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European solidarity: a semantic history

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ABSTRACT

'European solidarity' is one of the most frequently used words in contemporary public discourse, but what does it mean? This article investigates the historical and semantic background of the term in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish since the French Revolution, when 'solidarity' became a political keyword for the first time in European history. With the founding of the Holy Alliance in 1815 the *idea* of 'European solidarity' as an instrument for achieving political order on the continent emerged. A historical longitudinal analysis via the Ngram Viewer reveals that the frequency of 'solidarity' follows or depends on certain crisis moments in history, such as revolutions, wars or economic troubles. 'Solidarity' belongs to the history of emotions and propaganda but is not a stable value system that consolidates political culture. It also seems to play a greater role in the national rather than in the European context. As a European political expression, 'solidarity' is not genuinely European but borrowed from the national political vocabulary. Moreover, the article outlines the semantic field of 'European solidarity' by showing linkages between 'solidarity' and other words.

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Introduction

At a first glance, 'European solidarity' seems to be a well-defined historical category. It is obviously suitable for all kinds of behaviour, alliances and unions in history since Antiquity. The doing and acting of Europeans in their colonies can be regarded as a manifestation of 'European solidarity' against the various local populations. Arguably, the period of fascist and Nazi dictatorships in the first half of the twentieth century could be categorized in a similar way. And last but not least, the history of European integration is often narrated as the history of European solidarity in practice. Despite this broad application of 'European solidarity' as a historical category, it is not well defined at all. It is just an un-reflexive interpretation of actor-constellations in history and their presumed motives for acting. It is only rarely backed by the wording of primary sources. Coincidentally, no one has written the history of 'European solidarity'.

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There are only a few studies exploring 'solidarity' from a historical point of view. Peter Baldwin's *The Politics of Social Solidarity: Class Bases of the European Welfare State, 1875–1975* covers one of the longest periods and provides some useful insights.¹ Marie-Claude Blais's history of the idea of 'solidarity' concerns only the French case.² Hauke Brunkhorst in his *Solidarität* goes back to Antiquity and establishes 'solidarity' as a political ideal and principle which, although often under different names and terms, has expressed a fundamental value in European political thought.³ Lars Magnusson's and Bo Stråth's *European Solidarities: Tensions and Contentions of a Concept* deals primarily with the issue of social and economic cohesion in the European Union.⁴

'Solidarity' has gained notability since the creation of Polish 'Solidarność' in 1980.⁵ French President Mitterrand created a 'ministère de la solidarité' in 1981. Pope John-Paul II declared in the Encyclica 'Sollicitudo rei socialis' (1987) that 'solidarity is undoubtedly a Christian virtue' (N° 40).⁶ 'Solidarity' is so often used that it is one of the main keywords of the text. The 'Charta of Fundamental Rights of the European Union' (December 2000/current version 2012) says in its preamble that 'the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity', and Chapter IV is entitled with 'Solidarity'.⁷ In 2002, the EU established the European Union Solidarity Fund which 'provides financial assistance to EU countries facing major natural disasters'.⁸

In her book *European Solidarities*, published in 2007, Nathalie Karagiannis states: 'At the outbreak of the war in Iraq [2003; W.S.], for instance, the word and concept of 'solidarity' were brought to the fore by three of the most influential thinkers of our time, Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida and Richard Rorty'.⁹ Karagiannis emphasizes two main fields of application of 'European solidarity': within the EU and within a global context.

In 2005, the ministers of culture of Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia established the 'European Network Remembrance and Solidarity'.¹⁰ Romania joined in 2014. The network's goal was to discuss the history of organized population displacements in twentieth-century Europe. In the same year, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the foundation of Solidarność, the 'European Solidarity Centre' was conceived with the assistance, among others, of the EU. It was opened in Gdańsk in 2014.¹¹

The actual Treaty of Lisbon quotes 'solidarity' in Article 1a (values of the Union), Article 2 (goals of the Union), Article 10a ('foreign policy' of the Union) and Article 61 (immigration and asylum). The 'spirit of solidarity' is regularly evoked in the document.¹²

It is worth pointing out that the keyword in all these contexts, with the exception of the name of the Centre in Gdańsk, is simply 'solidarity'. The issue is European as well as national. The growing importance of 'solidarity' during the last decades simultaneously in national and European contexts suggests that it designates something in European political culture. 'Solidarity' can be located in 'political culture' with a more national and a more European strand, not to mention the global one. 'Global solidarity' is often referred to by civil-society associations, which are active internationally or intercontinentally, as well by trade unions, religious communities or the United Nations.¹³ The semantic field of 'global solidarity' is determined by 'human family', 'peace', 'international cooperation' and the like.

'European solidarity' is probably one of the most frequently used words in public discourse and media. Appeals to 'European solidarity' have multiplied as a consequence of financial crises, the refugee crisis and several other crises that have hit the Continent in recent times. A simple quantitative glance at the usage of the composition 'European solidarity' in various newspapers in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK in the last

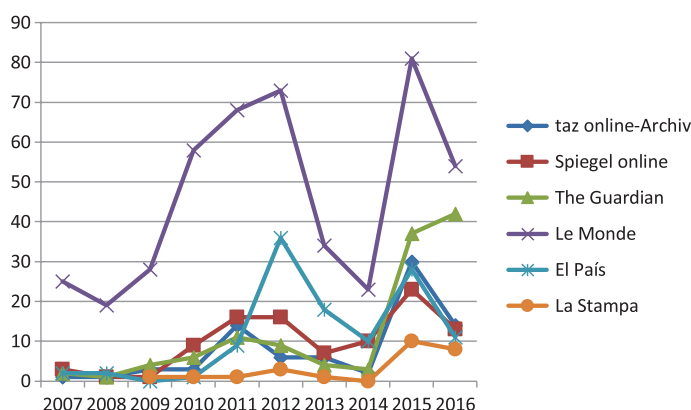


Figure 1. Quantitative glance at the usage of the composition ‘European solidarity’ in various newspapers in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK, 2007–2016.

Notes: The data are based on research in the open access online archives of the chosen newspapers. Websites scanned: <https://www.taz.de>; www.spiegel.de; <https://www.theguardian.com/>; www.lemonde.fr; <https://elpais.com/>; www.lastampa.it (all accessed February 10, 2017). *La Stampa* did not produce hits for 2007, 2008 and 2014.

decade supports the impression that ‘European solidarity’ expresses an important aspect of European political culture (Figure 1).

The frequency is similar for all five newspapers but *Le Monde* surpasses all. ‘Solidarité européenne’ constitutes a real keyword in French. We will see later that the same is true for ‘solidarité’¹⁴ because its score in the peak years of each half century (1800 to 1850, 1851 to 1900, 1901 to 1950, 1951 until today) is the highest of all. The Spanish crisis of 2012 led to an increased frequency of ‘solidaridad europea’ in *El País*. The same is true for *Le Monde* while the use of ‘European solidarity’ decreases in the case of *Spiegel online* and *taz*.¹⁵ The use of ‘European solidarity’ solely increases in *The Guardian* in 2016, probably due to the UK Brexit vote.

The examples suggest that ‘European solidarity’ stands for emotion rather than for a stable value because its frequency follows more or less the ups and downs of the various crises in Europe. Nevertheless, the usage of ‘European solidarity’ seems indispensable.

In the following, the article tries to shed light on the historical and semantic background of ‘European solidarity’ in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish since the French Revolution when ‘solidarity’ became a political keyword for the first time in European history.

Some critical remarks on the usage of Ngram Viewer and the Google Books corpora

One aspect of semantic history is the relation between linguistic attitudes, time and frequency. Frequency can be measured with Google’s Ngram Viewer which allows frequency analyses in different European and non-European languages. For the purpose of this study, English, French, German, Italian and Spanish were chosen for the frequency and semantic analyses.¹⁶

Ngram Viewer is based on a certain corpus of digitized texts, known as ‘Google Books’. The data set was configured in 2009 and, apart from a few exceptions, includes texts published before and in 2008.¹⁷ As the corpus thus does not offer data from recent years,

newspapers were used as well (see earlier in this article). These show that the frequency of the nouns 'European + solidarity' (in different languages) has increased since the outbreak of the more recent crises in Europe.

The Ngram Viewer *is based on a corpus*. An arbitrary although semantic search on the Web is not based on what we call a corpus. The Google corpus does not include present newspapers or broadcast texts but historical magazines and newspapers. In general, the corpus is composed of learned texts including scientific journals, official documents and the like. Can such a corpus mirror the social use of a language? It probably cannot in the full sense of representativeness, but the Ngram Viewer does allow a semantic search in hundreds of thousands or even millions of books and other digitized texts, leading to and assuring a useful and acceptable grade of representativeness of the results.

As both words in the composition 'European solidarity' (europäische Solidarität, solidarité européenne, solidarietà europea, solidaridad europea) have a life of their own, it is necessary to look briefly upon their respective histories. 'European solidarity' is, of course, not the only possible composition. Expressions such as 'Europe's solidarity', 'solidarity of the Europeans', 'solidarity of the European nations' and so on are linguistically conceivable as well and will be discussed at a later stage. Options which are grammatically and syntactically correct may not be used at all times. Thus, which linguistic options are practised and which are not provides useful information on social practice because languages as well as linguistic attitudes are social practices. I emphasize that, while working here with words, my intention is not that of a linguist but of a historian.

None of these five languages can be related to only one single country. With regard to English, Ngram Viewer offers various options, differentiating between English, British and American English and English Fiction. In this study, English Fiction was excluded straight away, while British English and American English were initially tested before finally deciding to use 'English'. It appears that the distinction between American and British English is not sharp enough in the digitized texts. True, the merging of American English texts and British English texts may distort the results somewhat due to a presumable 'Atlantic' bias in the topics. Assuming that British authors are, equally to German authors, more likely to write on 'European solidarity' than American authors, the percentage of their British English results within the Google 'English' corpus is distorted given the predominance of American texts there (in contrast to Austrian or Swiss German texts in the 'German' corpus).

German and French relate to several countries. The Spanish case is comparable to the English one. Only Italian largely coincides with Italy, although it is also spoken in parts of Switzerland. With regard to English, French and Spanish, it would have been useful to have more information on the exact composition of the Google corpus: how large is the part of non-European English, French and Spanish texts in different periods? What is its impact on the results? Or, to put it differently, how 'European' are the results? What we can take for sure is that the equation 'one language = one country' does not exist. There is no 'national linguistic option'. For the historian, this means, on the one hand, that one cannot easily establish a certain relationship between a linguistic result and a certain historical event. This would require studying the actual texts in the Google corpus (even the snippets on display can be useful in this context). On the other hand, certain frequency peaks, for instance during the world wars, clearly relate to specific historical developments.

Arguably, 'European solidarity' as part of discourses, of social linguistic practices, of ideas and imaginations, is relevant not simply in the narrower European or even national,

but also in the global context. For a historian, the usage of Ngram Viewer and the Google Books corpora provides some disadvantages but also incomparable advantages. It is quite possibly the best available tool for the comparative study of different languages, but also different countries as well as various periods in the longer historical run from 1750 or 1800 until today. Moreover, it always allows returning to the actual primary sources in the Google books corpus.

The rise of 'European solidarity' in the course of the nineteenth century

Effectively, the composition of 'solidarity' and 'European' or 'Europe' seems to have emerged in the course of the nineteenth century (Figures 2–6).¹⁸ French 'solidarité européenne' develops earlier than in other languages. In English, German, Italian and Spanish, the notion acquires relevance in the late nineteenth century. In all five languages, the frequency is, taken absolutely, relatively low. During the Second World War and after, the frequency is higher than before.

Arguably, the *idea* of 'European solidarity' is not necessarily connected to the composition of the words 'European' or 'Europe' and 'solidarity'. Indeed, the first concept of 'European solidarity' without using these exact words was the Holy Alliance, which was initiated by the Russian Czar Alexander I in September 1815 after the conclusion of the Congress of Vienna. As is well known, this Congress provided some kind of political order to post-Napoleonic Europe. However, it lacked any unifying big political idea. Alexander's intention was to offer just this.

In autumn 1815, the prevalent political system in Europe was the monarchy. Although its concrete forms varied from absolute monarchy (Russia) to constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system (United Kingdom), European political culture was predominantly monarchical in character. This is not to say that the political landscape was uniform. Different political movements and ideas, such as liberalism and republicanism, did exist,

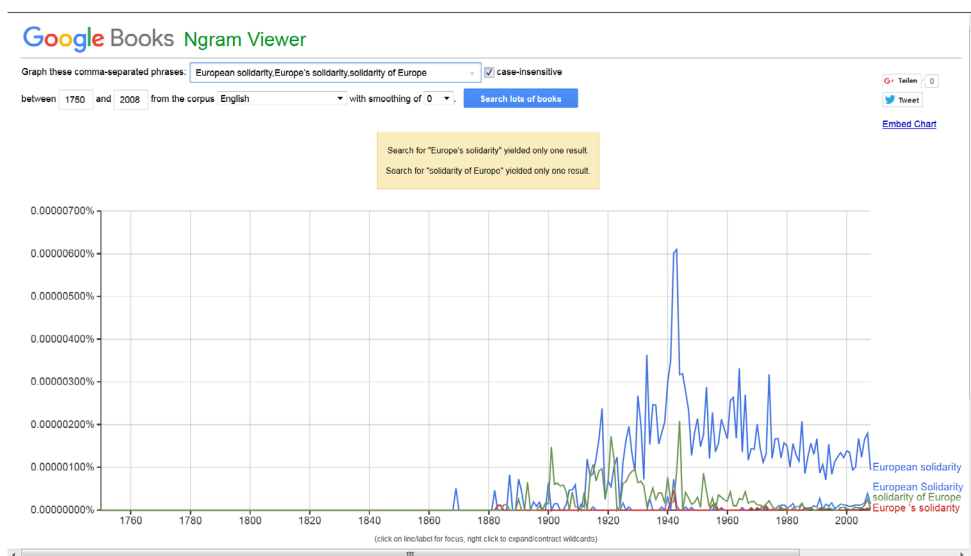


Figure 2. English.

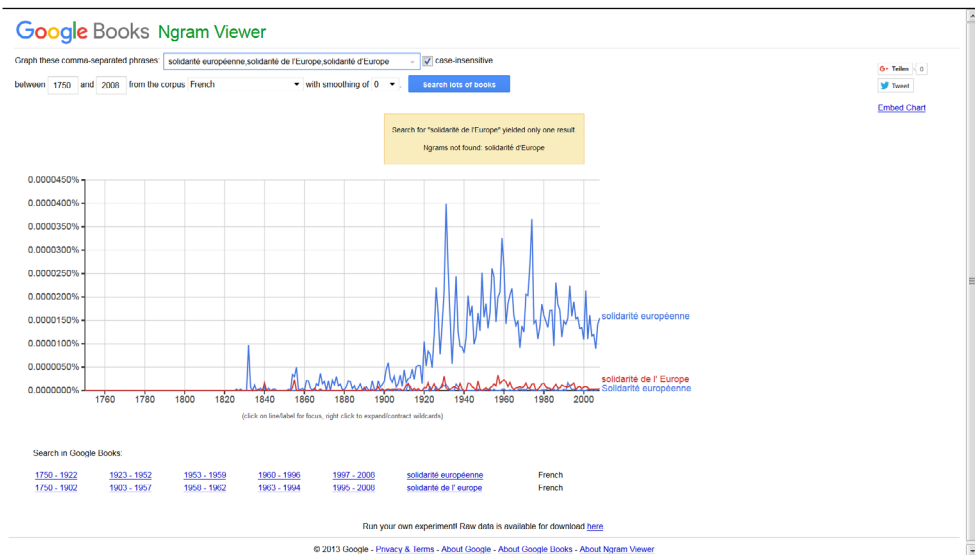


Figure 3. French.

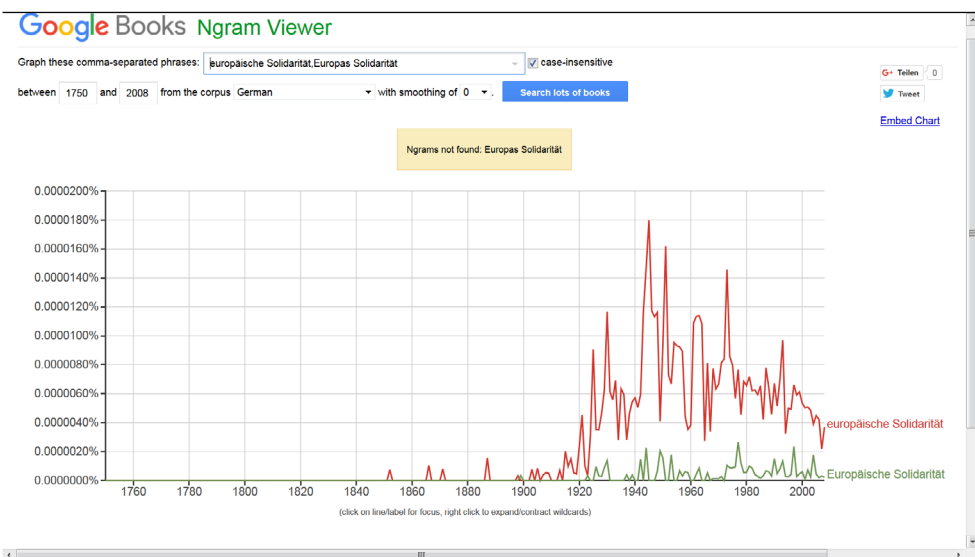


Figure 4. German.

of course. Radical democrats usually had to work covertly. Early Socialism constituted less a political movement than a new approach to the analysis of society and socio-economic questions. Finally, both nationalism and Europeanism existed in parallel but they did not necessarily contradict one another.

In this context, the orthodox Russian Czar succeeded in convincing both the Protestant Prussian King and the Catholic Austrian Emperor to sign the Holy Alliance. The Czar proposed to base politics on the common moral ground of universal Christian principles. The

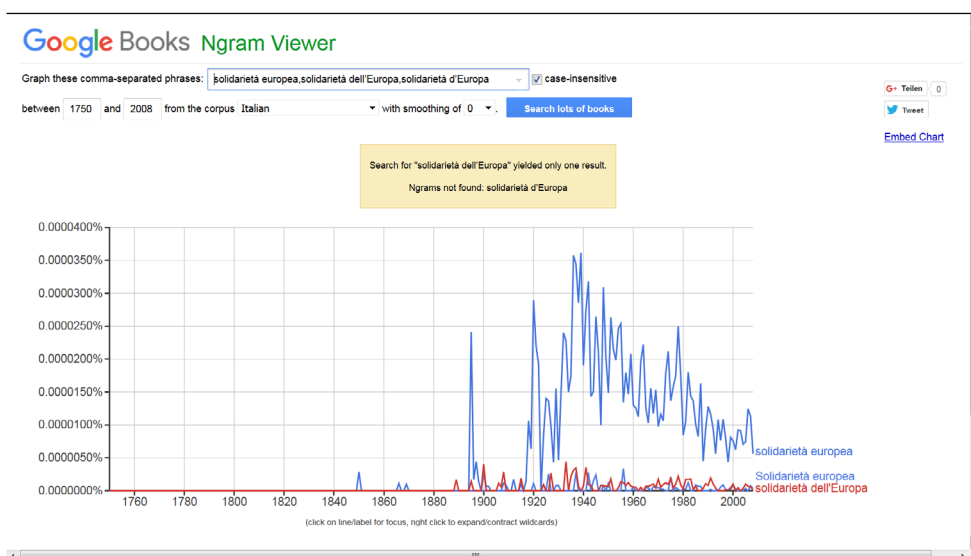


Figure 5. Italian.

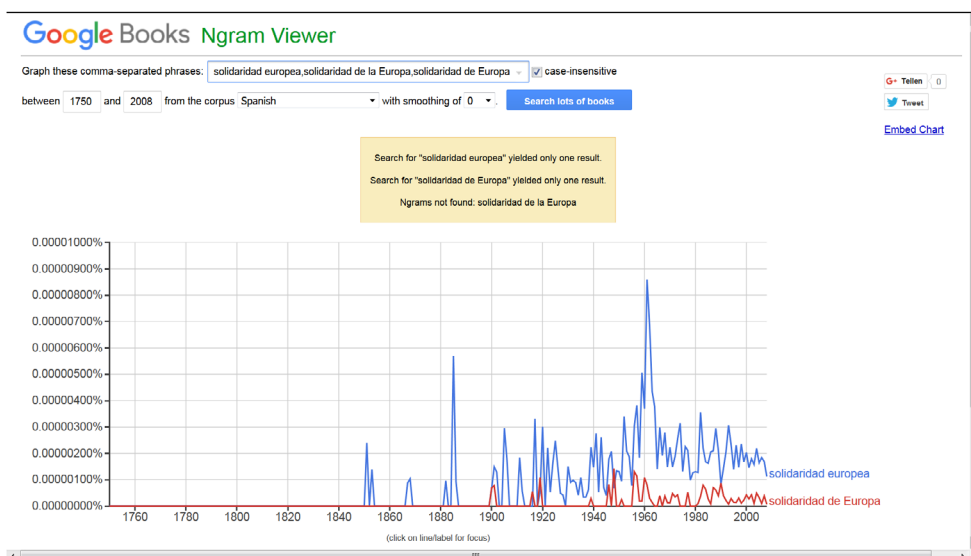


Figure 6. Spanish.

progressive aspect in this was the non-denominational interpretation of Christianity. The idea was based on an idealistic imagination of Europe. All its peoples formed the Christian nation ruled by monarchs. The phrasing of the declaration, then, is characterized by a couple of nouns and adjectives that will reappear in the semantic field of the word 'solidarity' during the nineteenth century, such as *rappports mutuels (des Puissances)*; *paroles des saintes Ecritures qui ordonnent à tous les hommes de se regarder comme frères*; (*se prêter*) *assistance [sic !]*, *aide, secours*; *esprit de fraternité*; *se rendre réciproquement service*; *affection mutuelle*.¹⁹

Very quickly, more than 40 sovereigns joined the Holy Alliance. In another article, I have studied the media echo to the Holy Alliance. Although the English Parliament, for instance, criticized the Alliance sharply, the innumerable Christian and Mission Societies as well as the Peace Societies in Europe and the United States of America reacted very positively to this initiative, and a considerable number of notable authors all over Europe translated the short declaration of the principles of the Holy Alliance into a kind of political and social philosophy.²⁰ Of course, the Holy Alliance did not address all political movements or ideas of the epoch but it did appeal to large sections of the European and North American people who identified with and supported the notion of Christian renewal after nearly 30 years of uprisings, revolutions and wars.

To some extent, with the Holy Alliance, the *idea* of 'European solidarity' was born. Did it create or contribute to 'European political culture'? One way to answer the question would be to look at political acts of solidarity and their history starting with the Holy Alliance itself. The general answer is predictable: there have been ups and downs of practical European solidarity, and some of the ups contradict what we would like to understand by European solidarity, such as the appeals to 'European solidarity' by the various fascist and Nazi movements.

When we try to answer the question whether 'solidarity' is part of European political culture, which is more than the addition of various national political cultures, we should, first, explore the political vocabulary. In the following, this is done in the sense of *longue durée*, that is, a 200-year period from around 1800 until today.

Quantitative and qualitative-semantic analysis of 'solidarity' and 'European solidarity' (1800–2008)

In German, the noun 'Solidarität' has been in use since the second half of the eighteenth century, but it is only after 1850 that it has been more frequent. It reaches its peak around 1982 with 0.004% of all 'grams' in German (in comparison, the definite article 'der' or 'die', one of the most used words in German, reaches 2.50% to 3.00%). The frequency rate of 'Solidarität' is remarkable, although it is less than 1%. The same methodologic remark is true for all other languages investigated here (Figures 7–11: Combined research of 'solidarity' and 'European solidarity' or similar expressions).

A comparison of the frequency of 'Solidarität' and 'europäische Solidarität' reveals that the gap is enormous: 'europäische Solidarität' reaches its absolute peak in 1945 with 0.000018%. This value is even much lower than that for 'Solidarität' without the adjective 'europäische' in 1823 (0.00005%).

In French, 'solidarité' has been in regular use since the second half of the eighteenth century. Not surprisingly, it was widely employed during the revolutionary decade. Traditionally, solidarity is a legal terminus, in the Roman law tradition, not only in French but also in German and other languages. But in the debates of the Assemblée nationale, it gains a political meaning. French 'solidarité' reaches its absolute peak also in 1982, with 0.0064%. 'Solidarité européenne' has a highest value of 0.000027% in 1932. In comparison to German, 'solidarité' is more important because the percentage is higher. The curves are similar. In both languages which do not entirely correspond only to France and Germany – but they do mainly – the gap between 'solidarity' and 'European solidarity' is enormous. In German, 'European solidarity' evokes a higher relevance than in French.

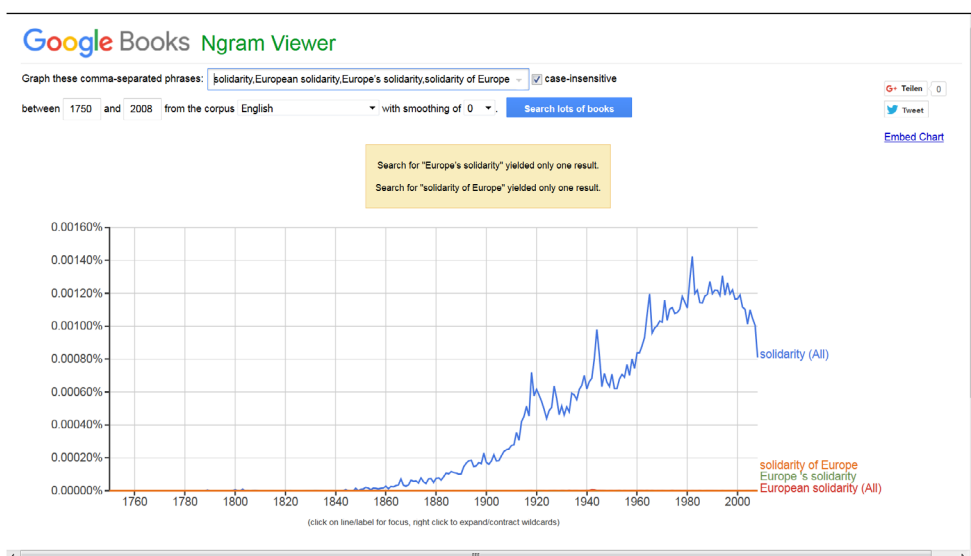


Figure 7. English.

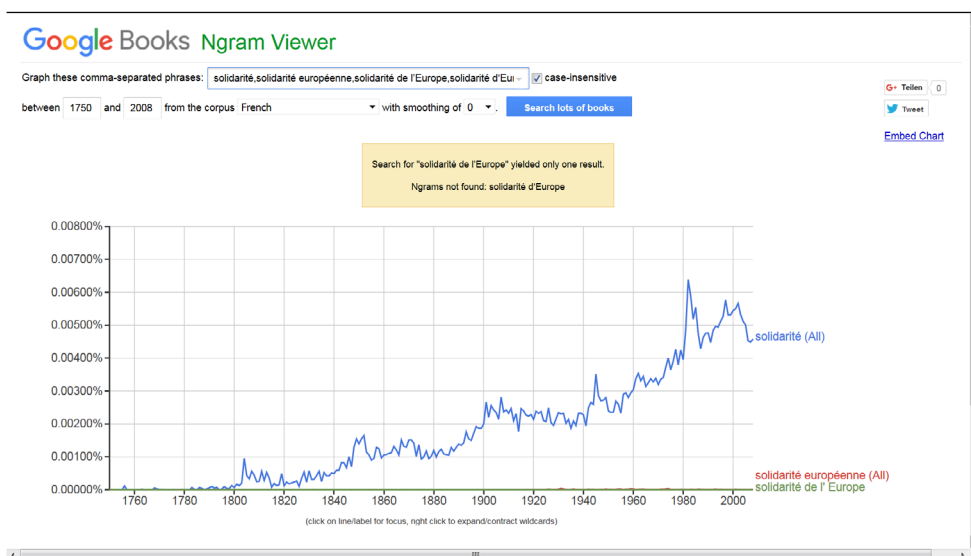


Figure 8. French.

In English, 'solidarity' reaches its peak in 1982, with 0.0014%, but this is clearly less than in French and German. The gap to 'European solidarity' is enormous; this notion reaches its peak in 1943 with 0.0000062%. This corresponds to a really low level in comparison with French and German.

In Italian, 'solidarietà' was used sporadically in the second half of the eighteenth century; similar to German it gains importance after 1840. The peak is reached in 2003 with 0.004%. 'Solidarietà europea' seems, in comparison, insignificant, the peak is reached in 1939 with 0.000036%.



Figure 9. German.

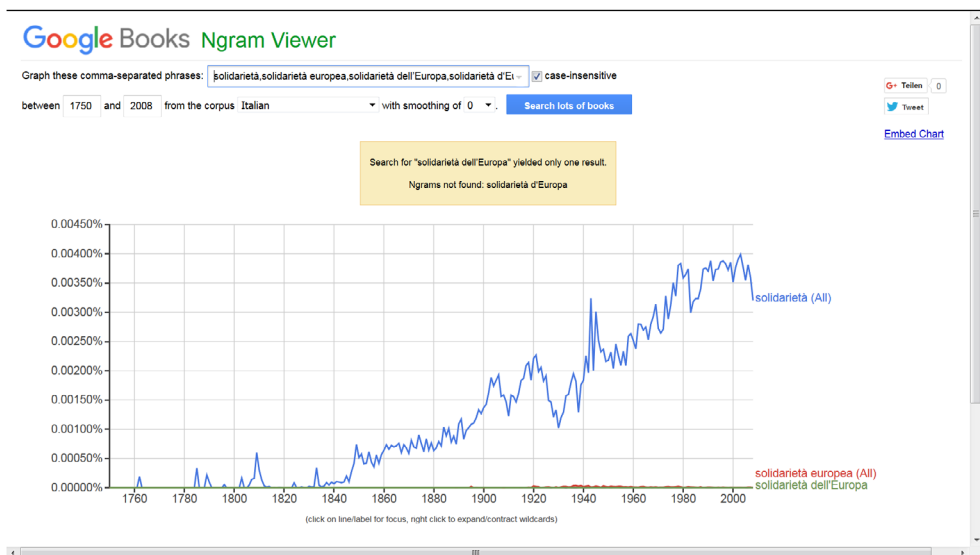


Figure 10. Italian.

In Spanish, 'solidaridad' existed in the eighteenth century but without discursive importance. It experienced a net increase in 1851 and subsequent years. Its peak was reached in 1986 with 0.0048%. On 1 January 1986, Spain became a member of the European Community. 'Solidaridad europea' reaches its absolute peak in 1961 with 0.0000086%.

A common aspect to 'solidarity' in all five languages (Figure 12 and Table 1) is that its frequency increases with the period of revolutions in the late 1840s. In this respect, the highest value is shown by French 'solidarité' in 1849 (0.0015%), the lowest by English 'solidarity'

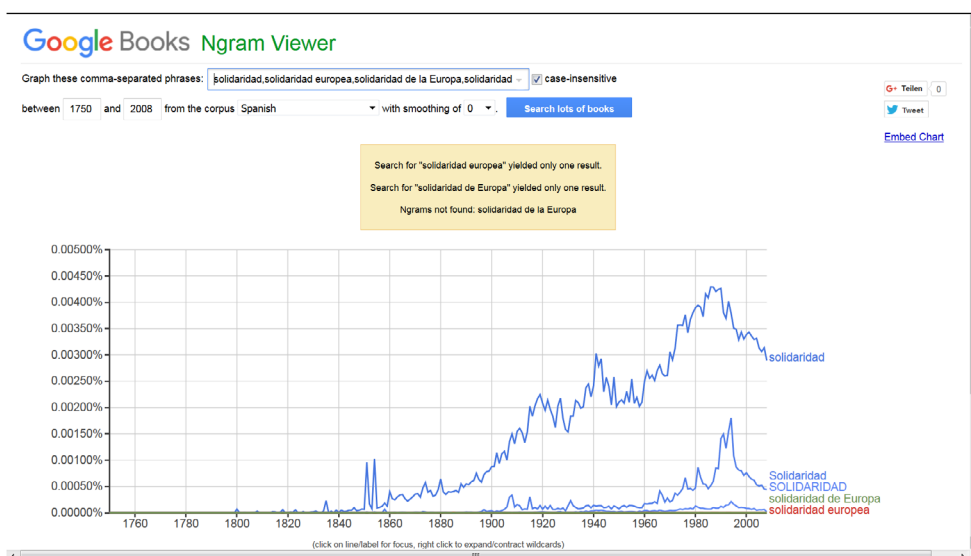


Figure 11. Spanish.

Table 1. Absolute peaks (1750–2008) for solidarity/European solidarity.

	Absolute peak: year	Percentage
Solidarität	1982	0.004
Solidarity	1982	0.0014
Solidarité	1982	0.0064
Solidarietà	2003	0.004
Solidaridad	1986	0.0048
Europäische Solidarität	1945	0.000018
European solidarity	1943	0.0000062
Solidarité européenne	1932	0.000027
Solidarietà europea	1939	0.000036
Solidaridad europea	1961	0.0000086

in 1848 with only 0.000015%. When searching for book titles containing ‘solidarity’ from 1800 to 1860, most of the hits are French.

In all five languages, the frequency of ‘solidarity’ increased during the last years of the nineteenth century. The next parallel can be seen in the 1940s: Spanish ‘solidaridad’ is about 0.0032% in 1941, Italian ‘solidarietà’ is also about 0.0032% in 1943 and French ‘solidarité’ is about 0.0035% in 1945. English ‘solidarity’ reveals once again a lower value with 0.00098% in 1945, and German ‘Solidarität’ reaches its peak after the war, in 1949, with 0.0010%.

The frequency of ‘solidarity’ follows or depends on certain crisis moments in history, such as revolutions, wars or economic troubles. ‘Solidarity’ belongs to the history of emotions and propaganda but is not a stable value system that consolidates political culture. It also seems to play a greater role in the national rather than in the European context. As a European political expression, ‘solidarity’ is not genuinely European but borrowed from the national political vocabulary.

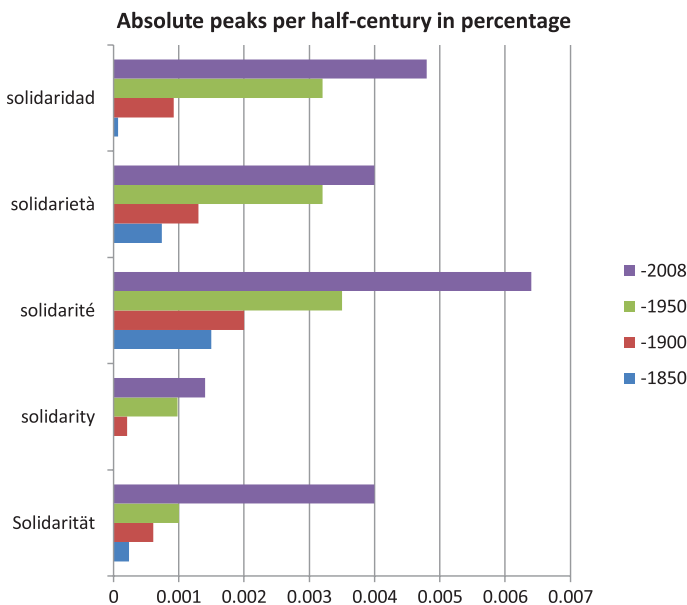


Figure 12. ‘Solidarity’: absolute peaks per half-century.

To measure the importance of the composition of ‘solidarity’ with the adjective ‘European’ one can search for ‘European *_NOUN’. Ngram Viewer lists the 10 most frequent compositions, but ‘European solidarity’ does not figure among the compositions with ‘European’. To have it listed, one has to add it explicitly to the search command. Figure 13 shows the result for English. In the other languages, the research is more complex because the adjective ‘European’ needs to be considered with different inflections.

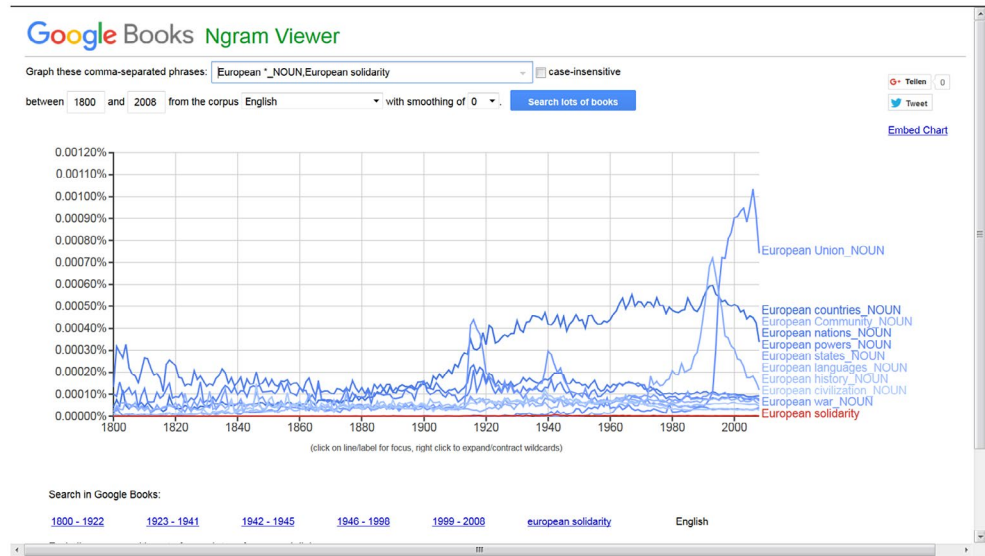


Figure 13. English.

The French case

The French case is somewhat peculiar because ‘solidarité’ demonstrates a greater (quantitative) importance than in other languages, which justifies an in-depth investigation here.

The frequency of ‘solidarité’ increased during the French Revolution, while ‘solidarity’ does not play a great role in other languages. Its frequency rate in the 1848 Revolution period is the highest of all five languages and reaches 0.0015%. Therefore, one may presume that ‘solidarité’ is related to other keywords of the various French revolutions. We compare the three keywords from the revolutionary slogan ‘liberté, égalité, fraternité’ (plus ‘République’, as the term refers to the political system of the République) with ‘solidarité’ and also ‘association’. The result looks as follows (Figure 14):

The frequency rates of ‘fraternité’ and ‘solidarité’ are fairly similar. Both are also close to ‘égalité’, except for the peak of ‘égalité’ in the French and the 1848 Revolutions. ‘Liberté’ and ‘République’ form a kind of pair.

In order to check whether this frequency diagram also represents part of the semantic field of ‘solidarité’, one can search for direct syntagmatic relations between the keywords by using the wildcard symbol ‘*’. In the following case, the relationship is expressed by the junction ‘et’ (Figure 15).

Arguably, the diagram demonstrates the following: in the long run, the link between ‘solidarité’ and ‘fraternité’ is the most stable – and the most important from the 1880s onwards. The next is ‘solidarité et égalité’ – but only from the 1940s onwards, with the exception of the late 1830s to 1860. In this period, lasting until around 1880, ‘solidarité et association’ reveals some importance. It can be linked to the debate on socialism and to workers’ movements. ‘Solidarité et République’ apparently does not exist or is so insignificant that it is not counted by the Ngram Viewer machine. In two periods – after 1880 and before the First

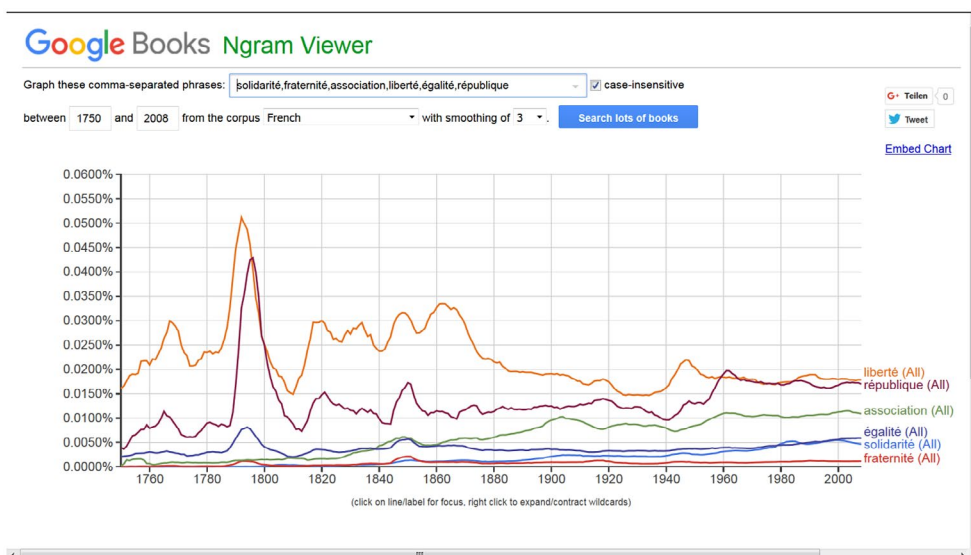


Figure 14. Comparison of the three keywords from the revolutionary slogan ‘liberté, égalité, fraternité’ (plus ‘République’, as the term refers to the political system of the République) with ‘solidarité’ and also ‘association’.

Note: The curves have been smoothed (factor 3) in favour of the transparency of the visualization.

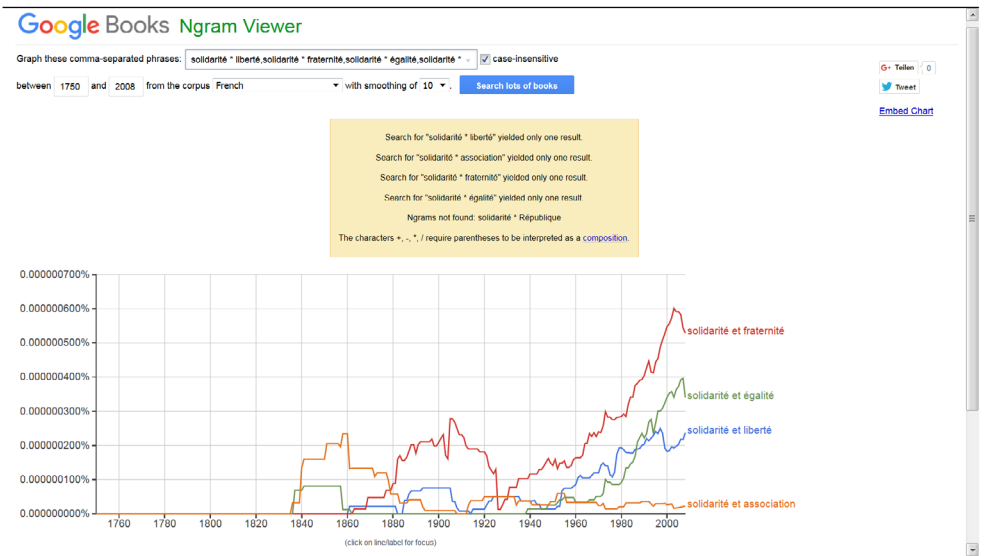


Figure 15. Direct syntagmatic relations between the keywords as of Figure 14 by using the wildcard symbol ‘*’.
Note: The curves have been smoothed (factor 10) in favour of the transparency of the visualization.

World War; after 1950 up to the early 1980s – the composition of ‘solidarité et liberté’ is the second after ‘solidarité et fraternité’. However, the overall percentage of all these compositions is extremely low. The highest score is around 0.0000006% (solidarité et fraternité), while a separate search for ‘fraternité’ shows an absolute peak at around 0.004% (in 1848).

In order to further investigate the semantic field of ‘solidarité’, and focusing consistently on the syntagmatic field, the wildcard option of Ngram Viewer is employed again but now the wildcard symbol ‘*’ is defined as noun: ‘*_NOUN’. Searching for ‘solidarité et *_NOUN’, Ngram Viewer lists the 10 most frequent compositions. Dividing the time span into half-century steps allows us to show modifications in the semantic field of ‘solidarité’ (Table 2).

With regard to our original question based on the revolutionary language in the 1790s, ‘fraternité’ is part of the most common syntagmatic field in three periods. Apart from this, only ‘responsabilité’ appears in all four periods, and ‘indivisibilité’ in three periods. ‘Association’, ‘justice’ and ‘sympathie’ figure in two periods. The rest is contained to only one. In the first half of the twentieth century, the semantic field is dominated by more emotional terms: ‘amour’, ‘conflit’, ‘fraternité’, ‘sympathie’; and ‘responsabilité’. Over the last 60 years, the

Table 2. Solidarité et *_NOUN.

1800–50	1851–1900	1901–50	1951–2008
association	association	amour	cohésion
égalité	communauté	conflit	coopération
indivisibilité	dépendance	fraternité	efficacité
justice	fraternité	indivisibilité	entraide
réciprocité	indivisibilité	interdépendance	fraternité
responsabilité	liberté	responsabilité	justice
sécurité	mutualité	sympathie	renouveau
sympathie	responsabilité		responsabilité
unité			santé

Note: Compositions with ‘qu’elle’ and others are listed by Ngram Viewer but were excluded here).

field has developed in a more technical direction. Emotional terms are ‘fraternité’, ‘entraide’ and ‘responsabilité’, while ‘cohésion’, ‘coopération’, ‘efficacité’ and ‘renouvellement’ reflect to some extent the ‘Euro-speech’. Arguably, a de-emotionalization of the meaning of ‘solidarité’ has taken place in recent years. This may signify that ‘solidarity’ is now undergoing a transformation from a keyword belonging to the national political vocabulary into a real European political keyword which is part of a European political culture.

Looking for more differentiations of the semantic field of ‘solidarité’, compositions with ‘de’, ‘du’, ‘des’ or ‘de l’ are considered, that is, constructions with subjective genitive. The junction ‘and’ and the subjective genitive cover those complementary nouns which are closest to the keyword. The subjective genitive refers to actors who practice solidarity or to fields of actions where solidarity is practised.

The periods are the same (1800–50, 1851–1900, 1901–50, 1951–2008). Table 3 lists the main compositions with ‘solidarité’ according to whether they differentiate ‘solidarité’ continuously in four or three, or less continuously in two or one period. The actual frequency of the nouns figuring in four, three or two periods varies but is not taken into account here.

The four-periods group is characterized by a rather general meaning; the three-periods group is more concrete with regard to larger or smaller social collectives; the two- and one-periods groups specify detailed applications and contexts of acting. The nouns in the two-periods and one-period group seem to reflect conjunctures of transient politicizations.

Having established the rough profile of the semantic field of ‘solidarité’, compositions with ‘solidarité’ and ‘Europe’ or ‘européen’ and so on are considered. While the title of this special issue refers to the composition ‘European solidarity’/ ‘solidarité européenne’ – frequently used in contemporary media and political discourse –, other compositions are syntactically possible: ‘solidarité européenne, solidarité de l’Europe, solidarité d’Europe (no hits in Ngram Viewer!), solidarité des européens, solidarité de l’Union européenne, solidarité de la CE/

Table 3. Main compositions with ‘solidarité’ according to whether they differentiate ‘solidarité’ continuously in four or three, or less continuously in two or one period.

Nouns in four periods	Nouns in three periods	Nouns in two periods	Nouns in one period
corps	classe(s)	associés	actes
ensemble	famille(s)	bien	Alliés
espèce	générations	clan	capital
Europe	genre	crime	cautions
fait	mal	droit	combat
groupe	membres	Etats	contribuables
homme	nations	gloire	danger
hommes	peuple	monde	destin
intérêts	sang	mouvement	dettes
peuples	travail	présent	endosseurs
	travailleurs	principes	gouvernement
		prolétariat	lignage
		race	lutte
		sentiments	ministère
		système	nation
		vocation	ouvriers
		vues	parti
			parties
			pays
			pensées
			Tiers
			type
			voisinage

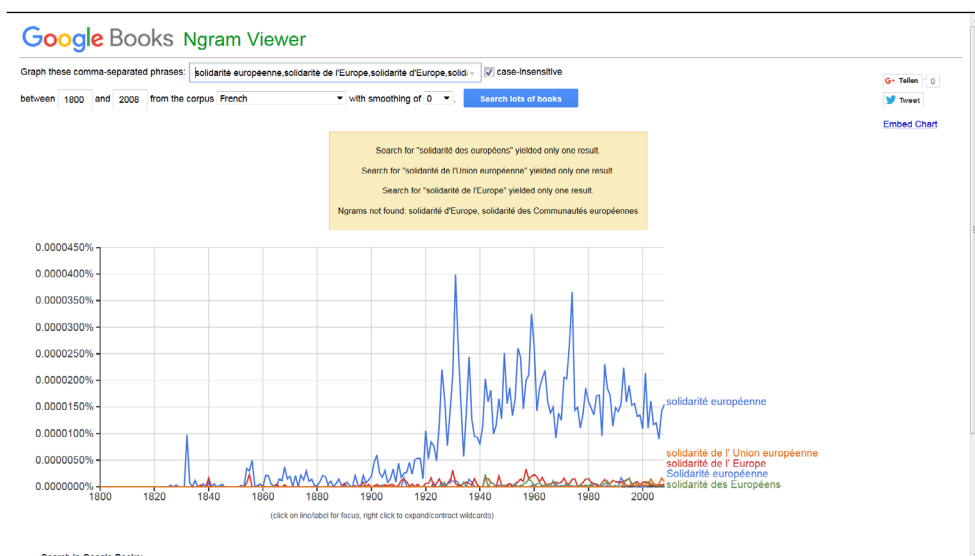


Figure 16. Compositions syntactically possible: 'solidarité européenne, solidarité de l'Europe, solidarité d'Europe (no hits in Ngram Viewer!), solidarité des européens, solidarité de l'Union européenne, solidarité de la CE/solidarité de la Communauté européenne/solidarité des Communautés européennes.

solidarité de la Communauté européenne/solidarité des Communautés européennes (no hits in Ngram Viewer!). Figure 16 shows the result.

Effectively, the most common composition is that of 'solidarité européenne'. The four other ones are insignificant. Nevertheless, 'solidarité de l'Union européenne' exists while 'solidarité de la/des Communauté/s européenne/s' obviously is not used. The composition with 'Union européenne' refers to the 'Fonds de solidarité de l'Union européenne'. It seems that 'solidarité européenne' does not refer to the European institutions but to the behaviour of European countries or governments.

Comparison of the five languages

Compositions with the junction 'and' as well as genitive constructions with a subjective genitive but not an objective genitive describe the inner semantic field of a word. The most frequent compositions in each language and in each of the two constructions ('and'/subjective genitive) express the most frequent meaning of a word. Among these most frequent compositions, with regard to 'solidarity', which have been counted for each half-century period, the noun or nouns that are in usage during the whole period of around 200 years express especially the nucleus or quintessence of the meaning.

Table 4 lists the results of the comparison of five languages for 'solidarity and *_NOUN' and for 'solidarity of [=genitive constructions according to the rules of a language] *_NOUN'.

The junction 'and' ties 'solidarity' very closely to another noun. This other noun can be read as a synonym and/or as a word that emphasizes a special part of the core meaning of solidarity. In French, German and English, only one noun appears: 'responsabilité' in French (perhaps somewhat surprisingly), and 'unity / Einheit' in English and German. Effectively,

Table 4. Comparison of five languages for ‘solidarity and *_NOUN’ and for ‘solidarity of [=genitive constructions according to the rules of a language] *_NOUN’.

French	German	English	Italian	Spanish
responsabilité	Einheit	unity	amicizia assistenza efficienza eguaglianza equità fratellanza uguaglianza unità	interdependencia interés/ses
corps	Arbeiter	L/labo/ur	famiglia	hombres
ensemble	Deutschland	mankind	interessi	interesses
espèce	Frankreich	society	N/nazione/i	naciones
Europe	Interessen		obbligazione/i	obligaciones
fait	Mensch(en)		operai	pueblos
groupe	Menschengeschlecht/Menschheitsgeschlecht		parti	
homme	Völker		popoli	
hommes			scrittore	
intérêts			spirito/i	
peuples			Stato	
			uomini	
			vita	

the German ‘Einheit’ is not as isolated as it appears because the other nouns in the four periods seem to relate to or specify the meaning of ‘unity’.

In Italian (e/ed) and Spanish (y/e), there are expressions for ‘Einheit’. The same is true for the English case. Most of the 10 most frequent are two forms of ‘and’, depending on whether the following word starts with a consonant or a vowel. Ngram Viewer counts the 10 most frequent compositions for both forms. In practice, it doubles the hits. In Spanish, the problem is minor, as there are only two nouns – ‘interdependencia’ and ‘interés’ or ‘interesses’ – for the conjunction ‘and’, but in Italian we get eight nouns instead of one or two as in the other languages. Three of the four-periods words deal with unity, friendship and brotherhood, three more with equal rights, equality and equability. ‘Assistance’ arguably emphasizes the first group while ‘efficienza’ (which is to be distinguished from ‘efficacia’) can be regarded as a twin of solidarity. So, by reducing the number of nouns by grouping them, we get ‘unity’ and ‘equality’ in its broadest sense.

Searching for patterns, we can compare the composition of ‘solidarity and *_NOUN’ in the five languages as to their conformity in the four periods.

Table 5 shows overlaps regarding the usage of the most important words belonging to the semantic field of ‘solidarity’ between the five languages. Low scores indicate the heterogeneity of the national political cultures in Europe, while higher scores signify a relative convergence of the latter.

In the first period (1800–50), the conformity value is 2.1 (on a scale from 1 to 5). On average, each of the most frequent compositions figures in two languages. For the second period (1851–1900), the value is 3.2. For the third period (1901–50), the value is 3, and for the last period (1951–2008), the value is 2.7. Taking conformity of linguistic usage as an indicator of Europeanness, its highest degree is reached in the second half of the nineteenth century, whereas the lowest degree was in the first half of the nineteenth century. Since 1900, the degree of Europeanness has decreased slowly, somewhat faster in the last period.

Table 5. 'Solidarity and *_NOUN'

A) 1800–50					
German	French	English	Italian	Spanish	Sum
Unity (Einheit)	+	+	+	+	5
Mutuality (Gegenseitigkeit)	+	–	–	–	2
Community (Gemeinschaft)	–	–	–	+	2
Identity (Identität)	–	–	–	–	1
Love (Liebe)	–	–	–	–	1
Reciprocity (Reziprozität)	+	–	–	–	2
Fraternization (Verbrüderung)	–	–	+	–	2
Cooperation (Zusammenarbeit)	–	–	+	+	3
Togetherness (Zusammengehörigkeit)	–	–	–	–	1
Average					2,1
B) 1851–1900					
Fraternity/brotherhood (Brüderlichkeit)	+	+	+	+	5
Unity (Einheit)	–	+	+	–	3
Reciprocity (Gegenseitigkeit)	+	–	+	+	4
Gemeinschaft	+	+	+	+	5
Equality (Gleichberechtigung)	–	+	+	–	3
Harmony (Harmonie)	–	–	–	+	2
Identity (Identität)	–	+ (oneness)	–	–	2
Organization (Organisation)	–	–	–	–	1
Responsibility (Verantwortlichkeit)	+	–	+	+	4
Average					3,2
C) 1901–50					
Fraternity/brotherhood (Brüderlichkeit)	+	+	+	+	5
Discipline (Disziplin)	–	+	+	–	3
Unity (Einheit)	–	+	+	+	4
Liberty (Freiheit)	–	–	+	–	2
Friendship (Freundschaft)	–	–	+	+	3
Community (Gemeinschaft)	–	–	–	–	1
Justice/equity (Gerechtigkeit)	–	–	+	+	3
Equal rights (Gleichberechtigung)	–	–	+	+	3
Helpfulness (Hilfsbereitschaft)	–	–	+	–	2
Cooperation (Zusammenarbeit)	–	+	+	+	4
Average					3
D) 1951–2008					
Unity (Einheit)	–	+	+	+	4
Liberty (Freiheit)	–	–	–	–	1
Friendship (Freundschaft)	–	+	+	–	3
Justice/equity (Gerechtigkeit)	+	–	+	+	4
Equality (Gleichheit)	–	+	+	+	4
Assistance (Hilfe)	+	–	+	+	4
Dignity (of man) (Menschenwürde)	–	–	–	–	1
Subsidiarity (Subsidiarität)	–	–	–	–	1
Support (Unterstützung)	–	+	–	–	2
Average					2.7

Of course, the whole time span could have been divided up differently. But the first period includes the 1848 Revolution which is commonly regarded as a European one. The third includes two world wars which are taken as *the* European divide; nevertheless, the value is about 3. The last one includes the fall of the Iron Curtain and the enlargement of the European Union, both often seen as a kind of High Noon of Europeanness; however, the value decreases from 3 to 2.7. Arguably, the linguistic usage says what reality is rather than the history of noble ideas or media appeals to emotions.

Conclusion: the current meaning of ‘European solidarity’

Since the epoch of the French Revolution, ‘solidarity’ has become solidly anchored in the five languages analysed here, but the respective semantic fields remain diversified. The congruency of the five semantic fields is clearly limited. The optimum is a congruency of 3.2 (from a maximum of 5) in the half-century from 1851–1900. In general, the ‘English-speaking world’ has an understanding of ‘solidarity’ differing from that in the francophone and German-speaking world, and so on.

The composition of ‘solidarity’ with the adjective ‘European’ must be characterized as ‘rare’ in comparison with the frequency of ‘solidarity’. This is common to all five languages. When we go back to the primary sources as listed by Google Books when searching for ‘European solidarity’ with Ngram Viewer, obviously the most frequent context of meaning in which ‘European solidarity’ has been evoked since the 1950s is that of requests for gestures of solidarity. The following lists (in no particular order) some topics in connection with ‘European solidarity’ in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish from the last six decades where gestures of solidarity have been requested: economy; society; healthcare; humanitarianism; Western and Eastern Europe before and after 1989; the Falkland War in 1982; religion; the common currency; Latin America; Africa; single European countries in specific historical situations (Spain joins the EU in 1986, Germany is unified in 1990 and so on); refugees and immigration; European youth; want of water; climate change; and others.

Against this background, it seems that the usage of the expression ‘European solidarity’ has a special function. The phrase appeals in special, often highly emotional, contexts due to the presumed impact of the situation in the future, a gesture of solidarity. This appeal is reiterated as often as it seems necessary. A simple frequency analysis in newspapers covering the last 10 years – a period which is not covered by the Ngram Viewer analysis because the corpus stops in 2008 – suggests the same because of the linkage of ‘European solidarity’ to the various crises in the European area since 2008.

Surprisingly or not, the meaning of ‘European solidarity’ as it had been expressed without using the words directly in the declaration of the Holy Alliance in September 1815 has not substantially been changed: the emotional and moral character of the idea of ‘European solidarity’ has been preserved.

Notes

1. Baldwin, *Politics*.
2. Blais, *La solidarité*.
3. Brunkhorst, *Solidarität*.
4. Magnusson and Stråth, *European Solidarities*.
5. Blais, “La solidarité,” 20. Blais gives some examples without details. In the following I look for the original documents and quote them.
6. Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, December 30, 1987, No. 40 (=Part V: A Theological Reading of Modern Problems). Online open access: https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_30121987_sollicitudo-rei-socialis.pdf (accessed February 10, 2017).
7. Cf. *Official Journal of the European Communities*. 2012/C 326/02. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT&from=EN> (accessed February 10, 2017).
8. *EUR-Lex*, s.v. “The European Union Solidarity Fund.” <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3Ag24217> (accessed September 6, 2016).

9. Online summary of Karagiannis' monograph on European Solidarity, <https://books.google.at/books?id=90QvAAAAYAAJ> (accessed September 6, 2016); cf. Karagiannis, *European Solidarity*; Karagiannis, "Solidarity."
10. <https://enrs.eu/en/about-us> (accessed September 6, 2016).
11. https://www.inyourpocket.com/gdansk/European-Solidarity-Centre_33549v (accessed September 6, 2016).
12. Cf. *Official Journal of the European Communities*. C 306/100. 17 December 2007, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:FULL&from=DE> (accessed February 10, 2017).
13. Examples are INTERSOL (Verein zur Förderung INTERNationaler SOLidarität), (cf. <https://www.intersol.at/index.php?id=87>, accessed February 10, 2017), cf. Irish Congress of Trade Unions, The Global Solidarity Development Education Project, (cf. <https://www.ictu.ie/globalsolidarity/>, accessed February 10, 2017), and the UN (cf. United Nations Department of Public Information and Non-Governmental Organizations, *Global Solidarity. The Way to Peace and International Cooperation*, August 2000, <https://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/annualconfs/53/wshops.pdf> (accessed February 10, 2017). A web search for "global solidarity" provides sufficient insight into the use of the expression.
14. On the French idea of "solidarité" cf. Blais, *La solidarité*; Blais, "La solidarité."
15. The search engines of *taz online archive* and *Spiegel online* consider different flections of "europäisch."
16. Russian would have been an option, too, while other languages, such as Dutch, Swedish or Polish are not offered by Ngram Viewer.
17. In a few cases, the corpus was reconfigured in 2012 and includes texts of 2009. The difference consists less in the quantity than in the OCR quality which enhances the machine readability of prints using old typographies. For more information, cf. <https://books.google.com/ngrams/info> (accessed September 6, 2016).
18. The URLs of the figures are not given here because they occupy many lines. The figures can be reproduced with the Ngram Viewer by the reader using the same search criteria as the author does.
19. The text of the Holy Alliance has been edited by Werner Näf, *Europapolitik*.
20. Schmale, "La Sainte-Alliance."

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