

## THE SOLIDARITY IN TIMES OF EUROPEAN MIGRATION CRISIS. GERMANY CASE STUDY

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**Abstract.** *The article deals with the problem of preserving transnational solidarity in the face of mass migration movements in Europe. The research focus is on Germany, given its major role in the issue. The history of previous migrations to Germany shows the country's experience in resolving demographic challenges. The article ends with an analysis of the public response to the crisis, which illustrates the weaknesses and strengths of modern national politics.*

**Keywords:** *solidarity, european migration crisis, refugee movements, public responses, Germany, guilt complex.*

**Introduction.** Recent developments around the world, including the refugee and migration crises, have sparked controversy about the state of global solidarity; some people see it declining and others feel that more and more people are showing support for people in need. Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka argue that solidarity is not fading away completely as it is not a phenomenon prone to rapid changes but they admit that certain aspects of it seem to be in decline [1:16].

There are a number of political factors that impact the state of solidarity, such as political community, political agents, political institutions and policy regimes [1: 19]. Their respective roles have been displayed through the diversity of responses to the refugee crises in the EU. It should be emphasized that the EU did not and does not have one unified stance towards the migration and refugee crises. National responses seem to have been largely a product of the different economic, social and political conditions of EU members. Another major factor was the level of influence of xenophobic discourse by various populist parties, which generally presented the refugee crisis as an existential threat to Europe. Xenophobic discourse was seen even in the countries that had been traditionally considered liberal and tolerant, but was more extreme in the countries where far-right parties were already represented in government [2: 8]. Populist parties across the EU have used the crisis to broaden their base of supporters and increase their influence on the public policy agenda. In general the EU

itself was not prepared for the diversity of national responses or the rise of xenophobic sentiments.

### Major shifts in migration

Several major global migration trends can be observed since the 1990s [3: 27]. One of the more salient developments is that many industrialized countries have experienced high rates of temporary migration [4: 27]. Temporary migration is seen as a solution to employment shortages in industrialized countries and a remedy for rapid population growth and poor employment opportunities in developing countries. Such migration mainly targets trainees, seasonal workers and people seeking short-term contracts. With the growing scope and importance of temporary migration, several issues associated with it have become apparent.

First of all, there is competition among industrialized countries for highly skilled workers because in general it seems that demand for skilled labor in a number of fields is higher than the global supply and, secondly, two opposing regimes for regulating migrant workers have emerged: state-centered and trade-related systems (ibid). In general, these regimes do not treat the migrants and their interests as a major consideration while devising their policies and rules.

### German experience in the migration issue

As the core economy of the EU, Germany strongly influences its policies and impacts the implementation of EU-level solutions such as European relocation schemes, safe guard missions in the Mediterranean or more

financial assistance for EU border countries or FRONTEX. Germany was affected by refugee flows entering Europe through Italy and Spain in 2010-2011 and was a major destination during 2015 migration surge. But these migration challenges were not the first in German history. Starting from the 1950s and 1960s, Germany has experienced a high rate of migration due to massive recruitment of guest workers [5: 75]. The first wave of guest workers came from Italy, the Iberian Peninsula and Greece, and from the late 1960s, Yugoslavia and Turkey became major sending countries [6: 62]. Even though initially the guest worker program was intended as a temporary immigration scheme, in the end many workers decided to stay in Germany permanently and moreover, migration inflows were bolstered in following years by family reunification immigration [5:75] During the 1980s, Germany put lot of emphasis on voluntary return policies rather than recruiting new labor migrants [6: 62]. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, it experienced high inflows of asylum seekers as well as ethnic Germans from post-socialist states. However, these inflows of immigration were not considered labor-oriented waves; in public discourse new immigrants were portrayed as asylum seekers, which raised xenophobic sentiments (ibid). The next important period of Germany's labor migration history was the adoption of the 2005 Immigration Act that introduced two completely new acts and changed existing laws [7:49]. The Residence Act became the main element of the Immigration Act and combined the regulation of non-EU/EEA migrants' residence, employment and integration in Germany in one legal framework. These measures simplified and accelerated the integration of migrants. Since 2005, several measures were introduced in order to liberalize the German labor market. The most important step was the implementation of the EU Blue Card Directive on August 1, 2012. It gives the possibility for any person who is in possession of tertiary education and a job offer of at least EUR 46 400 a year to obtain a residence permit [8].

#### **Public response in Germany**

Although Germany has a background in accepting migrants, nothing prepared them

for the situation in the summer of 2015. Refugees from Syria and other countries of the Middle East, Africa and Asia swept through Germany. The public response was unexpected- there was an unprecedented wave of solidarity with innumerable initiatives and individual citizens committed to what was called the new German 'welcoming culture' ('Willkommenskultur')[9]. These initiatives did not only engage in the provision of immediate help (e.g., clothing, food, shelter, language courses and administrative help), but also rallied for migrant and refugee rights.

The source of these movements can be found in German politics of memory. The sheer weight of history has forced Germany to address its crimes — and, by and large, to reject the forces of destructive nationalism and xenophobia. The guilt complex presents nationalism as a destructive force, and encourages tolerance of other cultures in its citizens. Its influence can be observed both within the government and among the population [10]. But regardless, over time the inability of German authorities to handle the massive inflow of migrants fueled mobilization of populist, right-wing and xenophobic groups, who dampened the 'welcoming culture' considerably and stirred controversy about the correct policies for the German administration to pursue. As a consequence of these conflicts, solidarity itself became a contested issue. While some rallied for a solidarity with all people in need of help – the refugees included – and insisted that “we can do this” [11], others, including Horst Seehofer, the leader of Christian Social Union in Bavaria, proclaimed the need to refrain from unlimited assistance and for exclusive support of Germans, fearing that the multiple crises in the world would eventually hit Germany as well [12]. Consequently, it seems as though solidarity has become a contentious field that separates people with different political orientations, cultural beliefs and potentially social standing.

According to TransSOL's report regarding refugee policies in Germany, those who are satisfied with the government are more likely to support refugees themselves [13]. This is a result of the debate around the government's refugee policies in recent years. Those who feel empathy with refugees and agree to the

German “welcome policy” also help them. In comparison, people who disagree with the government’s open border policy are also not willing to help refugees (ibid). Across the issue fields, social proximity and empathy with certain groups helps to encourage solidarity-like behavior.

**Conclusion.** It can be concluded that an unprecedented crisis of migrants gave a new impetus to the development of humanitarian policy. Today, Europe needs both internal national and external regional solidarity. Internal solidarity should be directed to the willingness of the population to help refugees in need. An example of public engagement observed during a large immigrant influx into Germany in 2015 proves that this is possible.

External solidarity should be directed towards coordinated action among member-states. Europe must acknowledge that unilateral policy decisions by one country have large effects on neighboring countries. No country can shoulder the burden of the refugee crisis alone.

This implies that migration and flows of refugees should be controlled within the framework of a single agreement of the EU countries. But we first need to create conditions that prevent the radicalization of society and give a strong signal to humanity to show that Europe's values are valid in difficult times. If all obstacles are overcome, the refugee crisis can eventually become a chance to revitalize the Union.

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**СОЛИДАРНОСТЬ ВО ВРЕМЯ ЕВРОПЕЙСКОГО МИГРАЦИОННОГО КРИЗИСА.  
ОБЗОР ГЕРМАНИИ**

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***Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается проблема сохранения транснациональной солидарности в рамках массовой миграции в Европе. Фокус исследования сделан на Германии, учитывая ее важную роль и влияние в этом вопросе. История предыдущих миграций в Германию показывает опыт страны в решении демографических проблем. Статья заканчивается анализом общественной реакции на кризис, который иллюстрирует слабые и сильные стороны современной национальной политики.*

***Ключевые слова:** солидарность, европейский миграционный кризис, движения беженцев, общественная реакция, Германия, комплекс вины.*