4

Unwelcome Solidarity

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

Solidarity is generally emphasized as a social good and may well often be. International lawyers, in particular, have frequently invoked it as a kind of precarious keystone in the international legal edifice.[1] International lawyers, in particular, have a strong *a priori* in favor of solidarity as synonymous with greater international community integration. The main concern is with a lack of sufficient solidarity rather than its excess. In that, international lawyers tend to merely reproduce truisms about the interdependence of nations that are part of the core ideological baggage of the discipline. That discourse, moreover, has tended to be a byproduct of international legal thinking rather than one grounded in the praxis of international relations. This is a pity because attention to the *practice* of solidarity deserves better than platitudes.

Rather than focus on solidarity as a necessarily positive value, then, I propose to explore the history, nature, and politics of what I describe as "unwelcome solidarity" understood as solidarity that is conceived by its purported recipients as somehow undesirable. I seek, in particular, to identify what might be problematic about some forms of solidarity, and the sort of implicit claims about self, identity, and dignity that are made in the process of rejecting solidarity.

Note to begin with that we have no reason to think that the solidarity of states is necessarily an unmitigated good simply because it is internationally minded. In fact, internationalist solidarity as such is at best a second order

[1] Rüdiger Wolfrum and Chie Kojima (eds.), *Solidarity: A Structural Principle of International Law* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2010).

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value, compared to what it is harnessed to. Operation Condor, for example, was set up by the Southern Cone countries to share the burden of repressing liberals and leftists, leading to abduction, torture, and execution.[2] The solidarity of human rights violators at the Human Rights Council, including horse trading of candidates and mutual back scratching, is often seen as problematic. The solidarity of thieves, such as it may be, is not much of a solidarity. The line between liberal and illiberal internationalisms (in addition to the sheer vagueness of those terms) is a fluid and thin one.[3]

Indeed, solidarity might evidence more *a priori* positive inclinations and still be problematic. Consider, for example, the effort, limited and halting as it may be, by European states to better spread the "burden" of hosting refugees.[4] On one, inter-state level, it is only fair that states should equally assume their responsibilities on some basis other than their proximity to Mediterranean shores; but, seen from an individual asylum seeker perspective, one may see such agreements as merely part of complex technologies to deny one's agency.[5] "Better solidarity" might become synonymous with states refusing to share their burden on account of some more or less pretextual complaint about how it is distributively allocated.

By the same token, simply because some states consider that certain forms of solidarity are unwelcome does not necessarily make it justifiably so. There will also be refusals of solidarity that betray, under some accounts, problematic policies. Consider, for example, the refusal by the Myanmar junta to accept foreign, particularly Western aid, after the tsunami, arguably prolonging the suffering of its population. Rejecting solidarity might only reflect a form of misplaced pride in the circumstances,[6] or maybe a tyrannical inclination.[7] Even Japan's polite rejection of aid after the Kobe earthquake was described as excessively rigid and technocratic, in light of the needs of its population.[8]

[2] Joan Patrice McSherry, "Operation Condor and Transnational State Violence against Exiles" (2019) 36 *Journal of Global South Studies* 368.

[3] Philippa Hetherington and Glenda Sluga, "Liberal and Illiberal Internationalisms" (2020) 31 *Journal of World History* 1.

[4] See Chapter 10, by Hansen.

[5] Marcia Vera Espinoza, "The Limits and Opportunities of Regional Solidarity: Exploring Refugee Resettlement in Brazil and Chile" (2018) 9 *Global Policy* 85.

[6] Charlotte Dany, "Failed Cooperation in Times of Natural Disasters: Explaining the Rejection of Humanitarian Aid" (2020) 20 *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 193.

[7] "Venezuela: UN Agency Warns of Humanitarian 'Catastrophe'," *DW*, March 3, 2018, available at: https://p.dw.com/p/2uDQU (last accessed August 15, 2022).

[8] Nicholas Kristof, "Sticking to the Rules – A Special Report; Japan Reluctant to Accept Help from Abroad for Quake Victims," *The New York Times*, February 5, 1995, available at: www.nytimes.com/1995/02/05/world/sticking-rules-special-report-japan-reluctant-accept-help-abroad-for-quake.html (last accessed August 15, 2022).

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Without going as far as to suggest that there is an obligation to accept genuine solidarity, the moral value of solidarity also lies in the ability of purported recipients to graciously receive it. In war settings, refusing humanitarian assistance or access may be in violation of international humanitarian obligations. Syria's refusal of aid designed to rescue 200 000 civilians in Ghouta is one such instance.[9]

What constitutes unwelcome solidarity, then, needs to be conceived in terms of some underlying normative theory or at least understanding of why or when solidarity might or might not be welcome. Take one recent example from the corporate world. New Balance is a famous brand of trainer shoes. In 2016, its founder hinted to the *Wall Street Journal* that he thought Trump might be a step in the "right direction" for America given the Republican party's opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which New Balance also opposed. Following that somewhat offhand statement, the *Daily Stormer*, a Neo-Nazi site, endorsed the shoes as "the official shoes of white people," urging its readers to buy them.[10] New Balance then had to go out of its way to reject that support. The "solidarity" expressed by the *Daily Stormer* with New Balance was not meant to embarrass the company (which in ordinary circumstances would surely like to receive free endorsements), but it was nonetheless deeply unwelcome.

Real world manifestations of solidarity may be both welcome and unwelcome in different proportions. The focus on the unwelcome kind is not meant as a general diatribe against solidarity as much as it is based on the intuition that we often sharpen the trenchancy of concepts by examining their opposites. This will provide an opportunity to examine both the dynamics of excessive solicitousness and the politics of not wanting to be helped. I will focus on a variety of concrete examples. The general intuition is that, even as the discourse of solidarity becomes justifiably more widespread, we have reason to be wary of uncritical appeals to it.

This chapter adopts quite a capacious understanding of international solidarity, that goes beyond the inter-state. This is as an acknowledgment that the sites of international solidarity have long been diversified and encompass much solidarity that is transnational – by certain peoples with other peoples,

[9] "Syria: Denial of Care and Food for Civilians in Eastern Ghouta Must Stop – UN Experts," *OHCHR*, November 10, 2017, available at: www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2017/11/syria-denial-care-and-food-civilians-eastern-ghouta-must-stop-un-experts (last accessed August 15, 2022).

[10] Kim Bhasin, "New Balance Created Its PR Crisis. Neo-Nazis Aren't Helping," *Bloomberg*, November 15, 2016, available at: www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-11-15/new-balance-created-its-pr-crisis-neo-nazis-aren-t-helping (last accessed August 15, 2022).

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rather than necessarily only or necessarily involving sovereigns. It is also as a recognition that some of the more elaborate and provocative debates on solidarity have occurred well beyond the confines of international law, in the broader realm of transnational social relations marked not by legal obligations but by identity, affect and exchange,[11] what Bertrand Badie recently described as inter-societal relations.[12] Nonetheless, the chapter does keep as its central focus the international order as a unique site of solidarity, one occurring specifically between often incommensurable and irreducible entities that it seeks to transcend in ways that also sometimes expose its limitation.

How, then, might one conceptualize "unwelcome solidarity" in terms of the politics of international relations and how is it mediated by international law? Solidarity operates on the margins of such relations, as part of a "politics of emotion" of what is otherwise characterized by distrust or, at best, rational cooperation. This is why manifestations of solidarity have always been somewhat of a mystery for observers of international politics. On one level, unwelcome solidarity might just be fake and, therefore, hypocritical. We have little patience for solidarity posturing that does not involve an actual cost, gift, or concession. Solidarity is cheap and can be seen as part of an economy of "virtue signaling."[13] There is, then, much discussion of the politics of half, fake, or misguided solidarity.

The more interesting question for this chapter's purposes, however, is whether solidarity might be justifiably unwelcome even when it is in good faith or independently of whether it is in good faith or not. For example, it has been argued that solidarity and the "centering of Western subjects"[14] may help reconduct problematic tropes (notably femonationalist or homonationalist) about the civilizational superiority of those professing solidarity.[15] Solidarity with victims can be a thin disguise for imperialist ventures as in some cases of humanitarian intervention.[16] Rather than questioning the motivations of those who profess solidarity, then, I want to discuss how

[11] Avery Kolers, *A Moral Theory of Solidarity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
[12] Bertrand Badie, *Inter-socialités: Le monde n'est plus géopolitique* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2020).
[13] See Chapter 2, by Scholz.
[14] Niamh Ní Mhaoileoin, "The Ironic Gay Spectator: The Impacts of Centring Western Subjects in International LGBT Rights Campaigns" (2019) 22 *Sexualities* 148.
[15] Egbert Alejandro Martina, "Wanted for Love, But Not Here: The Travelling Rights of African LGBT Activists," *Critical Legal Thinking*, August 12, 2013, available at: https://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/08/12/wanted-for-love-but-not-here-the-travelling-rights-of-african-lgbt-activists/ (last accessed May 15, 2023).
[16] Ayça Çubukçu, "The Responsibility to Protect: Libya and the Problem of Transnational Solidarity" (2013) 12 *Journal of Human Rights* 40.

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solidarity may be unwelcome regardless of its motivations and even, perhaps particularly, when it is sincere.

Specifically, the chapter highlights three ways in which solidarity might be unwelcome: because it makes things worse; because it comes from the wrong source; or because it unduly obliges its recipient. The three are not incompatible but their problematic character increases from the most superficial to the most fundamental.

4.2 "WITH FRIENDS LIKE THAT": WHEN SOLIDARITY MAKES THINGS WORSE

On a first, pragmatic, and instrumental level, solidarity might simply complicate the situation of those who are its intended beneficiaries. The Japanese case for refusing aid after Kobe, for example, was that many Western medicines sent to the country were dosed inadequately. Often well-meaning aid will face obstacles simply because it is redundant with the resources of the receiving country and requires significant administrative resources in times of crisis to simply manage. Evidently, solidarity should not make things worse, and states are justified in limiting its incidence when it does.

More problematically, solidarity may displace local leadership, crowding out home grown political movements by showering them with solicitude, or substituting to their own language of emancipation one elaborated elsewhere and for different circumstances. Hence, Lina Alsaafin points out how the West's praising of non-violent tactics in Palestine also tends to displace Palestinian self-determination, including when it comes to means.[17] In that context, Richard Falk has even acknowledged occasionally himself "being unwittingly paternalistic, if not complicit with an unhealthy 'tyranny of the stranger'."[18] Similarly, Emi Koyama has expressed concern about US activist claims of being the "voice of the voiceless" when a loud community of LGBT activists exists in Uganda.[19]

Even when solidarity is broadly felt to be going in the right direction, the particular means used may be denounced as ultimately not helping local

[17] Linah Alsaafin, "How Obsession with Nonviolence Harms the Palestinian Cause," *The Electronic Intifada*, July 10, 2012, available at: https://electronicintifada.net/content/how-obsession-nonviolence-harms-palestinian-cause/11482 (last accessed March 1, 2024).

[18] Richard Falk, "Pros and Cons of Western Palestinian Solidarity," *Al Jazeera*, July 18, 2012, available at: www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2012/7/18/pros-and-cons-of-western-palestinian-solidarity (last accessed May 15, 2023).

[19] Emi Koyama, "The Uganda Controversy: Solidarity vs. Imperialism in LGBT Organizing" (2010) 25 *Tikkun* 59.

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constituencies. For example, it has been pointed out that sanctions against Iran in the wake of the 2022 wave of protests "have less in common with liberal solidarity and more in common with siege starvation tactics as old as war," essentially asphyxiating the economy and harming local populations.[20] Concern has also been expressed that calls for sanctions to punish Uganda's LGBT policies "could lead to the collapse of social order in a country like Uganda, endangering many more lives of LGBT Ugandans than the legislation itself would."[21] Perverse effects abound in this context, and cannot be redeemed merely by pointing to loose good intentions.

Moreover, even when transnational solidarity is genuine and otherwise potentially helpful, its very existence may make it easy for a regime to portray groups as foreign manipulated (along with the possibility that, of course, they occasionally *are*). This vulnerability to the accusation that one is a "foreign stooge" may then designate one for further repression. The US State Department, for example, has long supported pro-democracy groups in and outside Iran, notably by training them abroad. This "solidarity" with those fighting against the Iranian regime has frequently been denounced by Iranian authorities as part of an effort to cause "anarchy and domestic unrest" in ways that have caused "increased public anger and hatred against America,"[22] in ways that at least problematize its overall usefulness to the very actors it is supposed to support. Similarly, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda has accused civil society organizations of being "internal saboteurs, acting on behalf of foreign interests."[23] President Putin has long made the claim that "foreign hands" are involved in protests and opposition to the central pillar of his dictatorship,[24] as has President Lukashenko of Byelorussia.[25] Indeed, governments themselves may be vulnerable to the accusation that they are merely tools of foreign

[20] Roman Cabay, "Responding to Iran: Sanctions Are Not Solidarity," *The Organization for World Peace*, October 12, 2022, available at: https://theowp.org/responding-to-iran-sanctions-are-not-solidarity/ (last accessed May 15, 2023).

[21] Koyama, "The Uganda Controversy," 59.

[22] Bill Samii, "Iran: Tehran Opposes U.S. Pro-Democracy Initiatives," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 22, 2005, available at: www.rferl.org/a/1058600.html (last accessed July 29, 2022).

[23] "Under Siege Museveni Seeks Support on Oil Law, Aid Cuts," *The East African*, December 15, 2012, available at: www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/under-siege-museveni-seeks-support-on-oil-law-aid-cuts–1313810 (last accessed July 29, 2022).

[24] Ellen Barry, "Putin Aide Says Foreign Hands Are behind Protests," *The New York Times*, February 3, 2012, available at: www.nytimes.com/2012/02/04/world/europe/putin-aide-promises-significant-changes-in-russian-political-system.html (last accessed July 29, 2022).

[25] Maria Tysiachniouk, Svetlana Tulaeva, and Laura Henry, "Civil Society under the Law 'On Foreign Agents': NGO Strategies and Network Transformation" (2018) 70 *Europe–Asia Studies* 615.

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powers as a result of the conspicuous "solidarity" of allies. This was the case of the last Shah of Iran, who quite incautiously blamed the British and the Americans for decisions he had himself taken, leaving his own prestige and credibility seriously weakened.[26] Such accusations have resurfaced frequently in the case of Afghanistan, Iraq, and others, where being seen as being on the receiving end of solidarity can in fact weaken rather than strengthen governments.

It matters little in this context whether claims about the nefarious dimensions of solidarity are true. The point is that foreign solidarity can be a mixed blessing for dissidents in particular, creating acute dilemmas and possibly the need to dissociate themselves from those in solidarity with them. One Russian law (itself inspired by an older, similar US law), for example, requires anyone who receives "support" from or is under "influence" from outside Russia to register and declare themselves as "foreign agents." Effectively, NGOs are asked to "out" themselves as externally compromised merely as a result of being recipients of foreign solidarity. The law has been repeatedly expanded to cover not just organizations engaged in "political activity" but also those receiving any amount of foreign funding toward publication. Some, such as Russia's Committee against Torture or Dynasty Foundation (a major science and education fund), have dissolved themselves rather than operate under the law. In other words, they have stood by the notion that their willingness to be the beneficiaries of Western solidarity should not lead to their being sanctioned at home, but at the cost of their very existence: the victims, in a sense, of solidarity with them.

Of course, in terms of principles, the case for solidarity being unwelcome merely because it upsets authoritarian states can be a relatively weak one. On some level, the direct responsibility for banning NGOs and marginalizing dissidents is clearly the home state's, not that of their foreign funders; but at the very least states or constituencies who profess solidarity with others should be wary of how it might make those they claim to support appear. The question is nonetheless why certain forms of solidarity might be justifiably unwelcome above and beyond states' more or less opportunistic motives for criticizing them. Indeed, the problem is made acute by the fact that, although the Kremlin's paranoia about civil society with or without foreign links is well known for example, it is not as if some Western NGOs do not, indeed, participate in the projection of forms of soft power and possibly more. Solidarity must also be seen in light of a long tradition of practices of foreign

[26] Fakhreddin Azimi, *The Quest for Democracy in Iran: A Century of Struggle against Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 276.

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interference that are no less real simply because they can also be opportunistically exaggerated.

4.3 "YES, JUST NOT FROM YOU": THE *INTUITU PERSONAE* OF SOLIDARITY

A second way in which solidarity might be understood to be unwelcome, then, is when emanating from the "wrong" source. This goes against the cosmopolitan idea that all solidarities are equal and that solidarity is all the more welcome that it comes from a position of abstract disinterestedness. Quite what that space of cosmopolitan impartiality would be and how it may be occupied is perennially unclear (there is always some pre-existing pattern of relations that directs solidarity in some direction rather than others, otherwise solidarity is both random and bland). More importantly, solidarity often seems to be justifiably based on a range of affinities that do not so much belie its universalist impulse as they ground it in the reality of ongoing social relations.[27] But this means that, if there is to be a solidarity based on affinities, then there must also be forms of solidarity that miss the mark precisely because they are not based on such affinities. Here the problem is not so much that the solidarity might be *de facto* unhelpful but that the particular political relationality it suggests is problematic.

One can conceive of a number of such forms of unwelcome solidarity in the international realm. A typical case is provided by unwelcome offers in the context of humanitarian catastrophes. For example, Israel made offers of humanitarian assistance to Lebanon after the Beirut blast, or to Iraq and Iran after earthquakes there, as did China to Taiwan after an earthquake. The "receiving" states in these cases nonetheless expressed ambivalence or declined on the basis that this particular solidarity was suspicious, coming as it did from a perceived enemy.[28] More recently, the citizens of Kherson are said to have refused humanitarian aid from occupying Russian troops.[29] The

[27] Joshua Hobbs and James Souter, "Asylum, Affinity, and Cosmopolitan Solidarity with Refugees" (2020) 51 *Journal of Social Philosophy* 543.

[28] "Iran–Iraq Earthquake: Israeli Offers of Help to Victims 'Turned down'," *The Independent*, November 15, 2017, available at: www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/iran-iraq-eathquake-latest-updates-israeli-offers-help-turned-down-benjamin-netanyahu-victims-aid-a8056076.html (last accessed May 16, 2023).

[29] Oleksandr Korniyenko [@OlekKorn], "Citizens of #Kherson Refused Humanitarian Aid from the Occupiers. The Occupiers' Trucks Went Back. I Call on International Humanitarian Organizations to Help with a Green Corridor to #Ukraine! @RedCrossUkraine @RedCrossEU #StopPutinNOW," March 4, 2022, available at: https://x.com/OlekKorn/status/1499750168954036227 (last accessed September 18, 2024).

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problem is not that Israeli humanitarian aid in Iran or Russian aid in Ukraine is objectively problematic (as in Section 4.2), but that the recipient of solidarity objects to its source as such and the sort of political effect it is being put to.

The point here is merely that there is an element of *intuitu personae* involved in solidarity: that we do not value all solidarity equally and may indeed have reasons to reject some of its expressions based on who it comes from. Agents are not simply generally in want of abstract solidarity; they are, if anything, open to receiving solidarity from particular constituencies as opposed to others. Some manifestations of solidarity may seem as if they have merely as their goal a distraction from one's own participation in oppression and a sort of free riding on the struggles of others.[30] Solidarity with a people one has otherwise contributed to impoverish or alienate will sound hollow. Even in the context of diasporas, support from certain groups may appear inimical to struggles fought at home. For example, there has been criticism of nationalist and imperial Iranian groups showing up at protests to support the women's movement in Iran as essentially substituting their own patriarchal and regressive policies to those of other groups.[31]

More ontologically, solidarity aspires to express a kind of horizontal equality to the "other" which may be performatively problematic. It seems to say "we are in this together." It is, on the one hand, the opposite of solicitousness, pity, paternalism, or of a merely humanitarian attitude. So, to accept solidarity – that is, to accept that one is the object of someone else's solidarity – is to accept that one is indeed in some crucial respect in unison with those who profess their solidarity toward oneself. By contrast, solidarity may feel misplaced when it comes from an enemy, or a dominant party that cannot be expected to feel what one is going through or, worse, that displaces one's own agency under the guise of expressing sympathy with one's plight or seeks to affirm a form of superiority.

Unwelcome solidarity of that kind, then, is a solidarity that, in its more or less wholesome embrace, seeks to artificially or arbitrarily dissolve the distinction between "us" and "them." It is obnoxious because it hints at – it affirms, in fact – a commonality of fate that may not, in fact, exist, or only exists artificially through the gesture of solidarity that seeks to construct it (at least, it is precisely the question whether one wants to be the recipient of solidarity by

[30] Orly Noy, "If Israelis Want to Support the Women of Iran, Start with Palestinians," +972 *Magazine*, October 13, 2022, available at: www.972mag.com/edition/iran-women-protests-palestinians/ (last accessed May 16, 2023).

[31] Ian Parker, "Iran Demonstration in Manchester: Disruption and Solidarity," *Anti-Capitalist Resistance*, September 25, 2022, available at: https://anticapitalistresistance.org/iran-demonstration-in-manchester-disruption-and-solidarity/ (last accessed May 15, 2023).

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this "other"). Rather than affirming a common reciprocal bond between equals, then, it may merely reinstate the bondage of a master–slave relationship. To refuse this kind of solidarity, then, is the truly emancipatory gesture because it calls the bluff on the equal value of all forms of solidarity and the wholesomeness of that particular embrace.

Paradoxically, this may particularly be the case of a certain type of bland universalist solidarity of the sort loosely associated with cosmopolitanism and international law, that is, a solidarity that is crushing in its hegemony because of its lack of any particular *intuitu personae*. Consider, for example, the recurrence of appeals to a radical commonality of fate expressed in the "Nous sommes tous américains" (after 9/11), "Je suis Charlie," "We are all Palestinians," or "We are all Ukrainians." Such slogans "express empathy, outrage, and horror by subsuming ourselves in victims' identities."[32] They may, as such, be both appealing in their radicality but also invasive, effectively displacing the identity of the victim or claiming some kind of absolution from the harms suffered by others, sometimes in part through "our" fault. They may highlight the construction of a particular privilege – the privilege to even be in a position of solidarity – and the normative significance, on the other hand, of the ability to refuse solidarity as a form of amalgamation.

Consider, *ad absurdum*, what our reaction would be to "We are all black" for example or "We are all women" as a reaction to the BLM and MeToo movements, respectively, expressed by non-black persons and men. Even if well-intended, as responses to the legacies of slavery or misogyny, these would arguably not remotely pass as a form of (welcome) solidarity. They would immediately be taken down as a form of hegemonic appropriation by those who cannot possibly fully inhabit what it means to be a victim in this context. The problem is not with solidarity in itself, but a radically abstract solidarity that erases all sense of difference. In a sense, those claiming solidarity are implicitly claiming a symbolic "out" from what is, problematically, their lot. This is partly because their solidarity *inter se* has historically been the problem: one cannot easily undo that in-group solidarity by rhetorically manifesting an out-group one. Paradoxically, victim groups may need the dominant "in their place," as expressing at least some kind of notional in-group solidary responsibility for what they stand for.

The point, then, is not so much that such statements are facile, but that they can provide an all-too-convenient escape hatch from what "we" actually are by

[32] Amanda Hess, "#IAm: The Default Mode of Showing Solidarity in the Hashtag Era," *Slate*, January 9, 2015, available at: https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/01/jesuischarlie-the-default-mode-of-showing-solidarity-in-the-hashtag-age.html (last accessed May 15, 2023).

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violently erasing the distinction between giver and recipient of solidarity. To live out one's solidarity with victims may be a way to not confront one's complicity with their oppression, or at least the considerable differences in vulnerability to harm even in the process of "solidarizing." Hence, it has been argued that, in the foreign Palestine activist community, the "equalization of American and Palestinian suffering" leads to a situation where "expressions of responsibility are trumped, effaced, and metamorphosed in such a way as to obstruct the very politics for which solidarity was offered in the first place,"[33] leaving those engaged in solidarity strangely "off the hook."[34] As argued by Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins, "American citizens, whose government is the most vehemently and uncritically supportive of Israeli policies, are thus extracted from their own political contexts; that is, they are detached from the taxes, votes, and purchases that structure their complicity to the injustices they observe."[35] Similarly, prominent European women cutting their hair in solidarity with Iranian women has been decried as unhelpful to the extent that these same women have previously stayed mum when it comes to their own countries' prohibition of the Islamic veil.[36]

On some level, the excess of solidarity might constitute a form of "passing," a type of solidarity that usurps not only the agency but the very identity of those it professes to support. One extreme case is Rachel Dolezal, the white woman who infamously passed as black whilst being specifically involved in the politics of black resistance as president of the NAACP in Spokane, Washington.[37] Hers was, therefore, an appropriation not only of blackness but specifically of black victimhood. Sally Munt, speaking of the omnipresence of the *argumentum ad misericordiam* in the media, hints that she "can well imagine how a shamed young personality yearning to connect might have had trouble with the entitlement of white privilege, and fly toward the

[33] Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins, "The Joys and Dangers of Solidarity in Palestine: Prosthetic Engagement in an Age of Reparations" (2008) 8 *CR: The New Centennial Review* 111–160, at 127.

[34] Ibid., 128.

[35] Ibid., 134.

[36] Nadeine Asbali, "White Actresses Cutting Inches off Their Hair Isn't the Solidarity Iran's Women Need," *Metro*, October 12, 2022, available at: https://metro.co.uk/2022/10/12/white-actresses-cutting-their-hair-isnt-the-solidarity-irans-women-need-17535386/ (last accessed May 15, 2023).

[37] Justin Moyer, "'Are You an African American?' Why an NAACP Official Isn't Saying," *The Washington Post*, June 12, 2015, available at: www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/06/12/spokane-naacp-president-rachel-dolezal-may-be-white/ (last accessed September 18, 2024).

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phantasmic glow of black solidarity."[38] After all, "Vicarious observation of, or participation in, rituals of trauma or loss can give a frisson of excitement . . .."[39] Notwithstanding, Dolezal was widely excoriated for pushing notions of solidarity so far as to operate a kind of perverted substitution of victimhood.[40]

This connects to debates that have emerged in South Africa over the legacy of Steve Biko and his understanding of blackness as a category of political conscience rather than a biological reality. Expounding on some of the ambiguities of Biko's categorizations, Xolela Mangcu has argued that, just as blacks can "pass" as whites, the converse was true in South Africa where "black" came to encompass at least non-whites participating in the black struggle.[41] Responding to that piece, Keolebogile Mbebe has countered that "because white people cannot experience the alienation that non-white people do, they cannot attain Black Consciousness and, thus, cannot be Politically Black."[42] In particular, whites in solidarity with blacks cannot experience either the material or mental components of discrimination: their solidarity is useful, but it cannot fundamentally erase differences of experience. This suggests limits to a sort of solidarity that does not know its place and which, in its exuberance, almost displaces the very possibility of solidarity.

Thus, in the terms of Steve Biko, "no white person can escape being part of the oppressor camp,"[43] and "total identification with an oppressed group in a system that forces one group to enjoy privilege and to live on the sweat of another, is impossible."[44] That ontology simply cannot be renounced, and solidarity that ignores it is mere kitsch. For Howarth, white allyship that identifies as black deprives the black consciousness movement of "a clear racial frontier around which oppositional identity could be forged."[45]

In turn, this connects to a significant literature on the promise and pitfalls of "allyship" in social movements. The old labor workers' idea that "an injury to one is an injury to all," has been reappraised in light of particularly US social

[38] Sally Munt, "Argumentum Ad Misericordiam: The Cultural Politics of Victim Media" (2017) 17 *Feminist Media Studies* 866–883, at 876.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Alisha Gaines, *Black for a Day: White Fantasies of Race and Empathy* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

[41] Xolela Mangcu, "Whites Can Be Black," *City Press*, July 5, 2015, available at: www.news24.com/citypress/voices/whites-can-be-blacks-20150703 (accessed September 9, 2016).

[42] Keolebogile Mbebe, "Whites Cannot Be Black: A Bikoist Challenge to Professor Xolela Mangcu" (2018) 65 *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory* 24–47, at 25.

[43] Steve Biko, *I Write What I Like: A Selection of His Writings* (London: Heinemann, 1987), p. 23.

[44] Ibid., p. 66.

[45] David Howarth, "Complexities of Identity/Difference: Black Consciousness Ideology in South Africa" (1997) 2 *Journal of Political Ideologies* 51–78, at 67.

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and racial struggles and the anxiety that white solidarity will result in white centering, thus problematically reinscribing racial domination.[46] In one extreme scenario, as outlined by Scott Morgensen, the contrite settler subject becomes the inheritor of indigeneity.[47] Amidst criticism of the "ally industrial complex," one indigenous activist deplores the inability or unwillingness to follow through with the ultimate consequences of one's allyship:

> The ally establishment co-opts decolonization as a banner to fly at its unending anti-oppression gala. What is not understood is that decolonization is a threat to the very existence of settler "allies." No matter how liberated you are, if you are still occupying indigenous lands you are still a colonizer.[48]

Returning to international relations and law, then, "solidarity" may be unwelcome because it comes from a constituency that one does not wish to receive solidarity from, either because of its perceived hostility (solidarity is hypocritical) or because of its sheer impossibility (solidarity is in bad faith) or because it destroys a meaningful distinction between recipient and giver (solidarity dissolves its conditions of possibility).

On a first level, one may perceive expressions of solidarity as claiming an equality that is simply not there, whose implicit assertion does violence to the actual inequality that undergirds it and that is used, in fact, to cynically raise the profile of the provider of solidarity at the expense of the receiver. Hence, the Israeli government reportedly jumped to the conclusion that Iran and Iraq had refused its offer of humanitarian assistance after the earthquake that shook both countries. As such, those countries were said to have shown "their true face" (even though a subsequent Haaretz investigation suggested the offer had, in fact, never been received).[49] Consider the following statement by Netanyahu as an example of a kind of "solidarity" that thrives on cosmopolitan abstractions to, effectively, make a political point about national superiority:

[46] Mia McKenzie, "No More 'Allies'," *BGD*, October 1, 2013, available at: www.bgdblog.org/2013/09/no-more-allies/ (last accessed August 15, 2022); Andrea Smith, "Unsettling the Privilege of Self-Reflexivity," in France Winddance Twine and Bradley Gardener (eds.), *Geographies of Privilege* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[47] Scott Lauria Morgensen, "The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now" (2011) 1 *Settler Colonial Studies* 52.

[48] "Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex," Ind*igenous Action*, May 4, 2014, available at: www.indigenousaction.org/accomplices-not-allies-abolishing-the-ally-industrial-complex/ (last accessed August 15, 2022).

[49] Uri Blau, "Israel Claimed Iran Refused Its Offer for Humanitarian Aid. Red Cross Says Otherwise," *Haaretz*, November 16, 2017, available at: www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2017-11-16/ty-article/.premium/israel-claimed-iran-refused-its-aid-offer-red-cross-says-otherwise/0000017f-e925-dc7e-adff-f9ad36f90000 (last accessed August 6, 2022).

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> I've said many times that we have no quarrel with the people of Iran. Our quarrel is only with the tyrannical regime that holds them hostage and threatens our destruction. *But our humanity is greater than their hatred. Israel continues to be a light unto the nations and this is what I am proud of. And all of you can be proud of Israel's morals, and Israel's might.*[50]

What one witnesses here is, then, in all likelihood an effort to disparage the Iranian and Iraqi regimes under the guise of bringing assistance to their populations – a sort of cosmopolitan anti-politics that feigns to not understand why, given conditions of enmity between parties, grandiose but vacuous professions of solidarity might be unwelcome. The offer may even have been made in the sure knowledge that it would be rejected. Of course, it remains possible that offers of aid (as in South Korea's offers of humanitarian aid to North Korea or Israel's more successful offer to Turkey) are also a first salvo in a policy of *détente*, but the point is that the offeror of solidarity in such a scenario "wins" either way by getting to frame the relationship: either solidarity is accepted and the generosity of the donor is recognized; or solidarity is somehow imposed and the distinctness of the recipient is denied; or solidarity is rejected and the receiver can be blamed.

Paradoxically, the more abstract and universalist the solidarity, the more it incurs the suspicion of artificiality, whereas a solidarity grounded in the idiosyncratic affinities of amity and kinship may at least lay a better claim to genuineness. For example, the "universalist" solidarity with the Venezuelan victims of Maduro supposedly at stake in the inter-state (Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Chile, Paraguay, and Peru) referral of Venezuela to the ICC is suspicious because it is difficult to disentangle from the anti-Bolivarian politics of the Lima group. The dominant narrative of solidarity in international law is often too committed to this particular universalist narrative – *erga omnes* obligations somehow pushing states to intervene on behalf of others for seemingly no other reason than protecting the core values of the system – to provide a compelling account of what solidarity actually stands for. Having failed to provide a convincing case of why solidarity would not be welcome, it will fail to provide an understanding of circumstances where it would.

The critique of "allyship" in the activist realm may, moreover, provide a powerful prism to criticize international solidarity posturing that is simultaneously wholly complicit in what it denounces. Consider, for example, development aid or climate mitigation understood as forms of Western "solidarity" with the Global South. What this solidarity framing eludes is the extent to

[50] Ibid. (emphasis added).

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which the West is merely remedying manifestations of its own ongoing privilege as well as continuing age-old patterns of domination.[51] This suspicion touches even states, such as the Nordic countries, that have a more distant historical relationship to colonization but whose claim to "exceptionalism" rooted in solidarity with the third World and "well-meaning whiteness" is belied by their complicity in post-colonial continuities.[52] It has led calls for challenging the "anti-politics of humanitarianism" in the Palestinian context, as a solidarity that casts Israeli occupation as a mere externality under the guise of supporting Palestinian development.[53] In the worst case, solidarity becomes a sort of gaslighting, all the more likely to be voiced that it is, at heart, an empty promise.

4.4 "THANKS, BUT NO THANKS": ON BURDENS OF GRATITUDE

The argument for unwelcome solidarity taken from the fact that it contradicts an underlying *intuitu personae* in at least some cases still leaves a large field of possibilities for welcome solidarity. Why might solidarity, even when it does not emanate from the "wrong" party, still be, in some sense, unwelcome? Or, relatedly, how one might further understand and even justify a refusal of solidarity that might objectively benefit one's people merely on the grounds that it comes from the wrong party? One lead is here that the problem of solidarity is not (or not just) its source, but its fundamental mode of operation, specifically the fact that solidarity is not as generous or, strictly speaking, "free" as it seems.

Marcel Mauss's theory of the potlatch has long underscored the centrality of an economy of giving to social solidarity. In particular, Mauss emphasized that the gift is never entirely free (even though it is disinterested), but that it conditions a series of reciprocal exchanges. The gift engages the honor of the receiver, obliging him to reciprocate, sooner or later (the mechanisms of the don/contre-don). The logic of the gift, then, is said to structure relations in between the models of the interest-driven market and what might be forms of pure altruism. The "essence of the gift," it has been said, "[is] that it [is] not a

[51] Michael Mikulewicz, "The Discursive Politics of Adaptation to Climate Change" (2020) 110 *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 1807.

[52] Lene Bull Christiansen and Ashleigh Harris, "The Danish African: Wolle Kirk, Whiteness and Colonial Complicity" (2013) 11 *KULT-Postkolonial Temaserie* 45; Suvi Keskinen, Salla Tuori, Sara Irni and Diane Mulinari (eds.), *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[53] Linda Tabar, "Disrupting Development, Reclaiming Solidarity: The Anti-Politics of Humanitarianism" (2016) 45 *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16.

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gift."[54] To the extent that the gift is interested, it is in creating and sustaining a relation between donor and receiver in the form of a social bond.

In Maussian anthropology, the solidarity of the gift is primarily understood as a positive function, something that unites societies over time beyond interest calculation. But, lurking beneath the theory, is also a hint of solidarity's dark side. Solidarity, as a form of gift that obliges those who receive it, may be socially awkward, especially when the gift cannot be reciprocated. One is effectively made into the donor's debtor, obliged by their "noblesse oblige." The non-reciprocated or non-reciprocable gift, then, may be a way of exercising power over the receiver in a context where "the impoverishment of the ability to reciprocate impinges on the nature of receiving and impedes the relationship of mutuality that The Gift seeks to foster."[55] Indeed, "Charity is still wounding for him who has accepted it, and the whole tendency of our morality is to strive to do away with the unconscious and injurious patronage of the rich almsgiver. The invitation must be returned, just as 'courtesies' must."[56]

As Mauss put it, then, "To give is to show one's superiority, to be more, or to be higher in rank, magister. To accept without giving in return, or without giving more back, is to become client and servant, to become small, to fall lower (minister)."[57]

Moreover, we have no reason to think that the donor does not know this and that the gift does not come with the more or less deliberate "strings attached" of faux-solidarity, a solidarity proffered only to symbolically humiliate the receiver and enhance the prestige of the donor. But the point is that, even if the donor does not know this, the donor's "gift" of solidarity obliges: the theory is not a theory of the agency of giving but of the socially structuring role of the gift. Thus, it is that the political economy of the gift can be understood, among other things, as central to the constitution of colonization and the creation of bonds of loyalty between ruler and subject.[58]

Amidst a resurgence of interest in Mauss's ideas when it comes to international relations[59] arguably paved by Mauss's own interest in

[54] Jacques Godbout and Alain Caille, *The World of the Gift* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), p. 92.

[55] Robert Kowalski, "The Gift: Marcel Mauss and International Aid" (2011) 27 *Journal of Comparative Social Welfare* 189–205, at 195.

[56] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 83–84.

[57] Ibid., p. 95.

[58] Harry Liebersohn, *The Return of the Gift: European History of a Global Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[59] Grégoire Mallard, *Gift Exchange: The Transnational History of a Political Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

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internationalism,[60] the idea of the inter-temporal rough reciprocity of the gift as a basis of international social life aligns neatly with ideas about international law that have sought to shun both the narrow instrumentalism of interest-driven theories and the normativism of the natural law tradition. As if, perhaps, habitual compliance with international law had less to do with the legally binding character of norms than the way in which they structure, over time, processes of giving and counter-giving.

Certainly, ideas about giving and solidarity raise questions about the nature of international society and the extent to which it can sustain conditions of "generalized reciprocity" over time; that is, paradoxically, conditions under which the underlying demand for reciprocity can be temporarily suspended or diffused (i.e. in that one is not constantly asking for an immediate quid pro quo to any donation). In that respect, Maussian thinking invites us to move beyond the contractual framework of international law to emphasize the role of solidarity in the constitution of international society, not just as bilateral exchange but as sustaining a veritable global economy of multilateralism.[61]

Moreover, Mauss's ideas can also help explain the sort of gift-giving "above and beyond" the mere solidarity of international law, a formal solidarity of obligation often relying on moribund expressions of will rather than the actualization of empathy that is at the heart of the French sociologist's theory. There is no doubt that gift giving above and beyond legal obligations can provide a sometimes-tenuous basis for ongoing social bonds, even in conditions of adversariousness. For example, it has been contended that the humanitarian aid given by Israel to Syrians in the Al-Qunaytirah region between 2012 and 2018 had created openings for "friendly" relationships.[62] Similarly, Volker Heins and Christine Unrau have brought attention to the importance of the kind of transnational solidarity expressed by ordinary Germans making "gifts" to refugees.[63] In such cases, fragile bridges can be built between communities.

Having said that, the question for our purposes is how unilateral offers of gift might be specifically *un*welcome on Maussian grounds. Even though Maussian theory can provide keys to understand the sustenance of

[60] Frédéric Ramel, "Marcel Mauss et l'étude des relations internationales: un héritage oublié" (2004) 36 *Sociologie et sociétés* 227.

[61] Frédéric Ramel, "How to Understand International Society Differently: Mauss and the Chains of Reciprocity" (2018) 14 *Journal of International Political Theory* 165.

[62] Beata Paragi, "Israeli Cross-Border Assistance to Syrians: Creating Bonds by Giving?" (2021) 28 *Mediterranean Politics* 250.

[63] Volker Heins and Christine Unrau, "Refugees Welcome: Arrival Gifts, Reciprocity, and the Integration of Forced Migrants" (2018) 14 *Journal of International Political Theory* 223.

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international order despite the profoundly agonistic nature of the system,[64] it can also occasionally shed light on how the politics of solidarity might also turn out to be a politics of subjugation. It is particularly in the context of international aid assistance that the idea of the gift has been put to work, including to show some of the gift's ambiguities.[65] Indeed, the fraught, tense operation of the international system suggests a situation in which obligations of reciprocating cannot be put off for very long, notwithstanding the seeming gratuity of solidarity.

Unrequited giving, in particular, has long been identified as a potential key to deeply asymmetric relationships despite or even because of its very liberality. Georges Bataille, for example, argued that the Marshall Plan was a form of gigantic potlatch in which the United States sacrificed national resources in order to increase their prestige in Europe and humiliate the Soviet Union.[66] This left the receiver, Europe, strangely out of the picture, something that Wilton Dillon, an American anthropologist, sought to correct by highlighting the consequences of "downward giving" on Europe, notably in terms of expectations of very real "gratitude, affection, anti-Communist votes, and permission to build military installations and station troops."[67] Dillon accounted for the fact that the Marshall Plan resulted in "hostility toward their protector-benefactors" and anti-Americanism rather than gratefulness based on the inability of the French to pay back the gifts and thus assert their standing as equals.[68]

It also resulted in a quixotic quest for counter-gifts and a pursuit of restored French grandeur, as visible in the Suez adventure or the search for nuclear weapons as a form of "psychological release" from the tyranny of giving back.[69] Indeed, the sting of the gift is felt with all the more intensity that it coincides in some cases with brusque reversals in fortune. This was the case of Western Europe after the Second World War. It was also evident in "the

[64] John Oates and Eric Grynaviski, "Reciprocity, Hierarchy, and Obligation in World Politics: From Kula to Potlatch" (2018) 14 *Journal of International Political Theory* 145.

[65] Volker M Heins, Christine Unrau and Kristine Avram, "Gift-Giving and Reciprocity in Global Society: Introducing Marcel Mauss in International Studies" (2018) 14 *Journal of International Political Theory* 126; Alex Enachioaie, "Aid as Gift: International Aid between Theory and Practice," Undergraduate Dissertation, University of Kent, June 1, 2014, available at: www.academia.edu/9270716/Aid_as_gift_International_aid_between_theory_and_practice (last accessed August 6, 2022); Kowalski, "Marcel Mauss and International Aid."

[66] Georges Bataille, *La Part Maudite: Précédé de la Notion de Dépense* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967).

[67] Wilton Dillon, *Gifts and Nations: The Obligation to Give, Receive and Repay* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 76.

[68] Ibid., p. 78.

[69] Ibid.

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sudden status of [post-Soviet] societies in the 1990s as recipients of Western aid [and] thus a profound reversal of their self-image as aid givers."[70] To be a "provider" and to become a "receiver" of solidarity crystallizes the adaptability of the fluxes of solidarity, but it also highlights the risk of brusque *déclassement* (loss of status).

This suggests that, even in international relations there is always more at stake in solidarity than merely "giving aid." There is, in fact, no such thing as a free lunch. Solidarity also potentially obliges and those who cannot repay their debt are thereby easily if discreetly subjugated: giving is/as a form of power. This idea is visible, then, in a variety of facets of international life. After the Cold War, the United States had certain expectations that it would get a share of the pie of reconstruction in Eastern Europe, just as both the United States and the Soviet Union had earlier had huge expectations about the gratitude they were owed for liberating Europe. Similarly, President George W. Bush is said to have been obsessed by the need for Iraqi leaders to strongly express their gratitude to the United States for "liberating" the country.[71] This has surfaced most dramatically and recently in diplomatic outbursts urging Ukraine to more demonstratively – if nothing else, at this still early stage – express its gratitude to the West for aiding it in its fight against Russia.[72] No doubt the powers that be will come knocking in due course and demand their symbolic due: liberation from Russia will not come at zero cost in terms of independence and ongoing burdens of gratitude, a fact that Ukrainian leaders may belatedly become aware of,[73] even as some argue that it is the West that increasingly has a huge debt of gratitude to Ukraine.[74]

Development assistance has also been analyzed as a classic form of unreciprocated giving. The crucial insight for Tomohisa Hattori, for example, emphasizing the primarily "symbolic" power of the gift, is that "the wide

[70] Thomas Carothers, "Western Civil-Society Aid to Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 1, 1999, available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/1999/09/01/western-civil-society-aid-to-eastern-europe-and-former-soviet-union-pub-145 (last accessed August 6, 2022).

[71] Fred Kaplan, "Why Is Bush so Obsessed with Ungrateful Foreigners?," *Slate*, March 13, 2007, available at: https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2007/03/why-is-bush-so-obsessed-with-ungrateful-foreigners.html (last accessed August 15, 2023).

[72] Lara Jakes, "'We're Not Amazon': Britain's Defense Minister Says Ukrainian Officials Should Show More Gratitude," *The New York Times*, July 12, 2023, available at: www.nytimes.com/2023/07/12/world/europe/uk-ukraine-ben-wallace.html (last accessed August 15, 2023).

[73] Luke Harding, "'Thank You, Ben Wallace!' Ukraine Bemused and Irritated by UK's Call for Gratitude," *The Observer*, July 15, 2023, available at: www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jul/15/ben-wallace-defence-secretary-ukraine-gratitude (last accessed August 15, 2023).

[74] Timothy Snyder, "Gratitude to Ukraine," *Thinking about. . .*, December 11, 2022, available at: https://snyder.substack.com/p/gratitude-to-ukraine (last accessed August 15, 2023).

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ranging policy objectives attached to foreign aid are secondary to a more basic role of affirming the social relation in which they are extended (which, in this case, describes an underlying condition of inequality)."[75] But that relationship is not one between equals, since it constructs, in the words of Didier Fassin, "those for whom the gift cannot imply a counter-gift, since it is assumed that they can only receive" as "the indebted of the world."[76]

Drawing on Bourdieu, Hattori further conceptualizes foreign aid as "symbolic domination, or a practice that signals and euphemizes social hierarchies."[77] Specifically, "giving" transforms the donor's "status in the relationship from the dominant to the generous." Therefore:

> In accepting such a gift (i.e. one that cannot be reciprocated), a recipient acquiesces in the social order that produced it: in other words, he or she becomes grateful. It is this active complicity on the part of the recipient that gives the practice of unreciprocated giving its social power . . . what begins as a simple euphemization of a social hierarchy can become an active misrecognition over time, eventually naturalizing the material inequality between donor and recipient as the normal order of things.[78]

One can detect traces of this, for example, in the context of China's COVID vaccine diplomacy and the kind of burdens that this liberality has (was meant to?) engendered.[79]

The logic of the gift, then, helps understand why states may be ambivalent vis-à-vis ostentatious displays of solidarity, even when these might otherwise be useful or not emanate from the presumptively wrong party. It is not just that receivers are not interested in the kind of ongoing relationship that the gift signifies, it is also that they fear being put in a relationship of subjugation by a solidarity that cannot be reciprocated, except with gratefulness and subservience. Of course, giving back is always a possibility and may sometimes involve merely notional giving, but the obligation is always there and ends up sustaining a relationship of domination and subservience.[80]

[75] Tomohisa Hattori, "Reconceptualizing Foreign Aid" (2001) 8 *Review of International Political Economy* 633–660, at 639.

[76] Didier Fassin, "Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life" (2007) 19 *Public Culture* 499–520, at 512.

[77] Hattori, "Reconceptualizing Foreign Aid," 639.

[78] Ibid., 640.

[79] "The Guardian View on the Politics of Generosity: Gifts with Price Tags," *The Guardian*, April 8, 2020, available at: www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/apr/08/the-guardian-view-on-the-politics-of-generosity-gifts-with-price-tags (last accessed August 6, 2022).

[80] Beáta Paragi, "Contemporary Gifts: Solidarity, Compassion, Equality, Sacrifice, and Reciprocity from an NGO Perspective" (2017) 58 *Current Anthropology* 317.

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4.5 CONCLUSION: SOLIDARITY AND THE CHALLENGE OF RECIPROCITY

This chapter has sought to stress the salience of the politics of being on the receiving end of solidarity. Where international lawyers have been mostly interested in solidarity as a cohesive agglutinant for the international community at large, it has sought to transcend such abstractions to highlight the praxis of solidarity, drawing on a range of illustrations extending beyond international law. In the process, the chapter has sought to shed light on one particular dimension of the praxis of solidarity, namely the extent to which it may well be unwelcome. Against a perspective focused traditionally on the "supply side" of solidarity, it has insisted on taking seriously the actual "demand" for solidarity. And, contra traditional realism's suspicion that solidarity is just make-believe, it has foregrounded a wariness with solidarity's all-too-real actual operation against the background of problematic post-colonial and racialized assumptions.[81]

In short, the chapter suggests we should be mindful of how invocations of and appeals to solidarity construct both the provider and the recipient of solidarity as part of ongoing social ties. Solidarity does not as much emerge from unproblematic bonds as it seeks to construct them, raising questions about who decides on the perimeters of communities of solidarity. This is particularly the case of international solidarity as something that emerges well beyond the confines of polities understood as the "normal" locus of social solidarity. One should be wary of international lawyers' tendency to posit solidarity as "already there" and inherent to the international system rather than something that is constantly being constructed and deconstructed (solidarity and un-solidarity). Instead, the chapter has brought attention to "imaginaries of solidarity" or "non-solidarity" activated by social actors themselves.

One thing that the chapter might be seen as underscoring is the importance of willingness to have other parties be in solidarity with oneself. To be invited "into" solidarity may be an important dimension of what makes solidarity worthwhile. For example, Ukrainians have left no doubt that they very much expect international solidarity against Russia. The International Solidarity Movement was founded at the insistence of Palestinian activists themselves who sought foreigners to bear witness to what was happening under occupation. There may also be certain obligations of gracefulness in being the recipient of solidarity, to the extent that this solidarity is not ill-meaning or

[81] Nina Glick Schiller and Andrew Irving (eds.), *Whose Cosmopolitanism?: Critical Perspectives, Relationalities and Discontents* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014).

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problematic in some of the ways illustrated in the chapter. For example, the "courage [of some Syrians] to accept Israeli gifts"[82] has been praised as permitting a thin bond to emerge between Israelis and Syrians, in otherwise highly fraught geopolitical circumstances.

By the same token, the chapter suggests caution about legislating duties of solidarity under international law or human rights. This is not merely because an obligation of solidarity trivializes what the performance of solidarity entails; it is also because one should be wary, on the receiving end, of international actors feeling as if they ought to be recipients of solidarity in all cases. To have no choice but to accept whatever solidarity is coming and at what price is an extreme form of dispossession of self. An obligation to be the passive recipient of solidarity would be, paradoxically, the exact opposite of what solidarity entails: the ability to be mutually in solidarity with the other as a recognition of a commonality of fate and a willingness to assume the obligations (including of reciprocal giving) that come with it.

Moreover, positing the absolute value of solidarity could detract from the obligation of those "giving" to critically examine their own giving *élan*, and how it might be a source of awkwardness in social relations (including through solidarity that is much less of an ostentatious performance and that makes space for reciprocity). In that respect, the chapter was also a contribution to how a politics of allyship might become more of a politics of comradeship, instead of one focusing on one's own "downward" duty to the less well off.[83] It raises the question of how "we 'in solidarity' might extract ourselves from that cozy, comfortable feeling of solidarity with the 'victims'" by "rearticulating our relationship to the 'perpetrators' while at the same time avoiding self-sainthood."[84]

The emphasis on "unwelcome solidarity," then, sheds light indirectly on what might be welcome forms of solidarity. Against the relative heavy-handedness of state-to-state solidarity and its sometimes-problematic politics, one way of viewing welcome solidarity might be as that solidarity that transcends borders and expresses radical forms of brother/sister-hood with others facing similar plights. The intimate domain of the inter-personal may be one in which solidarities express themselves in the rawest fashion, without the corrupting leverage of international relations or the reductionist language of international law.[85] However, neither civil society nor public opinions can be

[82] Paragi, "Israeli Cross-Border Assistance to Syrians," 251.
[83] Jodi Dean, *Comrade: An Essay on Political Belonging* (London: Verso, 2019).
[84] Stamatopoulou-Robbins, "Joys and Dangers of Solidarity in Palestine," 114.
[85] Patrick Hayden and Natasha Saunders, "Solidarity at the Margins: Arendt, Refugees, and the Inclusive Politics of World-Making," in Kei Hiruta (ed.), *Arendt on Freedom, Liberation, and Revolution* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 171–199.

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expected to be free of the dilemmas that structure all solidarity, including the challenge of remedying obvious asymmetries.[86]

Finally, the chapter has brought attention to the need to think of ways in which solidarity might or might not be made to be reciprocal. The value of the gift as an anthropological conceit that might be extended to international relations at large is its flexibility and adaptability. Counter-giving is never about a strict quid-pro-quo, the sort of formal symmetry that only a rather sterile modernist mindset can envisage under international law. It allows for creativity, even cheekiness and irony in the act of subversive counter-giving, as when President Chavez of Venezuela sent oil to poor Americans to heat themselves in the Winter.[87] But it is counter-giving nonetheless, a way of providing opportunities in a relationship that do not excessively burden one party with the curse of always being on the receiving end of the other's liberality.

[86] Hjalmar Bang Carlsen, Nicole Doerr, and Jonas Toubøl, "Inequality in Interaction: Equalising the Helper–Recipient Relationship in the Refugee Solidarity Movement" (2022) 33 *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 59.

[87] Rebekah Kebede, "Venezuela Brings Free Heating Oil to Poor in NY," *Reuters*, December 14, 2007, available at: www.reuters.com/article/citgo-energy-bronx-assistance-idUSN14255889200712 14 (last accessed August 15, 2022).

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