
Zygmunt Bauman, *Europe Unfinished Adventure*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2005.

Never before has this very planet needed rowdy and willing do adventures Europe. Europe that is capable of looking beyond its own borders. Europe that is critical about its narrow-mindedness of points of view and megalomania. Europe that is dreaming of overcoming its own condition as well as the condition of the rest of the world. Europe that is enriched by the sense of duty of global mission.

Zygmunt Bauman

In his latest book Zygmunt Bauman undertakes a trial of considering Europe in the context of its internal abilities and conditions and external circumstances as to transform it from a present position of *a global payer to a global player*.

Bauman regards Europe as a process which is determined by seeking for the endless; as a challenge for Europe is a mission, a project to be created and realized; finally as a title adventure for the essence of Europe is “constantly unsurpassable for the existing European reality”. Although he shares the common opinion concerning the difficulties in the matter of defining Europe, what he describes as “solving the insoluble”, he consequently and undoubtedly puts forward the opinion that European civilization is characterized by incessant, always imperfect, however unceasingly aiming at perfection process of transforming the world. This is a very source as well as substantiated explanation of the European global mission because every “adventure” that Europe had participated in for thousands years of its history, turned out to be decisive for the whole world. Zygmunt Bauman states in a concise way that “the Europeans created more history than they were able to consume it themselves. For Europe was definitely an export entity, possessing constant favourable balance with the rest of world”. However, this export of European cultural and political values turned against Europe, which faced hopeless task of “local consuming of global surplus of history”. Alas, contemporary Europe is not what it was previously and does not succeed in or even is not allowed to make decisions, respected in the international scene. Structural problems like constantly lowering rate of demography or weakening production and political problems, e.g. lack of political consciousness and visions towards creating of Europe decisive global player taking new risks result in the fact that Europe is not regarded as an attractive leader to be followed by the rest of the world anymore. Moreover, European ideas are fading and the countries which used to be Europe’s followers and learners rise above the teacher in many aspects. In the world of deepening global interdependencies of economical and

what is integrally associated, political character, Europe is becoming more and more destined to persist as multilevelled continental stronghold, depriving itself or being deprived of engagement into the world affairs. At present, Europe's politics is restricted to "institutionalization of uniting", as Bauman claims, in order to avoid fulfilling necessary but inconvenient global obligations.

While continuing his considerations concerning Europe, Zygmunt Bauman analyses the contemporary world order. Paraphrasing Ken Jowitt, who described it "a world disorder", Bauman calls it "a world disarray" or "a world paresis" and distinguishes a few factors that determine its condition. Among them there are three issues that the author pays special attention to: firstly, the hegemony of the United States; secondly, the results of global capital; finally, the decreasing role of national state.

The changes that took part after 1989 brought about international situation in which the United States became the only hegemon with no previous points of reference. However, Bauman questions the hegemonic position of the US in the contemporaneous state of international affairs supporting his point of view by the following reasoning: the US is the only hegemon in the world in which there are no other superpowers so this notion cannot be fully substantiated any more and the values that previously decided about hegemonic position like large territory and expansion lost their importance on behalf of other values that are in the process of shaping and the US is definitely not the creator of them. What is more, American hegemony remains exclusively when the US reminds the rest of the world, especially Europe, of it by carrying out some spectacular military action. Bauman presents an interesting opinion that the war in Iraq was not justified neither, as the US officials convinced, by the removal of Saddam Husajn and introducing democracy in Irag nor, as the US critics exclaimed, by the will of controlling oil sources, but the need to show the power it disposes. The US foreign policy characterized by regular demonstration of power and choices of allies and enemies on the blur and incomprehensible bases is not the satisfactory answer to the challenges and problems of the contemporary world. Additionally, the US is virtually associated with the next factor that Bauman emphasized, namely global capital for the US is both sender and receiver of the results of the uncontrolled, beyond-the-state flow of capital. The consequences of globalization, understood in general way, lead to deterioration of the importance of national state and the crisis of legitimacy for the citizens do not approve of the authority that is excluded by global forces from controlling the spheres that traditionally lied in state gesture. In turn, this results in profound changes of matters in which national state realizes its interest and exercises power so as to persist in the civil consciousness. Instead of diagnosing real problems,

state focuses on the issues-substitutes of less importance and make the society regard them as essential. In this way, the issue of terrorism became the criterion of legitimacy of the national state authority.

Never before has this very planet needed rowdy and willing do adventures Europe. Europe that according to Zygmunt Bauman has the features that give it persuasive arguments in the dialog with the rest of the world and possibility of potentially successful alternative to the three, mentioned above, problems.

As far as the state of international affairs is concerned, Europe disposes every premise to achieve leadership in the contemporary world because its historical experiences and past or today presence in all parts of the world resulted in, as Bauman describes, irreversible process of hybridization and multiculturalism, which uninterruptedly continues to shape and reshape the character of Europe. Contrary to the US, Europe understands that the meaning of “different” is integral part of its identity and this skill of comprehension can be the foundation of the world’s functioning based on the acceptance of the differences. Europe with its “reflexive modernity”, incessantly prepared and willing to co-operate with other substances, is able to rise above the historical antagonisms and solve insoluble conflicts without usage of force and live with “the perspective of constant cultural diversity”. This knowledge is desired nowadays to weaken *pax americana* on behalf of *modus coexistendi*. The author calls it “the idea of translation” and describes Europe as “a vanishing mediator”. As there would gradually appear the world dialog, Europe’s mediation would become less and less needed.

In addition, a long tradition and huge attachment to model of social care state, present in Europe since many decades, could be, as Bauman agrees to Jürgen Habermas, the counterweight to the results of profligacy capitalism for it provides coherence, supports peaceful forms of solving problems and institutionalizes conflicts of different types. Moreover, social state would also dispose the means necessary to neutralize the common negative consequences of global capital that can be observed in the state itself like proceeding limitation of sovereignty, crisis of legitimacy and deconstruction of civil societies.

The answer with reference to a crisis of state also can be found in processes occurring contemporaneously in Europe, namely processes of separating the political legitimacy of authority and democratic procedures from the rule of state or territory sovereignty, which so far have been connected inseparably. Europe has chosen the way towards federation and simultaneously has been facing the challenge of connecting the sphere of authority and the sphere of politics. The author, considering the associations between a nation and a state, opposes the argument that supra – national or

supra – state democracy is not to succeed due to the fact that civil and political values cannot replace ethnic and cultural bonds by claiming that: firstly, the national (ethnic and cultural) legitimacy could have been only “a historical episode”, one of many forms of uniting spheres of authority and politics; secondly, ethnic criterion does not present condition of an indispensable character to legitimate authority provided that the state is truly democratic, as nationalism becomes a substitute factor in legitimating authority in the situation of civil indifference in democratic procedures. What is more, Bauman shares the conviction of already mentioned, Jürgen Habermas, who claims that “democracy not necessarily must be associated with the idea of nation and the national community is not the ultimate level of social consciousness” (Habermas 2001). Therefore, the author points out the confusion and barrenness of arguments of the critics of “the European construct”, who try to force traditional solutions, being justified in national state, into projects extending beyond the borders of particular state. The same misleading reasoning concerns the issue of European identity, which according to Zygmunt Bauman not only exists, but is of paradoxically consolidated character. For European identity is, on one hand, “utopia, irritably unseizable and notoriously contradictory to current reality” but on the other hand “a way of living, characteristic for Europe” meaning a very exceptional form of co-existence, based on mutual acceptance of surrounding differences.

While considering the past and contemporary condition of Europe, Zygmunt Bauman in his latest book shows that an outstanding political vision of the old continent is present at every step of his scientific discourse. Vision that is lacked by European governments and politicians. Vision that is compatible to the convictions that Europe disposes serious premises to become, e.g. “a world co-operative empire” (Wassmund 2001). However to claim so, there essentially has to be taken under consideration the following issue – the definition of Europe. Although Bauman’s discourse concluded that Europe comprehended in different aspect (political, cultural or geographical) can have not necessarily analogous meaning, the author regards Europe as the European Union. This point of view has considerable consequences in reasoning Europe’s internal and external perspectives.

As far as internal matters are concerned, it seems that the title adventure is about to begin for Europe faces the challenge of creating mutual relations between Western and Central and Eastern states. The 2004 enlargement of the EU diagnosed the situation that could have been easily predicted before, meaning that despite many similarities, there exist also significant differences between particular parts of Europe. Bauman’s emphasis of Europe’s exceptional skill of co-existence referred to Western Europe. It is noteworthy that this skill was acquired in the circumstances of Cold War – a world order

which managed to freeze efficaciously all the conflicts concerning differences of various types. However, the post – Cold War international situation favours the processes of “defrosting” deep-rooted conflicts. Here lies the adventure of Europe – to answer the challenges forth-coming not only from the new “Eastern-European” EU members, but other Eastern countries and, more and foremost Russia, and shape the mutual relations on the base of mutual acceptance of differences. So far Europe has not succeeded in passing this obligatory test in the context of e.g. indifference concerning noticeable political changes in Ukraine towards values that, as Bauman claims, constitute the identity of Europe. Here also lies the adventure because Europe without its central and eastern part will remain, as Harrie Salman (2002) emphatically concluded “the colony of America” in many aspects.

Considering Europe as the European Union brings about also reflections referring to situation inside the EU. The recent events concerning the Constitutional Treaty confirm Bauman’s conviction that European identity is notoriously contradictory to current reality and can be described as an unceasing search for identity. However, this ground of rather abstract character is a favourable base for forgotten and struggling for popularity “Haider-type” politicians but fragile fundament for working out the premises of federation, like changes in regarding associations between nation and state, nation-and-state and civil consciousness. Contemporaneously, the EU, understood as the impulse to federation, exists mainly in the consciousness of politicians and hopelessly struggles against social indifference. Therefore, it seems unfounded to agree with Bauman’s statement that politics restricted to “institutionalization of uniting” is undertaken exclusively in order to avoid fulfilling necessary but inconvenient global obligations. To do so, Europe must speak one voice that would include also, or mainly the legitimacy of European societies.

As far as external perspectives are concerned, it seems that the visions containing Europe’s global role in accordance with this expresses by Bauman have their substantiated reasoning. Europe, strengthened and capable of global acting, would have not only the function to mediate, but the “rescue America from its imperial fantasies” (Calleo 2003). Nevertheless, there are serious premises that question Europe’s role of mediator as well as counterweight to the US. Bauman’s analysis of contemporary international scene did not include the increasing appearance of a new actor – Islam countries and Islamite immigrants numerously present in Europe – that might not undertake dialog with Europe due to the fact that the values of generally comprehended West are unacceptable for them (Piątkowska-Stepaniak 2005). In case of balancing the United States, the problem can be observed in two issues. *Primo*, to be a *global player* Europe also needs to be voluntary *global payer* meaning that respected international position involves serious

costs (Owen 2003) while Europe seems to restrain them gradually even to solve its internal problems. In this context, it is also hard to defend the current reliability of Bauman's argument that typically European model of social state would be the solution to negative aspects of global capital. Although the discourse concerning associations between those two matters is led lucidly with rigorous logic and the conclusions are perfectly justified, Europe, the birthplace of social state, is at the point of turning down of its fundamental values. *Secundo*, to balance America it is essential to present *alternative* of the international action that would be supported by the will of an international community. At this very international moment, it can be seen, on the example of the state of European community, that even if existed, it would not be able to work out the compromise out of its particular interests.

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