinstitut.de/publications/ukraine-support-tracker-data-6453/>

¹¹ Krastev I., Holmes S. *The Light that Failed: Why the West is Losing the Fight for Democracy*. New York : Pegasus Books, 2019. URL: <https://books.google.com.ua/books?id=B5eGDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=uk#v=onepage&q&f=false>

At the end of the 19th century, the concept of solidarity experienced another fundamental transformation: it made the transition from a moral ideal to an objective sociological fact. In his fundamental work “On the Division of Social Labor” (1893), the French sociologist Emile Durkheim investigated the mechanisms that ensure social cohesion of modern societies in the conditions of growing individualism¹².

Durkheim distinguished two types of social relations. In traditional and primitive societies, “mechanical solidarity” dominates, which rests on the strict similarity of individuals and their complete subordination to the collective consciousness. However, in modern industrial societies it is replaced by «organic solidarity».¹² It arises as a direct consequence of deep social division of labor and specialization. According to Durkheim, individuals in the modern world are united not because they are the same, but precisely because they are different and critically need each other (similar to how different organs in a living body interact). Thus, Durkheim scientifically argued that interdependence is not just an ethical choice, but an objective structural reality of modern society, which subsequently opened the way for the transformation of solidarity into an official political and legal doctrine of states^{12 13}.

2. Institutionalization of solidarity as the basis of the European social model

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the concept of solidarity acquired a new, practical dimension, having made the transition from the philosophical and humanistic intuition of Pierre Leroux and the sociological observations of Émile Durkheim to a systematized socio-political doctrine. The central figure in this process was the French politician, lawyer, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Léon Bourgeois, who is rightly called the “father of solidarity”.¹⁴ In his key work *Solidarité* (1896), Bourgeois set the goal of translating the moral imperative of solidarity into the language of social law and political institutions¹⁵.

Bourgeois relied on the sociological fact of objective social interdependence established by Durkheim in the conditions of the division of labor. If Durkheim proved that society is an organism where everyone depends on everyone, then Bourgeois drew a political conclusion from this:

¹² Durkheim É. *De la division du travail social: étude sur l'organisation des sociétés supérieures*. Paris : Félix Alcan, 1893. 416 p.

¹³ Sangiovanni A. *Solidarity in the European Union*. Oxford Journal of Legal Studies. 2013. Vol. 33, No. 2. P. 213–241.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Bourgeois L. *Solidarité*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1896. 287 p.

responsibility in such a society cannot be purely individual. His doctrine became the ideological foundation of the French state of the the French Third Republic, which sought ways to reconcile individual freedoms and the demands of social justice^{14 15 16}.

The most important conceptual contribution of Léon Bourgeois was the transformation of solidarity from the realm of voluntary morality and Christian charity into a quasi-legal obligation. The foundation of this transformation was the idea of “social debt” (*dette sociale*)¹⁵. Bourgeois thoroughly argued that no person creates his opportunities and wealth completely independently. Every individual, at birth, enters into a kind of “quasi-contract” with society and from the very beginning enjoys the accumulated benefits created by the labor of previous generations and the efforts of contemporaries (infrastructure, knowledge, cultural capital, security).

Since individual success relies to a large extent on this social heritage, each person is a priori a debtor to society. This de facto interdependence generates not just a moral but a legal obligation to repay this debt. The just repayment of the social debt requires the individual to participate in the common good through work, law-abiding, civic engagement, and paying taxes for the benefit of those less fortunate or those who contribute most to the public good. Thus, individual rights were recognized as impossible without the fulfillment of social duties, which formed a new solid foundation of justice¹⁷.

The political doctrine of solidarism was developed as a conscious “third way” of social development, designed to overcome the extremes of the two dominant ideologies: classical liberalism and Marxist socialism. Bourgeois sharply criticized economic liberalism for its absolute individualism and belief that the market would solve everything; he argued that freedom of choice was a fiction, since people were born with profoundly unequal initial opportunities. At the same time, he rejected state socialism because of its orientation towards class struggle, the collectivization of property and the danger of egalitarian collectivism, which absorbs individual freedom by the mass^{17 18}.

Solidarism, on the other hand, affirmed interdependence without subordination: the preservation of individual freedom in a mandatory combination with the guarantee of social justice and solidarity responsibility. Bourgeois interpreted solidarity not as charity, but as a form of social justice in action¹⁷.

¹⁶ Durkheim É. *De la division du travail social: étude sur l'organisation des sociétés supérieures*. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1893. 416 p.

¹⁷ Bourgeois L. *Solidarité*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1896. 287 p.

¹⁸ Sangiovanni A. *Solidarity in the European Union*. Oxford Journal of Legal Studies. 2013. Vol. 33, No. 2. P. 213–241.

In practice, this meant the need for state intervention to “restore social equilibrium”. The institutionalization of the principle of solidarity manifested itself in the creation of specific mechanisms that later became the foundation of the welfare state (État social)^{17 18} and the entire modern European social model. Key instruments were:

- Progressive taxation: viewed not as a punishment for the wealthy or an encroachment on private property, but as a legitimate state mechanism for the enforcement and fair repayment of the “social debt” to the community¹⁷.
- Social security system: creation of state protection programs (pensions, unemployment benefits, health insurance, insurance against accidents at work), which acted as an institutionalized way of distributing risks on the basis of solidarity¹⁸. Thanks to this, when an individual worker found himself in a vulnerable position, the healthy and working part of society had a duty to support him.

Thus, thanks to the doctrine of Leon Bourgeois, solidarity acquired a concrete institutional dimension, transforming from a philosophical abstraction into a normative principle of modern society and the political and legal foundation of European welfare states.

3. Constructing solidarity as cross-border risk sharing

If in the 19th and 20th centuries the concept of solidarity developed mainly as an ethical basis for an intra-state social contract and a foundation for building welfare states, then the global transformations and security shocks of the 21st century brought it to the international and geopolitical level^{19 20,21}. Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 became one of the most profound tests for the European political order since the Cold War, which actualized the fundamental problem: who, for whom and under what conditions is ready to distribute cross-border risks, economic costs and political responsibility²². This security crisis tested the ability of European societies to act as a single community that recognizes their mutual dependence in the face of an external existential threat.

¹⁹ Börzel T. A., Risse T. From the euro to the Schengen crises: European solidarity under stress. *Journal of European Public Policy*. 2018. Vol. 25, No. 1. P. 83–101.

²⁰ Gerhards J., Lengfeld H., Ignác Z. S., Kley F. K., Priem M. *European Solidarity in Times of Crisis: Towards an Evolution of European Citizenship*. London : Routledge, 2019. 248 p.

²¹ Leroux P. *De l’humanité, de son principe, et de son avenir*. Paris : Perrotin, 1840. 948 p.

²² Andor L. Europe in the shadow of war in Ukraine. Foundation for European Progressive Studies. 2023. URL: <https://feeps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/5.-Europe-in-the-shadow-of-war-in-Ukraine-by-Laszlo-Andor.pdf>

In modern political science, this concept is undergoing a significant rethinking. Solidarity is no longer seen as an abstract moral virtue or a mere declarative position of compassion. Instead, it is conceptualized as a practical political choice that entails concrete material, institutional, and security consequences for citizens and states. International solidarity in this context means the willingness of societies to support policies that require burden-sharing: from providing financial assistance to accepting the risks associated with sanctions pressure or military support^{19 20 21}.

At the same time, such cross-border solidarity is always limited and conditional. It directly depends on whom citizens recognize as part of their political community, which crises they perceive as common and which as exclusively external, and the extent to which they are willing to accept losses for the sake of others²³. The case of European support for Ukraine is a unique indicator, as it allows us to test the extent to which solidarity is able to overcome the boundaries of formal institutional membership (for example, in the European Union or NATO) and extend to a community beyond formal institutional boundaries that is perceived by Europeans as close, vulnerable, and strategically important²⁴.

An important characteristic of modern international solidarity is its complex, non-monolithic structure. Researchers differentiate it into several key dimensions that have different political sensitivities and rely on different mobilization mechanisms. In particular, macro-level analysis allows us to distinguish humanitarian solidarity and political-institutional (or security) solidarity²⁵.

Humanitarian solidarity reflects the willingness of a society to accept people fleeing war and provide them with shelter and basic support. A striking example is the support of Europeans for allowing millions of Ukrainian refugees to enter and live in their countries after the start of a full-scale invasion²⁶. This type of solidarity is usually perceived by societies as an immediate humanitarian obligation, driven by empathy, and therefore the average level of its support has traditionally remained the highest.

²³ Gerhards J., Lengfeld H., Ignác Z. S., Kley F. K., Priem M. *European Solidarity in Times of Crisis: Towards an Evolution of European Citizenship*. London : Routledge, 2019. 248 p.

²⁴ Krastev I., Leonard M. *Peace versus Justice: The coming European split over the war in Ukraine*. European Council on Foreign Relations. 2022. URL: <https://ecfr.eu/publication/peace-versus-justice-the-coming-european-split-over-the-war-in-ukraine/>

²⁵ European University Institute, & YouGov. (2018–present). *Solidarity in Europe project*. European Governance and Politics Programme, European University Institute

²⁶ Hoffmann I., de Vries C. E. *Under Pressure: The War in Ukraine and European Public Opinion*. eupinions / Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2022. URL: <https://eupinions.eu/de/text/under-pressure-the-war-in-ukraine-and-european-public-opinion>

In contrast, political-institutional and security solidarity requires a readiness for much tougher, more costly, and longer-term commitments. It includes the approval of large-scale economic sanctions against the aggressor state, the provision of weapons and military equipment, agreement to increase national defense spending, and support for the accelerated expansion of supranational alliances, such as the prospect of Ukraine joining the EU. This dimension of solidarity involves not only ad hoc assistance to victims of the conflict, but also a conscious political readiness to include another state in the European institutional, symbolic, and security space^{27 28}.

The empirical development of European support for Ukraine confirms this multidimensional structure of solidarity. Humanitarian solidarity was institutionalized through the activation and repeated extension of the EU Temporary Protection Directive, which provided displaced Ukrainians with residence rights, access to labour markets, education, social welfare and medical assistance. By the end of March 2026, Germany, Poland and Czechia hosted the largest numbers of beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine in the EU, which demonstrates that solidarity was not limited to symbolic declarations but involved long-term social and administrative commitments by host societies. At the same time, public opinion data show that support for Ukraine remained differentiated across policy areas: Europeans expressed particularly strong support for welcoming people fleeing the war and for providing financial and humanitarian assistance, while support for sanctions, military assistance and Ukraine's institutional integration into the EU reflected a more demanding form of political and security solidarity²⁹. This confirms that the Ukrainian case reveals not one single form of solidarity, but a layered structure in which humanitarian compassion, geopolitical threat perception and institutional responsibility interact.

The difference between these dimensions is fundamental for understanding the behavior of states. While the reception of refugees can be justified by universal human emotions and compassion, military and institutional solidarity depends much more on the geopolitical views of society, attitudes towards Russia, the level of trust in NATO and the EU,

²⁷ Andor L. Europe in the shadow of war in Ukraine. Foundation for European Progressive Studies. 2023. URL: <https://feps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/5.-Europe-in-the-shadow-of-war-in-Ukraine-by-Laszlo-Andor.pdf>

²⁸ Hoffmann I., de Vries C. E. Under Pressure: The War in Ukraine and European Public Opinion. eupinions / Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2022. URL: <https://eupinions.eu/de/text/under-pressure-the-war-in-ukraine-and-european-public-opinion>

²⁹ European Commission. The EU's response to the war in Ukraine. Standard Eurobarometer 104. Autumn 2025. 2025. URL: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3378>

as well as on the perception of a threat to national sovereignty^{28 30}. Studies show that even in those societies where political or ideological filters block support for tough security measures or EU membership, there is often relatively stable support for humanitarian aid to refugees, which convincingly argues the multidimensional and multilevel nature of solidarity in international politics of the 21st century.

4. Formation of political and ideological boundaries of modern solidarity

Attitudes towards international solidarity do not develop in a neutral political vacuum; they are closely integrated into broader societal conflicts around European integration, national sovereignty, migration, globalisation and trust in supranational institutions³¹. Empirical research shows that political ideology functions as a powerful micro-level filter through which citizens interpret external threats and their obligations to others³². In particular, right-wing populist and Eurosceptic political orientations consistently negatively correlate with the willingness to support cross-border solidarity and can block its development even in countries close to the source of the threat³³.

For voters with right-wing Eurosceptic views, aid to another state is often seen not as a form of protection of the common European order or democratic values, but as an unwanted external burden.³⁴ In such an ideological context, cross-border support begins to be perceived as an imposed financial obligation by the EU or NATO, as an unjustified risk of conflict escalation, or as a direct threat to national sovereignty. Accordingly, ideology can significantly weaken the transformation of objective geopolitical proximity into a sense of shared vulnerability, turning the issue of international solidarity into an instrument of domestic political division.

³⁰ European University Institute, & YouGov. (2018–present). Solidarity in Europe project. European Governance and Politics Programme, European University Institute.

³¹ Gerhards J., Lengfeld H., Ignác Z. S., Kley F. K., Priem M. European Solidarity in Times of Crisis: Towards an Evolution of European Citizenship. London : Routledge, 2019. 248 p.

³² Hoffmann I., de Vries C. E. Under Pressure: The War in Ukraine and European Public Opinion. eupinions / Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2022. URL: <https://eupinions.eu/de/text/under-pressure-the-war-in-ukraine-and-european-public-opinion>

³³ Kiel Institute for the World Economy. Ukraine Support Tracker Data. 2026. URL: <https://www.kielinstitut.de/publications/ukraine-support-tracker-data-6453/>

³⁴ Krastev I., Leonard M. Peace versus Justice: The coming European split over the war in Ukraine. European Council on Foreign Relations. 2022. URL: <https://ecfr.eu/publication/peace-versus-justice-the-coming-european-split-over-the-war-in-ukraine/>

In the initial stages of global crises or armed conflicts, mechanisms for mobilizing solidarity often rely on the so-called affective politics³⁵. In moments of external shocks, fear of further escalation, strong empathy for the victims of aggression, moral anger, and feelings of compassion can sharply increase support for humanitarian and security measures^{36 37}. However, such emotional mobilization has a significant drawback – it is extremely unstable.

Solidarity based solely on emotional shock is inevitably fragile, as its intensity tends to decline over time. The risk of a rapid decline in support is due to a number of factors³⁸: the emergence of “war fatigue”, increasing economic costs and inflation, as well as the aggravation of internal political polarization, when other national problems begin to compete for public attention. In addition, there is a gradual normalization of conflict in the information space – the constant presence of news about destruction and victims turns into a routine, which reduces the level of emotional response of the audience^{35,36}. Therefore, in order to maintain its duration, solidarity requires institutional mechanisms, political narratives and a rational awareness that helping others is part of a wider European interest. The depth and sustainability of international solidarity are determined not only by the fear of a common threat, but also by whether the recipient country is perceived as part of “one’s” political community. Solidarity is always limited in nature and depends on a social consensus on who is worthy of risk-sharing^{39 40}. If the recipient country is viewed by the donor society as a completely external state, the willingness to provide cross-border support remains low and is limited mainly to short-term humanitarian assistance.

However, the situation changes radically when the recipient of aid (such as Ukraine in the face of a full-scale invasion) begins to be perceived as an

³⁵ Chouliaraki L. *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism*. Cambridge : Polity Press, 2013. 240 p.

³⁶ Chouliaraki L. Post-humanitarianism: Humanitarian communication beyond a politics of pity. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. 2010. Vol. 13, No. 2. P. 107–126

³⁷ Hoffmann I., de Vries C. E. Under Pressure: The War in Ukraine and European Public Opinion. *eupinions* / Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2022. URL: <https://eupinions.eu/de/text/under-pressure-the-war-in-ukraine-and-european-public-opinion>

³⁸ Krastev I., Holmes S. *The Light that Failed: Why the West is Losing the Fight for Democracy*. New York: Pegasus Books, 2019. URL: <https://books.google.com.ua/books?id=B5eGDwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=uk#v=onepage&q&f=false>

³⁹ Gerhards J., Lengfeld H., Ignác Z. S., Kley F. K., Priem M. *European Solidarity in Times of Crisis: Towards an Evolution of European Citizenship*. London : Routledge, 2019. 248 p.

⁴⁰ Leroux P. *De l’humanité, de son principe, et de son avenir*. Paris : Perrotin, 1840. 948 p.

integral part of its own European value, political and security space⁴¹. The more citizens identify the “Other” as part of a broader European “we”, the higher their capacity for empathy and solidarity becomes. Such a perception expands the boundaries of solidarity, moving it from the level of situational assistance to victims of conflict to the level of strategic political responsibility. This factor is critically important for ensuring long-term institutional solidarity (in particular, maintaining a state’s membership in the EU), as it requires a conscious willingness to permanently incorporate another country into the symbolic and institutional architecture of Europe^{42,43}.

5. Factors of the global transformation of modern solidarity

The global transformations of the 21st century are caused not only by geopolitical changes, but also by profound institutional, political and technological mutations in the very structure of international solidarity. In the period from the 1970s to the present, there has been an unprecedented instrumentalization of the sphere of humanitarian aid and development, accompanied by the retreat of “grand narratives” and the growing technologization of communications. The combined effect of these factors has led to a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of solidarity: it has transformed from collective political action into individualized, commercialized practice, giving rise to the phenomenon of the “ironic observer”⁴⁴.

The first powerful driver of this transformation has been the marketization of humanitarian practice. As a result, solidarity is being instrumentalized: it begins to serve the priorities of the Western donor market, often ignoring real needs. This process is legitimized through the neoliberal paradigm of the “new development economy” that imposes a technocratic agenda. International support is reduced to a depoliticized managerialism focused on microeconomic indicators and measurable “impact,” while ignoring the systemic macroeconomic causes of global inequality and injustice⁴⁵.

⁴¹ Hoffmann I., de Vries C. E. Under Pressure: The War in Ukraine and European Public Opinion. eupinions / Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2022. URL: <https://eupinions.eu/de/text/under-pressure-the-war-in-ukraine-and-european-public-opinion>

⁴² Krastev I., Leonard M. Peace versus Justice: The coming European split over the war in Ukraine. European Council on Foreign Relations. 2022. URL: <https://ecfr.eu/publication/peace-versus-justice-the-coming-european-split-over-the-war-in-ukraine/>

⁴³ Gerhards J., Lengfeld H., Ignácz Z. S., Kley F. K., Priem M. European Solidarity in Times of Crisis: Towards an Evolution of European Citizenship. London: Routledge, 2019. 248 p.

⁴⁴ Chouliaraki L. The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013. 240 p.

⁴⁵ Chouliaraki L. Post-humanitarianism: Humanitarian communication beyond a politics of pity. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. 2010. Vol. 13, No. 2. P. 107–126.

Economic instrumentalization coincided with the political crisis of universalist ideologies after the end of the Cold War. Historically, solidarity has relied on two major narratives: the apolitical “solidarity of salvation” (the Red Cross) and the radical “solidarity of revolution” (Marxist and anti-colonial movements). However, both models have been severely criticized: the former has been accused of complicity and compromise with corrupt regimes, the latter of reproducing Western dominance and imposing totalizing projects. The collapse of these macro-narratives has led to the emergence of a new, depoliticized paradigm of aid. The demands of structural justice have been replaced by a “critique of authenticity,” which has shifted the focus from the pathologies of the capitalist system to the alienation and suffering of the individual himself. As a result, morality oriented towards the Other has been replaced by an individualistic morality of “feel-good altruism” – an apolitical form of compassion in which the pursuit of personal gratification overrides the demands of macro-social justice.⁴⁶ The technologization of new media and the penetration of corporate branding into the humanitarian sphere have cemented this shift at the level of public consciousness. Classic humanitarian appeals, which relied on shocking images and formed an objective “ethics of pity,” have given way to interactive communications that focus on the subjective emotions of the donor. Such communication blurs the lines between commercial exchange and philanthropic duty, transforming compassion into convenient consumer activism. It is in this context of global transformation that the ambivalent figure of the Western public actor emerges. He is characterized by alienated knowledge and skepticism about universal moral truths, but at the same time – a superficial willingness “to do something” for those who suffer. A fundamental mutation of the communicative structure of the humanitarian sphere has occurred: a transition from a theatrical structure, where the encounter with the vulnerable Other was an ethical and political event, to a mirror structure, where this encounter is reduced to the narcissistic self-reflection of the Western subject^{47 48}.

The market, the media and the renewed philosophy of aid have transformed solidarity from a collectivist politics of beliefs to a reflexive politics of lifestyle. Such superficial, consumerist solidarity makes moral action conditional, as it directly places the satisfaction of the self at the center of support, avoiding political engagement with the real conditions of

⁴⁶ Chouliaraki L. *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013. 240 p.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Chouliaraki L. Post-humanitarianism: Humanitarian communication beyond a politics of pity. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. 2010. Vol. 13, No. 2. P. 107–126.

human vulnerability. Ultimately, this shapes an ethnocentric approach that treats political disputes as irrelevant and tacitly reproduces the global distribution of power between the wealthy and the poor. To overcome this depoliticized consumer activism (including superficial celebrity endorsements and “clicktivism”), contemporary aid requires a return to the “theatricality” of the public sphere – a mechanism of alienation that destroys the narcissistic comfort of branding and confronts us with the humanity of the Other^{49 47}. The alternative to skepticism must be an agonistic solidarity that involves acknowledging the existing politicization of aid, giving voice to the most vulnerable communities (as in convergent journalism), and a willingness on the part of the West to confront complex moral dilemmas about justice, power, and otherness. Only through such politicized, structural interaction can international solidarity remain an effective tool for systemic change in the 21st century^{50 51 52}.

This transformation can be observed empirically in the gradual shift from symbolic and humanitarian responses to more institutionalized forms of support, including macro-financial assistance, sanctions policy, military aid, temporary protection for displaced Ukrainians and the political recognition of Ukraine’s European perspective. These measures indicate that Ukraine was increasingly framed not merely as an object of humanitarian compassion, but as a political subject whose security was directly connected with the security of Europe.

The case of European support for Ukraine after February 2022 became a test of the ability of Western societies to move beyond the syndrome of the “ironic spectator”. At the initial stage of the invasion, global reactions partly reproduced the logic of symbolic activism, including social media campaigns, public gestures of support and emotionally driven forms of humanitarian engagement. However, the scale and brutality of the existential threat soon revealed the limitations of depoliticized compassion. Ukraine could not be reduced to a passive object of humanitarian sympathy; it

⁴⁹ Andor L. Europe in the shadow of war in Ukraine. Foundation for European Progressive Studies. 2023. URL: <https://feeps-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/5.-Europe-in-the-shadow-of-war-in-Ukraine-by-Laszlo-Andor.pdf>

⁵⁰ Hoffmann I., de Vries C. E. Under Pressure: The War in Ukraine and European Public Opinion. eupinions / Bertelsmann Stiftung. 2022. URL: <https://eupinions.eu/de/text/under-pressure-the-war-in-ukraine-and-european-public-opinion>

⁵¹ Krastev I., Leonard M. Peace versus Justice: The coming European split over the war in Ukraine. European Council on Foreign Relations. 2022. URL: <https://ecfr.eu/publication/peace-versus-justice-the-coming-european-split-over-the-war-in-ukraine/>

⁵² Sangiovanni A. Solidarity in the European Union. *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*. 2013. Vol. 33, No. 2. P. 213–241.

emerged as a political subject whose security was directly connected with the security of Europe.

This shift pushed European solidarity beyond symbolic recognition and towards more demanding forms of political and security commitment. It was reflected in sanctions against Russia, military assistance to Ukraine, macro-financial support, temporary protection for displaced Ukrainians and the political recognition of Ukraine's European perspective. In this sense, the Ukrainian case demonstrates the transition from post-humanitarian compassion to agonistic solidarity, understood as a form of support that openly recognizes conflict, political responsibility and the need for difficult collective choices.

Therefore, agonistic solidarity helps Ukraine convert the initial emotional shock of the international community into a strategic political responsibility of the West, capable of confronting an existential military threat.

CONCLUSIONS

The conducted research allows us to assert that in the conditions of global transformations of the 21st century, solidarity has undergone a significant change in its nature, functions and spatial boundaries. If during the 19th–20th centuries it developed mainly as a mechanism of intra-social integration and the normative basis of the welfare state, then modern security, economic and humanitarian challenges have transformed it into an important factor of international politics and geopolitics.

The chapter demonstrates that modern solidarity is less and less based on the moral imperative of mutual assistance and is increasingly taking on the character of conscious political interdependence. In conditions of global risks, support for other states ceases to be exclusively an act of humanitarian compassion and turns into an instrument of collective self-defense, preservation of international order and protection of common values. In this context, solidarity acts as a mechanism for cross-border distribution of risks, responsibilities and resources.

It has been established that the sustainability of international solidarity is determined not only by the presence of a common threat, but primarily by the process of forming a collective political identity. The willingness of societies to support other states directly depends on the extent to which they include them in the symbolic space of the common “we”. That is why not only material or security factors are of decisive importance, but also historical memory, political narratives, emotional mobilization and ideas about a common future.

At the same time, the global commercialization of the humanitarian sphere, the digitalization of communications and the spread of “consumer activism” practices create risks of depoliticization of solidarity.

The transformation of support into symbolic gestures or an instrument of personal moral self-realization significantly limits its ability to ensure structural social changes and long-term political commitments.

The case of international support for Ukraine after the start of the full-scale Russian invasion demonstrates the formation of a new model of solidarity that goes beyond traditional humanitarian aid. European support for Ukraine has gradually transformed from an emotional reaction to aggression to the awareness of a common security fate and political responsibility. This indicates the emergence of a qualitatively new type of international interaction, based not only on compassion, but also on the recognition of interdependence and common strategic interests.

Thus, an adequate form of solidarity in the conditions of global transformations of the 21st century is agonistic solidarity, which recognizes the political nature of international assistance, allows for the existence of a conflict of interests and at the same time ensures readiness for joint action to protect democratic values, international law and security. It is this model of solidarity that can become one of the key mechanisms for maintaining the stability of the democratic world in conditions of growing global instability.

SUMMARY

The chapter examines the transformation of the concept of solidarity in the context of global political, security and social changes of the 21st century. The evolution of solidarity from a legal and socio-philosophical phenomenon to an important factor in international politics and geopolitics is analyzed. It is substantiated that in the contemporary context solidarity goes beyond national communities and takes the form of cross-border distribution of risks, responsibilities and resources. The features of humanitarian, political-institutional and security solidarity are determined, as well as the factors influencing their formation. The role of political ideology, collective identity, historical memory and emotional mobilization in supporting international solidarity is shown. The analysis demonstrates that the commercialization of the humanitarian sphere and the development of digital media contribute to the spread of depoliticized forms of support, which reduce the potential of solidarity as a mechanism for social change. The example of international support for Ukraine argues that modern solidarity is increasingly based on the awareness of the commonality of security interests and political responsibility. It is concluded that the most adequate response to the challenges of modernity is agonistic solidarity, which combines moral support with a willingness to make long-term political and institutional commitments.

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