

# Solidarity as a Political Practice: A European Perspective

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Cesare Sposetti SJ

Cesare Sposetti, SJ is a Jesuit based in Milan and is the managing editor of *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, a monthly review of the Italian Jesuits on social issues and Catholic Social Teaching. He holds Master degrees in Law and Political Science, and is currently involved the political formation of young Italians, in projects such as the “I Care Lab”, promoted by *Aggiornamenti Sociali*.

## INTRODUCTION

“Più Italia, meno Europa” (More Italy, less Europe). This was one of the slogans adopted by the Italian far-right party *Lega* (the League) for the last European elections. Another one was “Cambiamo l’Europa prima che lei cambi noi” (Let’s change Europe, before it changes us). *Fratelli d’Italia* (Brothers of Italy), the political party of the Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, adopted an apparently more moderate approach, but not too dissimilar in fact, stating “L’Italia cambia l’Europa” (Italy changes Europe). In these slogans, the particular, the nation State, takes priority: the European dimension can only play a role if it is functional and “useful” to the national level.

These are a few examples of the way some right-wing Italian political parties chose to present themselves for the last European elections. Considering the strong results obtained, particularly by Meloni’s party, this strategy was effective.<sup>1</sup> As we know, right-wing parties obtained good results almost everywhere in the continent with very similar slogans and stances. Though different readings are possible concerning these results, the great success of these narratives is a matter of fact, and raises important questions concerning the future of the European Union.

Despite these parties and movements usually not openly favouring the dissolution of the European Union, it is clear that their vision regarding its future appears to be very different from that of the previous efforts of European integration, leaning on restoring a greater part of the power of the national States.<sup>2</sup> Many of the principles that guided the process of European integration appear then to be seriously challenged nowadays. Among them, we find especially the principle of solidarity.

When dealing with solidarity, we are aware of handling an “essentially contested concept,” which “inevitably involve[s] endless disputes

about [its] proper uses on the part of [its] users.”<sup>3</sup> So, more than attempting to find a single universal definition of the concept (a rather impossible task), it appears more interesting and relevant to try to detect the current application of this principle, particularly in the context of European politics. Drawing on that, it will be interesting to trace back the origin of the concept in sociology, political philosophy, and in Catholic Social Teaching, and to try to see what perspectives solidarity can offer in the current European political context.

## A EUROPEAN HISTORY

“Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a *de facto* solidarity.” This very famous quotation is taken from the declaration delivered by the French minister of Foreign Affairs, Robert Schuman, in Paris on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1950. Considered by many one of the most important founding texts of the process of European integration,<sup>4</sup> it already highlights the central role of the principle of solidarity in this context. Schuman spoke of a particular kind of solidarity, called in the original French version *solidarité de fait*. This concept was used in a very pragmatic sense, as a way to express the concrete steps that the European States were called to take in order to overcome the previous divisions and rivalries, in order to foster cooperation, especially in the field of the production of coal and steel,<sup>5</sup> and, more generally, in the economic domain.

The concept was then used in this way in the treaties of the first European communities, as a practical way to create common bases for economic development.<sup>6</sup> It was only with the *Treaty of Maastricht* (1992), which officially instituted the European Union, that the principle started to be used in a wider political sense. It was used for example in its

1 *Fratelli d’Italia* gained 28.8 per cent of total votes, securing the best performance among the Italian parties, though with only 49.7 per cent of the general voter turnout in the country. See ‘Elezioni Europee 2024: I Risultati Elettorali e Le Analisi Post-Voto Di Ipsos’, 18 July 2024, <https://www.ipsos.com/it-it/elezioni-europee-2024-risultati-elettorali-analisi-post-voto-ipsos>.

2 Giorgia Serughetti and Gilles Gressani, *L’Europa e La Sua Ombra. Un Continente Di Fronte Alla Responsabilità Del Futuro* (Milano: Bompiani, 2023), <https://www.boa.unimib.it/handle/10281/430244>.

3 W. B. Gallie, ‘Essentially Contested Concepts’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56, no. 1 (1956): 167–98.

4 Robert Schuman, ‘Declaration of 9 May 1950’, Fondation Robert Schuman, 9 May 1950, <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/declaration-of-9-may-1950>.

5 Which was the object of the first European community, the European Coal and Steel Community, established in 1951.

6 Claudia Massarotti, ‘Il Principio Di Solidarietà Nel Diritto Dell’Unione Europea’ (Astrid, 2024), <https://www.astrid-online.it/static/upload/d56bd56b553f3d21d90c090b6090f7f91b07.pdf>.

preamble in reference to history, cultures, and traditions of the different member States, and with reference to the foreign affairs of the European Union. The treaty moreover stated that the European Union “shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child” and that “[i]t shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States.”<sup>7</sup> More specifically on political solidarity, it stated that:

*[t]he Member States shall work together to enhance and develop their mutual political solidarity. They shall refrain from any action which is contrary to the interests of the Union or likely to impair its effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations.*<sup>8</sup>

Further references to solidarity in the same treaty were related to border control and to the legislation concerning immigration and asylum.

The most important and extensive recognition of the principle of solidarity was finally included in the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, signed in 2000, which became legally binding in all the Member States with the Treaty of Lisbon of 2009. Its preamble includes solidarity among the fundamental “indivisible, universal values” of the European Union, along with human dignity, freedom, and equality. The entire fourth chapter of the Charter is then dedicated to solidarity, with a particular focus on workers’ rights, but also on health care, environmental protection, and consumer protection. Finally, article 222 of the current version of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union* (2007) contains the so-called “solidarity clause,” stating that “the Union and its Member States shall act jointly in a spirit of solidarity if a Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster.”

7 From art. 3 of the current Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union. See ‘Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union’, 2012, [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC\\_1&format=PDF](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:2bf140bf-a3f8-4ab2-b506-fd71826e6da6.0023.02/DOC_1&format=PDF).

8 From art.24, ‘Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union’.



And yet, it has been noted that using solidarity as a mere rhetorical strategy rarely worked.

In the current versions of the European treaties—among the different applications of the concept— we find intergenerational solidarity; solidarity between the States and the citizens; among the States themselves; between the States and the Union; and among the citizens themselves, while maintaining also the original attention to the economic and financial dimension.<sup>9</sup> This principle has also been particularly developed in the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice.

Beyond these legal references, it is important to note how solidarity has been concretely used in the last decades in the European political discourse. If it was (and still is) quite common to make the bold claim that “[s]olidarity is part of how European society works and how Europe engages with the rest of the world,”<sup>10</sup> there is also a painful awareness that that solidarity is very often the “great absentee” of European politics.<sup>11</sup> Solidarity is often used then in the form of a “norm-based argument”<sup>12</sup> against nationalistic and sovereigntist discourses, meaning that, when facing most of the current continental social and political crises, the most common “mantra” of many European lawmakers and politicians has been that of the need of more European solidarity.<sup>13</sup>

And yet, it has been noted that using solidarity as a mere rhetorical strategy rarely worked. We can take into consideration the most recent crises which interested the European continent: the 2008 global financial crisis and its consequences with the Eurozone

9 Massarotti, ‘Il Principio Di Solidarietà Nel Diritto Dell’Unione Europea’, 9.

10 A 2008 statement by the European Commission, quoted in Malcolm Ross and Yuri Borgmann-Prebil, ‘Promoting European Solidarity: Between Rhetoric and Reality’, in *Promoting Solidarity in the European Union*, ed. Malcolm Ross and Yuri Borgmann-Prebil (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1.

11 A 2017 statement of the former President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker: “[l]e grand absent Européen, c’est la solidarité”, quoted in Andreas Grimmel, ‘“Le Grand Absent Européen”: Solidarity in the Politics of European Integration’, *Acta Politica* 56, no. 2 (2021): 243.

12 For instance, see Frank Schimmelfennig, ‘The Community Trap: Liberal Norms, Rhetorical Action, and the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union’, *International Organization* 55, no. 1 (2001): 47–80.

13 Grimmel, ‘“Le Grand Absent Européen”: Solidarity in the Politics of European Integration’, 244.



Giorgia Meloni campaigning during Italian elections. Credit: Brad Sterling/Alamy Stock Photo

crisis in 2010; the so-called refugee crisis in 2015; Brexit in 2016; the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020; and the ongoing invasion of Ukraine. What can strike our attention is that these crises deeply affected the perception of European institutions in most of the European countries, with an increasing trend of disaffection and skepticism.<sup>14</sup> This can be particularly observed in Italy, one of the founding members of the European Union, traditionally characterised by high approval rates for the European institutions and for the process of political integration, and now appearing as a “former pro-European country.”<sup>15</sup> Even if the response of the European institutions to the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently the general welcoming attitude towards the Ukrainian refugees (at least in the first phases of the war), have showed that a practical and institutional European solidarity can still find its ways to emerge, it appears very clearly that other crises were and still are characterised by a great difficulty in finding shared solutions and in fostering an authentic sense of belonging and “togetherness” among the European peoples.<sup>16</sup>

A good question could be then if solidarity can mean something more than a legal inspiration or a wishful thought. Is there any element in the previous history of this concept that can give us other elements in order to face the current challenges of European politics?

## FROM OBLIGATIO IN SOLIDUM TO POLITICAL SOLIDARITY

The origins of the concept of solidarity are usually linked to Roman law, where the expression *obligatio in solidum* indicated (and still indicates in the legal systems inspired by the Roman tradition) the unlimited liability of each member of a family or of a particular community to pay common debts. Within this scheme, the payment of one member of the community is able to settle the obligation for all the debtors.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, it was not earlier than the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the principle was given a wider framework and started to be applied especially by some French thinkers in the context of morality, society, and politics, following the influence of the events of the French Revolution, particularly stemming from the ideal of “fraternity.”<sup>18</sup>

14 For more, see Ester Di Napoli and Deborah Russo, ‘Solidarity in the European Union in Times of Crisis: Towards ‘European Solidarity’, in *Solidarity as a Public Virtue? Law and Public Policies in the European Union*, ed. Veronica Federico and Christian Lahusen (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2018), 197–200.

15 Guido Formigoni, ‘L’Europa Di Fronte a Un’Italia Fragile e Divisa’, *Il Mulino*, no. 2 (2024): 101.

16 See Maurizio Ferrera, ‘The European Union and Cross-National Solidarity: Safeguarding “Togetherness” in Hard Times’, *Review of Social Economy* 81, no. 1 (2023): 105–29.

17 Kurt Bayertz, ‘Four Uses of “Solidarity”’, in *Solidarity*, ed. Kurt Bayertz (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 3.

18 For more, see Giovanni Magnani, ‘Le Nuove Vie Della Solidarietà. Abbozzo Di Riflessione Teologica’, *Aggiornamenti Sociali* 39, no. 7–8 (1988): 7–8; Eros Monti, ‘Solidarietà’, *Dizionario di dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, accessed 23 September 2024, <https://www.dizionariodottrinasociale.it/Autorii/Solidarieta.html>; Jürgen Habermas, ‘Democrazia, Solidarietà e La Crisi Europea’, *Aggiornamenti Sociali* 1 (2014): 29.

Among the first philosophers and sociologists to use this term we find especially August Comte (1798-1857) and Emile Durkheim (1858-1917). Comte called *solidarité* a fundamental law able to explain and connect different social events, in the sense of highlighting the structural interdependence among them and, in a diachronic sense, among the different generations. Durkheim applied the concept particularly to his considerations regarding the division of labour, distinguishing between “mechanic” and “organic” solidarity: the first one was linked to a more traditional type of society, where communitarian, cultural, religious, and familial links would naturally bond the individuals; the second one, typical of more developed and organized societies, was characterized by a high level of social differentiation and a generalized division of labour, where the mutual support was not any more just a given, but was based rather on the interdependence and the active cooperation among the individuals. Other thinkers, like the German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) presented even more clearly the modernisation as a process of gradual and increasing “desolidarisation.” According to this stance, facing a dynamic of increasing individualism, it appears more and more important to find and to favour what keeps us together as a society, which has not to be taken any more for granted.

Beyond this use of the concept of solidarity in the field of sociology, other common current uses of the term have been highlighted in the fields of moral philosophy, of social activism, and in the context of the birth and development of the so-called welfare State.<sup>19</sup> Concerning the use in moral philosophy, the concept is linked with the development of a universalistic understanding of morality, started already with the Greek philosophy, and even more developed with the advent of Christianity. The English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) put it particularly in terms of a sort of “emotional link” binding all the human beings. Other philosophers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century gave it even a stronger and more determinant role, with the German

philosopher Max Scheler (1874-1928) stating that the principle of solidarity “renders the entire moral world one big whole, in which each individual is ‘co-responsible’ for the actions and desires, the faults and merits of every other individual.”<sup>20</sup> This means that egotism cannot be in any way a ‘natural’ characteristic of human beings, but just the mark of societies which are already internally sick or overcome by senility. This aspect recalls the Aristotelian tradition of humans as naturally political beings, made for a life in community with others. Nevertheless, solidarity has also sometimes been regarded as a characteristic of more closed communities, whose ties need to be strengthened in order to face a common enemy, as we particularly find in the thought of the German political philosopher Carl Schmitt (1888-1985), signalling the particular tension between universalism and group identity which still characterises the concept.<sup>21</sup>

This is even clearer in another use of it, linked to social activism, where the term “solidarity” is used especially, in a positive way, to express the common struggle and the commitment to mutual support of several categories of people claiming specific rights or rising specific issues: we can think about most of the social movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the labour movements, the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and, more recently, the LGBTQIA+ and environmental movements. This use clearly implies also a “negative” component, which is the common commitment against an opponent, usually coloured with strong moral and political ideals. In its extreme form, this form of solidarity has been equalled to a form of “class consciousness.”<sup>22</sup>

Finally, the concept is widely used to justify a redistribution of financial resources implemented by the State in favour of materially needy individuals or groups.<sup>23</sup> This usage became particularly widespread with the development of the so-called welfare State. It has been noted though a certain difficulty

20 Bayertz, 6–7.

21 Giorgio Campanini, ‘Il Fondamento Della Solidarietà’, *Aggiornamenti Sociali* 12 (1998): 907.

22 Bayertz, ‘Four Uses of “Solidarity”’, 17, 20–21.

23 Bayertz, 21.

19 Bayertz, ‘Four Uses of “Solidarity”’, 5–26.

in using a morally loaded concept of solidarity in this context, considering that there is an important difference between a general moral commitment to the poor and the sick, which is voluntary and generally involves a personal relationship, and the State social services, which usually operate in a highly bureaucratized environment, are coerced from the donor and are usually anonymous.<sup>24</sup> Somebody has even suggested that in this case it would be more proper to use the concept of justice rather than that of solidarity.<sup>25</sup>

## SOLIDARITY IN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The Catholic reflection on the issue of solidarity developed quite late, even though its roots can be clearly found at the core of the Christian message itself.

The German Jesuit philosophers and theologians Heinrich Pesch (1854-1926), Oswald von Nell-Breuning (1890-1991) and Gustav Gundlach (1892-1963) were the first to reflect more systematically on solidarity, adjusting it into the Thomistic and neoscholastic framework which was mostly common in Catholic philosophy and theology particularly until the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). These thinkers also wanted to ground solidarity on the dignity of the human person.<sup>26</sup> This attention was particularly developed by Catholic personalist philosophers like Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), who underlined how human beings are naturally bonded by feelings of fraternity, deriving from the awareness of being part of a single community and political body oriented to the common good. This orientation, in spite of all the challenges given by the egotistical urges that would naturally persist, builds the political community as a solidaristic reality, in which the pursuit of “civic friendship” would constitute the litmus test of an authentic social progress.<sup>27</sup>

Further developments in the reflection on solidarity in Catholic environments were fostered by an increasing use of the term in the social encyclicals of the Popes.<sup>28</sup> The earliest references are found implicitly in Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, focusing on the conditions of the working class. In Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931, we find its role mentioned as a component of a new social order that must be constructed, binding together the personal and communitarian aspect, fighting against totalitarianisms.<sup>29</sup> The term started to be openly used by Pius XII, who utilised it in the meaning given to it by personalist philosophers. But it was with John XXIII that the principle of solidarity started to be mentioned as one of the most important pillars of Catholic Social Teaching. In John XXIII’s *Mater et Magistra* (1961) solidarity was given a wider perspective, embracing the entire global political community. The Pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) referenced the principle, and gave it a clear theological connection to God’s desire to be in full solidarity with humanity through the life and work of Jesus Christ,<sup>30</sup> who presents himself as a “Messiah in solidarity” with us.<sup>31</sup> Paul VI’s *Populorum Progressio* (1967) and *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971) marked further important steps forward in presenting solidarity as an intrinsic element of human nature, not only as a fact, but also as a duty, and widened its application particularly to the persistent inequalities between developed and developing countries.

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24 In a similar sense, Habermas affirms that solidarity is a true political act, different from a simple act of moral altruism. See Habermas, ‘Democrazia, Solidarietà e La Crisi Europea’, 27.

25 Habermas, 24.

26 Magnani, ‘Le Nuove Vie Della Solidarietà. Abbozzo Di Riflessione Teologica’, 514.

27 Campanini, ‘Il Fondamento Della Solidarietà’, 907–8.

28 Monti, ‘Solidarietà’.

29 Monti; Magnani, ‘Le Nuove Vie Della Solidarietà. Abbozzo Di Riflessione Teologica’, 515.

30 Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican, 7 December 1965), § 32.

31 Magnani, ‘Le Nuove Vie Della Solidarietà. Abbozzo Di Riflessione Teologica’, 518.



Credit: Markus Spiske at Unsplash

With John Paul II, the magisterial pronouncements on solidarity increased significantly. In his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (1979) solidarity is presented as a principle which must inspire the effective search for appropriate institutions and mechanisms in order to promote human dignity; in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) we find one of the most well-known definitions of the principle, which emphasises also how it is a social virtue – the social and institutional expression of charity:

*It is above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a 'virtue', is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of*

*vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good.<sup>32</sup>*

Finally, the encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (1991) traces the entire trajectory of magisterial reflection on solidarity, presenting it as a principle tending to direct social intervention, linked to that of subsidiarity (which aims to enable the so-called intermediate bodies of society, favouring then interdependence rather than centralisation)<sup>33</sup> and active in the world of labour, volunteering, of culture and education, and aiming to a global renewal of social order.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (Vatican, 30 December 1987), § 38.

<sup>33</sup> As Pope Benedict XVI put it in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* (Vatican, 29 June 2009): "The principle of subsidiarity must remain closely linked to the principle of solidarity and vice versa, since the former without the latter gives way to social privatism, while the latter without the former gives way to paternalist social assistance that is demeaning to those in need" (§ 58).

<sup>34</sup> Monti, 'Solidarietà'.

In this way the principle has also been presented in the magisterial pronouncements of Benedict XVI and Francis, particularly with a more specific consideration of its role in taking care of the common home, with the awareness that “[e]very violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment, just as environmental deterioration in turn upsets relations in society,”<sup>35</sup> and with a particular attention to intergenerational solidarity.<sup>36</sup> Pope Francis, in his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, has linked the term solidarity to “solidity”, emphasising being “born of the consciousness that we are responsible for the fragility of others as we strive to build a common future.”<sup>37</sup>

## WHAT FUTURE FOR SOLIDARITY?

We live in a time of “polycrisis,” as it has been very effectively described by the French philosopher Edgar Morin, in Europe as well as in the entire world. The ongoing wars at the gates of Europe, the end of the “world liberal order,”<sup>38</sup> the environmental crisis, the new migration trends, together with the lingering economic crisis and the declining birth rate form an *unicum* which has a deep impact in European politics. The most common political reaction to this, especially in the Western world, seems to be closure and “nostalgia” for an idealised past of solid national identities, against the disorder of a more globalised world. This longing for a clearer group identity against so many external threats is usually expressed in terms of contraposition, as a particular form of solidarity between members of a closed group. This is usually the narrative used by contemporary populist movements in the Western world, and commonly used by Italian and European right-wing parties.

And yet, if we look more carefully, we see how contemporary Western societies are nowadays deeply individualistic, following the aforementioned movement

of “desolidarisation” fostered by the modernisation process. The electoral use of this pleas for “national(istic) solidarity” really looks more focused on fear and nostalgia rather than on a realistic consideration of the present and on openness towards the future. While it appears important to listen to the fears and discontent of the constituencies of these populist movements, this does not mean resignation in the search for other, more effective ways out from the current crises.

The consideration of the roots and the development of the reflection on solidarity in philosophy, sociology and Catholic Social Teaching, as well as looking on how its practice has developed in the context of the European integration process helps us to see how crucial this principle is, and at the same time how fragile it is, constantly at risk of becoming a simple and ineffective wishful thought. A good point seems actually to treasure the experience of the first steps of the European integration process, beginning again with forms of *solidarité de fait*. All the aforementioned challenges of the current historical moment, can become an opportunity to raise the awareness that all this cannot be overcome just by the single countries alone. If international and communitarian law and politics still seem to be stuck, the growing urgency to face a global “complex crisis which is both social and environmental”<sup>39</sup> can lead us to find other paths of common action from below. A *ressourcement* of political solidarity is needed.

On the one hand, civil society and social activism, and especially the vitality of several youth movements<sup>40</sup> can play a crucial role in this, as we can see especially with environmental activism, but also with what students’ and young people’s movements have achieved in several parts of the world, in search of more freedom and of more democracy. What happened with the fall of

35 Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, § 51.

36 For instance, see Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* (Vatican, 24 May 2015), § 162.

37 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (Vatican, 3 October 2020), § 115. In general, see § 114–117.

38 Drew Christiansen SJ and Jeff Steinberg, ‘Governare Il Nuovo Disordine Globale’, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 4063, 4 (2019): 16–29.

39 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, § 139.

40 Fridays for Future and The Good Lobby are examples of youth movements engaged in political formation at an international and European level, see ‘Fridays for Future’, <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>; ‘The Good Lobby’, <https://www.thegoodlobby.eu/about-us/>. At a local level in Italy, we have the Svolta project in Chieri (near Turin) and the Polis Politics group in Milan are two vibrant examples, see ‘Svolta’, <https://www.svolta.eu/chi-siamo/>; ‘Polis Politics’, <https://www.linkedin.com/company/polis-politics/?originalSubdomain=it>.



the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina Wazed, on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2024 is just the most recent example of this.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, if we look at the European context, where young people are less numerous, the intergenerational aspect of solidarity appears to be more and more relevant. The young people themselves can find their ways to educate the older generations to a different way of looking and hoping for the future, while they can find ways to advocate for intergenerational solidarity within the European institutions, to create spaces where the voice of the current young generations and even of the future ones can be heard.<sup>42</sup>

The famous Italian priest and educator don Lorenzo Milani (1923-1967) said that politics is about realising that the problems and challenges of other people are our own problem, and that its main task is to face these challenges together.<sup>43</sup> Solidarity appears to be especially a matter of education and practice rather than a simple inspiration for legislative texts and political speeches.

Beyond the current global and European emergencies, we can ask ourselves what can be our contribution in changing the way of narrating the current times and the role of politics in all this, so that the attention to solidarity and “togetherness” can become more and more its ordinary way of proceeding, rather than its frustrated ideal.

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41 John Curtis, 'Bangladesh: The Fall of the Hasina Government', Research Briefing (London: House of Commons Library, 2024), <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10096/CBP-10096.pdf>.

42 Interestingly enough, Ursula von der Leyen, in her recent bid for re-election as President of the European Commission on July 18 2024, included in her political guidelines her intention to appoint a commissioner “whose responsibilities will include ensuring intergenerational fairness.” For more, the Jesuit European Social Centre has written on the emergence of policymaking and advocacy with a mind towards future generations, see Jesuit European Social Centre, 'Portare la Voce delle Generazioni Future al Cuore dell'Europa', *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, no. 10 (October 2024): 559–66.

43 “Ho imparato che il problema degli altri è uguale al mio. Sortirne insieme è la politica, sortirne da soli è l'avarizia”: See Scuola di Barbiana, *Lettera a Una Professoressa* (Firenze: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1967), 14.