



**Solidarity in Local and
Multicultural Communities
in the South of Russia**



SOLIDARITY IN LOCAL AND MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES IN THE SOUTH OF RUSSIA

SOLIDARIDAD EN COMUNIDADES LOCALES Y MULTICULTURALES EN EL SUR DE RUSIA

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Abstract

The article presents the results of the social research of solidarity in the South Russian multi-ethnic region as an essential structure of mental programs of social behavior in local communities. The study of cognitive, axiological and conative aspects of solidarity made it possible to draw the conclusion that in the South of Russia, just as in Russian society in general, social solidarity, being at a very low level, mainly takes forms of the “lower” (micro-social) self-organization and mutual aid, associated with the self-assertion by citizens, as well as upholding of their economic and environmental interests.

Keywords: solidarity, cultural, multicultural communities, local communities, social solidarity, civil solidarity, solidarity practices, legitimate solidarity practices, legal solidarity practices, illegal solidarity practices.

Resumen

El artículo presenta los resultados de la investigación social de la solidaridad en la región multiétnica del sur de Rusia como una estructura esencial de los programas mentales de comportamiento social en las comunidades locales. El estudio de los aspectos cognitivos, axiológicos y conativos de la solidaridad permitió llegar a la conclusión de que en el sur de Rusia, al igual que en la sociedad rusa en general, la solidaridad social, al estar en un nivel muy bajo, toma principalmente formas de " "Autoorganización (micro-social) y ayuda



mutua, asociada con la autoafirmación de los ciudadanos, así como la defensa de sus intereses económicos y ambientales.

Palabras clave: solidaridad, comunidades culturales, multiculturales, comunidades locales, solidaridad social, solidaridad civil, prácticas de solidaridad, prácticas de solidaridad legítimas, prácticas de solidaridad legal, prácticas de solidaridad ilegales.

Introduction

Russian sociocentrist society is solidary by nature, hence the idea of human solidarity as a special national idea that has permeated Russian history and culture for many centuries. This gives reason to call Russia a solidary civilization, in which solidarity is one of the basic values. The results of cross-cultural studies which were conducted by foreign researchers in the 80s of the previous century, also testified that solidarity values dominated in the Soviet society (Hofstede, 1983, 60).

According to the opinion polls held among Russians, social solidarity in modern Russian society triggers positive emotions in them as well. However, a maximum of 16% of respondents value solidarity as the willingness to help people and participate in the achievement of common goals, in people. At the same time however, as has been noted by some researchers, “the weakening of traditional political and civil forms of solidarity” can be observed (Russian society and the challenges of time, 2017, 214– 217, 293). What is more, some researchers believe that civil solidarity which serves as a fundamental basis for the “citizenhood as involvement of all members of society in nationwide goals and public policy” is currently being destroyed (Gorshkov, 2016, Vol. 2, 139). Civil solidarity is increasingly giving way to ethnic solidarity which serves as essential element of social capital in multi-ethnic communities (Gorshkov, 2016, Vol. 1, 304).

The South of Russia is one of the most multi-ethnic regions of the Russian Federation, a big part in the national republics of which is played by ethno-national identity and ethnic solidarity which is based on ethnocultural traditions and historical memory of ethnic communities. In this regard, particular academic interest is generated by the question of what is the attitude of people towards social solidarity in local communities in the South of Russia and what are its peculiar properties in polyethnic societies. These matters have not yet become the subject of scholarly attention in the academic literature dedicated to solidarity problems in modern Russia. Sociological study of these matters has not only social and scholarly importance, but also practical relevance in terms of development of projects for the implementation of policy aimed at social consolidation of regional communities (Vodenko et al., 2018; Vodenko, 2019; Zeibote et al., 2019; Ismail et al., 2019).

Materials and methods

In modern Russian society, solidarity is the subject of various scientific research practices. The academic interest of Russian researchers today is mainly centered around the problems associated with historical traditions and peculiarities of solidarity in Russian society. At the same time, some researchers, associating the formation of solidarity with the civil society, believe that sociocultural peculiarities of Russian society prevented the



formation of solidarity as a basis for genuine social consolidation to the full extent (Akhiezer, 2004; Gudkov, 2005; Lubsy et al., 2016). Other researchers, considering historical traditions of solidarity, note the presence of such traditions, but solidarity in Russian society mainly resulted from the initiative of the governmental authorities, considering the initiative to achieve consent with society, including through the use of coercive measures (Pantin and Lapkin, 2006). At the same time, some researchers turn their attention to the fact that solidarity in Russia was based not only on violence, but also on ideological grounds, for example in the Soviet society.

Considering the peculiarities of solidarity in modern Russian society, researchers pay their attention, in the first place, to its low level, and, in the second place, to the presence of a tendency towards its reduction resulting from the increase in the individualism in Russian society and its social atomization (Skvortsov, 2012). In this regard, some researchers regard solidarity as a social alternative which is able to overcome radical diehard conservative and liberal anarchist policies which became prevalent in modern Russian society (Kovalev et al., 2018) at a macrosocial level. Besides, researchers turn their attention to the fact that solidarity in Russian society mainly takes forms of the “lower organization” of daily interaction at a macrosocial level nowadays. Such social solidarity is a basis for an adaptive life strategy for many Russians that follow a particular system of views and values supporting them whenever their social interests are threatened. Therefore, as noted by researchers, either common social goals for certain social groups or topical social issues giving rise to the practices of self-organization and mutual aid in these groups, serve as the key factors of solidarity in local communities (Reutov, 2017, 121). At the same time, researchers note that outside of “strong social connections” - family-kinship and friendly, which are treated as a source of additional resources, stable social solidarity groups are formed on extremely rare occasions. Few social actors become involved in such solidarity groups in local communities. Therefore, solidarity did not become the standard even in the sphere of neighborly relations. In addition, a significant role in self-organization processes in local communities is still played by the government agencies (Reutov et al., 2016). Moreover, researchers believe that top-priority importance of private values as compared to values of civil duty and social responsibility in modern Russian society has a very negative impact on the prospects of development of civil solidarity activity (Volkov, 2017). As a result, the lack of civil solidarity can be observed in Russian society in the first place (Serdiukov, 2018).

The solidarity in the South of Russia, except for several papers dedicated to protest activity, particularly that of young students (Chelpanova, 2013; Chelpanova, 2014; Lukichev, 2014), has not been the subject of special social research yet. Hence, the article reveals special aspects of solidarity in local communities in the South Russian region based on the analysis and interpretation of empirical information obtained as a result of the social research.

A set of empirical information including the results of the social research conducted by the authors in 2018 with the use of the individual questionnaire method called “face-to-face” in five constituent territories of the Russian Federation in the South of Russia (Rostov Region, Stavropol Krai, Republic of Adygeya, Kabardino-Balkar Republic and Republic of Crimea) serves as a basis for academic study of solidarity in local communities in the South of Russia. The representativeness of implemented research procedures was achieved



through the implementation of many-stage stratified proportional sample (a sample of 2468 respondents). In addition, the social research used reference sources of information obtained at federal, regional and city level, regulating solidarity practices in local communities, as well as the mass media and Internet resources containing the information about solidarity activity in the South Russian regions. The methods of qualitative operational analysis and theoretical interpretation of obtained empirical information were used in the social research apart from quantitative methods.

The concept of social solidarity in contemporary Russian discourse is filled with various axiological, ethical and ideological connotations (Efremenko and Evseeva, 2012). That said, some researchers in their comprehension of solidarity are relying on west-european intellectual tradition, in which the conceptual and practical problems of solidarity became the subject of research within the scope of various research trends (Solidarity: theory and practice, 2014; Scholz, 2008; Reisz, 2006; Carigiet, 2001; Dean, 1996). Therefore, in Western European discourse “As noted by researchers, the interpretations of the idea of solidarity turned out to be as diverse as these trends themselves; moreover, they frequently aggressively fought against each other. Numerous adherents of particular types of solidarism, since the XIX century to this day, have been active in various European countries, including, of course, Russia” (Gofman, 2013, 100).

At the same time, the cumulative concept of social solidarity which was developed in the format of late modernism is particularly popular with Russian researchers focused on west-european intellectual tradition; it includes, firstly, the idea of the fact that “description of solidarity in terms of interhuman (intersubjective) relations means the recognition of the individual in question as an equal and worthy interaction partner”. Secondly, it includes the notion that “society that can be described in terms of solidarity, is based on equitable distribution of chances of its constituent entities for recognition”, and, and, therefore, “fair recognition is a prerequisite for social cohesion and solidarity” (Juul, 2010). In connection with the problems of formation of civil society in Russia, the concept of social solidarity is popular as well, within the scope of which it is deemed to be the basis for overcoming the key contradiction of civil society – the dichotomy of individualism and collectivism (Alexander, 2011; Alexander, 1999).

However, the interpretation of social solidarity in various communities “with the help of universality terms” looks, as noted by some researchers, quite vulnerable in our time of increasing risks, social and cultural polarization (Reutov, 2017, 113). Therefore, other researchers in their comprehension of solidarity in Russian society primarily take into account its sociocultural specificity (Volkov et al., 2018). In this regard, solidarity in Russian society is interpreted not only as the ability of citizens to unite for the sake of attaining common goals. As noted by researchers, an important component of solidarity is normative axiological and cultural identity of citizens, as well as its pragmatist aspect related to their self-organization and mutual aid (Reutov, 2017, 118). Various types of solidarity can be identified in the modern academic literature: historical, civilizational, nationwide, social, ethnic, faith based, civil, everyday, professional (Khokonov, 2016).

In the context of the multidimensional methodological construct of the social research, solidarity is regarded as the structure of mental programs (Lubsky et al., 2016) as a set of values and policies giving rise to solidarity practices of various social groups in local communities in the South of Russia. In this regard, axiological and conative aspects of



the study of solidarity stood out, defining, on the one hand, the importance of solidarity in the axiological hierarchy of respondents, and on the other hand, reflecting their willingness to participate in solidarity practices. Firstly, the emphasis on legitimate solidarity actions aimed at demonstrating agreement with policy of the authorities; secondly, legal (authorized) and illegal (unauthorized) solidarity protest actions have special methodological value for the comprehension of solidarity practices in the South of Russia.

Results and discussion

The responses of respondents to the question about the causes of joint public actions make it possible to estimate solidarity as a value in local communities in the South of Russia (See Table 1).

Table 1. Solidarity as a value (regional aspect).

Responses to the question: “What in your opinion is the most frequent cause of joint public actions?”	%
Economic interests	49.1%
The need for protection of rights and freedoms	52.1%
Ethnic interests (interests of my people)	18.5%
Professional interests	24.8%
Values of a healthy lifestyle	20.0%
Faith-based interests	11.8%
Family values	18.2%
Interests of the multiethnic population of Russia	22.8%
Customs and traditions	18.5%
Other	2.2%

The results are indicative of the domination of universality values of solidarity in mental programs. People are mainly oriented toward protection of “rights and freedoms” (52.1%) and “economic interests” (49.1%), which serves as a basis for civic and social solidarity in local communities. In this context, professional solidarity (24.8%) and nationwide solidarity (22.8%) as a value are greatly inferior to civil solidarity and social solidarity. Civilian values, which in the South of Russia may include “customs and traditions” (18.5%), “faith-based interests” (11.8%), “ethnic interests” (18.5%), in general do not play a big part in the organization of joint public actions. However, these civilian values as “ethnic interests (interests of my people)”, “customs and traditions”, “faith-based interests”, alongside with such universal values as “the need for protection of rights and freedoms” and “economic interests” are very important in mental programs of representatives of various ethnic groups (except for the Russians) which were mentioned as the causes of solidarity activity (See Table 2).



Table 2. Solidarity as a value (national aspect).

Responses to the question: “What in your opinion is the main cause of joint public actions?”	Nationality						
	Avars	Circassians	Balkars	Dargins	Kabardians	Tatars	Russians
Economic interests	0	41.5	47.1	0	28.2	66.7	50.4
The need for protection of rights and freedoms	71.4	46.3	41.2	0	41.0	57.1	56.3
Ethnic interests (interests of my people)	14.3	31.7	47.1	33.3	38.5	28.6	16.1
Professional interests	28.6	29.3	29.4	16.7	17.9	14.3	24.0
Values of a healthy lifestyle	28.6	17.1	17.6	0	12.8	28.6	19.1
Faith-based interests	23.3	14.6	29.4	50.0	20.5	23.8	8.7
Family values	42.9	9.8	17.6	33.3	15.4	23.8	19.0
Interests of the multiethnic population of Russia	0	22.0	29.4	0	10.3	9.0	23.8
Customs and traditions	28.6	14.6	23.5	16.7	31.2	42.9	19.3

Thus, the Crimean Tatars (42.9% as against 18.5% for the South of Russia in total), the Avars (28.6%), the Kabardians (31.2%), and the Balkars (23.5% as against 18.5%) believe that “customs and traditions” are an important cause of solidarity actions. “Faith-based interests” as a cause of solidarity activity are of greatest importance for the Dargins (50.0% as against 11.8% for the South of Russia in total), the Balkars (29,4%), the Crimean Tatars (23,8%), the Avars (23,3%), and the Kabardians (20,5%). “Ethnic interests” appear to be the most important causes of solidarity actions for the Balkars (47.1% as against 18.5% for the South of Russia in total), the Kabardians (38,5%), the Circassians (31,7%), and the Crimean Tatars (28,6%). In this regard, it should be noted that civilian values in regional communities as the causes of joint public actions are less important than those in the national environment, due to the fact that Russians living in the South of Russia associate the causes of solidarity activity primarily with such universal values as “the need for protection of rights and freedoms” (56.3%) and “economic interests” (50.4%).

Solidarity in mental programs of individuals in local communities in the South of Russia has both social and civil aspect. The respondent responses to the question of whether they are ready to be the organizers of joint public actions aimed at defending social interests testify that social solidarity is a policy (See Table 3)

Table 3. Social solidarity as a policy.

Responses to the question: “Are you ready to be an organizer of joint public actions aimed at defending social interests?”	%
Yes, I am ready	11.2
Yes, but only in case where there is a grave violation of my personal interests	18.1



No, I don't believe that I can defend social interests by means of joint public actions	14.5
No, I don't have personal qualities necessary for this	36.5
Don't know	18.9

According to the results of social research, only an insignificant part of respondents (11.2%, with due consideration of inflated self-concept) are ready to organize solidarity actions aimed at defending social actions, and only if it is associated with a grave violating of their personal interests (18.2%). According to the respondents themselves, this is due to the fact that they do not possess the necessary qualities (36.5%) or they don't believe in the possibility of defending social interests by means of joint public actions at all (14.5%).

Civil solidarity as a policy of mental programs in local communities in the South of Russia in general is also inherent in a small number of Russian citizens (See Table 4). This is due to the fact that, according to respondents themselves, they do not believe that they can defend their personal interests by means of public actions (18.2%), or to the fact that they have no time to take part in such actions (13.8%).

Table 3. Civil solidarity as a policy.

Responses to the question: "Are you ready to take part in joint public actions if you think that this will help you to defend your personal interests?"	%
No, I don't believe that I can defend my personal interests using these methods	18.2
I have no time take part in joint public actions	13.8
If there will be appropriate circumstances or relevant need, we cannot discard such possibility	33.3
I will certainly take part in joint public actions, if it will help with defending my interests	14.1
Don't know	20.3

However, one should pay attention to the relatively high potential of civil solidarity as compared to social solidarity: thus, one third of respondents leave open the possibility of their participation in joint public actions in order to defend their personal interests, if there will be such need and appropriate circumstances. Apparently, it is the absence of such need with the majority of individuals in local communities in the South of Russia that makes them unwilling to take part in joint public actions, even if it will help to defend their personal interests.

The low level of social and civil solidarity of individuals in local communities is largely due to etatism nature of their mental programs and domination of the statist liberal pattern of social behavior with a pronounced conservative component in the South of Russia. This pattern of social behavior is followed in different spheres of life by 45 to 60% Russians in regional communities in the South of Russia. The representatives of this pattern agree that in order to improve their material well-being, people must make their own efforts; however, they believe that the governmental authorities in Russian society must take care of people, ensuring a decent standard of their well-being.



Strong paternalistic state and special democracy corresponding to national heritages and protecting not only equal rights of all citizens, but also their material well-being, serve as a statist liberal pattern of social behavior in the mental program. At the same time, the ideas of democracy harmonize with etatism, with the concepts of the need for a “firm hand” in Russia, which can regain order in the country. Through the support of the existing governmental authorities in the process of “regaining” the public order “at the top”, they treat as political activity in society as its contraposition. At the same time, the representatives of this pattern of social behavior state that they will not abandon their political rights and freedoms, but they would rather not enjoy them. Therefore, social inactivity and civil passivity are the policies of the mental program of this model (Mental programs and modal patterns of social behavior in the South of Russia, 2017). In particular, this is evidenced by the responses of respondents to the question of whether they will take part in joint public actions if the latter will be banned by the authorities (See Table 5). As little as 3.9% of respondents are willing to participate in illegal solidarity practices; 18.1 % of respondents leave open such possibility if these actions will defend their personal interests.

Table 5. Solidarity as a policy.

Responses to the question: “Will you take part in joint public actions if they will be banned by the authorities?”	%
No	53.4
No, but if they will defend my interests, I leave such possibility open	18.1
Yes, since the actions of authorities do not always defend my interests	9.6
Yes	3.9
Don’t know	14.6

Peculiarities of solidarity as the structure of mental programs of population in local communities stipulate the nature of solidarity practices in the South of Russia, where legitimate solidarity actions aimed at demonstration of acceptance of authorities, as well as legal and illegal solidarity protest actions, are dominant. Currently, mass public actions aimed at demonstration of solidarity with the authorities are generally organized by the governmental authorities or political party “Yedinaya Rossiya”. These solidarity actions which are usually associated with the main national and regional holidays, or are antiterrorist in nature, have a pronounced loyal statist and patriotic orientation.

The study of legal and illegal protest actions makes it possible to draw the conclusion that protest moods in local communities in the South of Russia are expressed at an extremely low level. In this case, Rostov Region the turned out to be the leader in terms of the number of protest actions, where, nevertheless, there is no tangibly significant social basis for the recruitment of supporters of opposition against the governmental authorities. There are no any influential organizations nor a significant number of political actors who intend to voice their complaint with the authorities in the region. There are few or no opposition political forces in the Stavropol Krai, in Kabardino-Balkariya and Adygea. This being said, it should be noted that if liberal rhetoric, although weak, is present in protest solidarity practices in the Rostov Region and Stavropol Krai, then it is absolutely



uncharacteristic of Adygea and Kabardino-Balkariya. A big part in legal protest actions in these republics is played by historical memory of its peoples, in the depths of which Russian authorities have a bad credit history. Conversely, the historical memory of peoples plays a big part in the organization of illegal protest actions in Stavropol Krai and Republic of Crimea. This is due to the fact that domestic ethnic conflicts are still glowing in Stavropol Krai, while in Crimea illegal protest activity is exhibited by a number of Crimean Tatar organizations which are banned in the Russian Federation.

There are no significant legal and illegal protest actions in local communities in the South of Russia, which is indicative of imperfection of civic institutions here. Besides, here, just as in Russian society in general, state and civic identity is dominant, whose carriers demonstrate loyalty to the state and its line policy. Ethnonational identities that position their ethnic and cultural exclusiveness as the subjects of federative relations in Russia get along together quite well with the national republics with such identity.

Conclusion

The results of the social research of solidarity in local communities in the South of Russia testify that social solidarity in this case, just as in Russian society in general, is at a very low level. This is due to the fact that solidarity as a value is not a top-priority structure in mental programs of social behavior. This being said, the solidarity in the South of Russia is mainly based on such universality values as the need for protection of rights and freedoms, as well as economic interests which are regarded as the main causes of joint public actions. In national communities, alongside with such values, big part is also played by civilian values, such as “customs and traditions”, “ethnic and faith-based interests”. In addition, solidarity is not a policy for the most people in local communities in the South of Russia due to the fact that, according to the respondents of the social research, on the one hand, they do not have the necessary qualities to be the organizers of joint public actions. On the other hand, they have neither time nor desire to take part in such actions since they do not believe that they can defend social and personal interests through solidary actions.

Low level of solidarity activity in local communities is mainly stipulated by etatism nature of mental programs of the majority of population in the South of Russia. In these programs, priority in the consolidation of Russian society is given to the strong state power, contributing to the formation of such policies as social inactivity and civil passivity.

Besides, the results of the social research of solidarity in local communities in the South of Russia testify that *здесь она*, just as in Russian society in general, mainly takes forms of the “lower” (micro-social) self-organization and mutual aid, associated with the self-assertion by citizens, as well as with their desire to improve the life environment and to help deprived people

At the same time, legitimate solidarity actions aimed at demonstration of acceptance of authorities, as well as legal and illegal solidarity protest actions are dominant in local communities in the South of Russia. Legitimate solidarity actions aimed at demonstration of acceptance of authorities, are usually organized by governmental authorities and coincide with national holidays. Particular attention in the South Russian regions is paid to antiterrorist meetings, as well as mass meetings resulting from the nationalization of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation.



Legal and illegal protest actions in local communities in the South of Russia are characterized by occasional nature and involvement of a small number of citizens in solidarity practices of this sort. Particular activity in the organization of these practices is exhibited by opposition parties or civic organisations, as well as citizens themselves. Protest actions in local communities were mainly focused on combating poverty and corruption, and to a lesser extent they were focused on the struggle for the freedom of conscience or environmental security. Protest actions may occasionally be associated with interethnic relations at the mundane level.

In general, solidarity practices at a micro-social level, despite the low level of social trust in Russian society, are gradually becoming an integral element of the social space of local communities. In self-organization processes, a big part in these communities is still played by the government agencies; however, horizontal forms of social and civil solidarity are developing quite actively as well.

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