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A Crisis of Political Solidarity in the European Union and the Western Balkans: Reactive vs. Institutional Solidarity

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Panel**Multiple Crises and the European Borders of Solidarity**

Abstract

While the narratives of democratization and Europeanization had significant mobilizing potential in the Western Balkans during the 1990s and early 2000s, their relevance has been largely undermined by recent political developments in the region and growing crises of solidarity within the EU. The article offers a novel perspective for understanding the prospects of an EU future for the Western Balkans, through a discussion of the ideas and practices of political solidarity. It introduces the need to differentiate between reactive and institutional solidarity, and argues that institutional solidarity has a unique potential to mobilize the attention and commitment of citizens by offering a projection of a durable and sustainable political community organized around the principles of social justice and equality. Operationalizing this has become a necessary precondition not only for the “European future” of the Western Balkans but also for the future of the European project itself.

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