

## ARTICLES

### EUROPEAN DIALOGUE: PROBLEMS, BARRIERS, PERSPECTIVES

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The meaning of dialogue can differ. In a very narrow sense it is defined as a reciprocal conversation between two or more persons. However from scientific point of view it should be first of all understood as an universal value, one of the most important premises for social actions. Dialogue should be than seen either as a form of bilateral or multilateral relations on global or regional scale or as a method of reaching political decisions inside the political system, functioning as a stabilizing factor. A constructive dialogue is constituted by three basic rules: rule of mutual understanding; rule of mutual respect; rule of integrity of each side's convictions and behavior<sup>1</sup>. Coexistence of these aspects creates practical mechanisms for solving problems of human condition, civilization threats and social and cultural conflicts in a globalized world.

One can easily notice that the phenomenon of development is accompanied with waves of crises and tensions. We can talk about widening gap between what Immanuel Wallerstein called "The Centre" and "Semiperipheries" and "Peripheries"<sup>2</sup>. Confrontations of different lifestyles and ideologies lead to extreme actions like terrorist attacks, which now became one of the most serious threats to modern states

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<sup>1</sup> R. Thiemann, *Religion in Public Life: a Dilemma for Democracy*, Georgetown University Press, Washington D. C. 1996.

<sup>2</sup> I. Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World Economy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1979.

and societies. We face problems of mass weapons' proliferation and failing states being not able to sustain basic political and economical control.

Integration seems to be one of the counter measures to negative processes taking place. However one should understand that integration is more complex and varied process than it seems. First of all the answer to three basic questions ought to be found: What form should the integration processes take? Whom should they include? At what pace should the integration proceed? The important question is also whether we should define the final goal of integration we are reaching to. Different theories of integration can give some indications but still they touch just selected aspect of reality, no matter if it is David Mitrany's functionalism, Karl Deutsch's transactionism or Gary Marks' multilevel governance<sup>3</sup>. Still we should have in mind that the dynamics of the integration process depend on both internal and external influences, including globalization processes; integration permeates different spheres: political, economic, cultural, social and the discourse which takes place on various levels: public (popular), institutional, elite and in mass-media. No matter if a real integration takes place still one of the most valid aspects stays process of communication in a form of a dialogue between different actors.

On the very basic level dialogue is used in intrastate relations. It is a counterbalance to a confrontation of a different social forces, eases a governance and stabilizes system. One example can be multiparty coalitions based on program consensus and consensual approach of the opposition. Undoubtedly, only stable democracies achieve high level of system transparency and social support. In so called "new democracies" still the lack of truly democratic institutions is visible. Communication between the authorities and the society faces many barriers, which are caused by historical experiences, mutual distrust and abnegation.

In case of the international relations the dialogue is based on bilateral or multilateral relations of states, institutions and organizations. The aim is to provide a relatively stable state of contacts minimalizing areas of possible conflict. The methods and means of the dialogue depend on a relations' level (global, regional, local), partners involved, their potentials and scope of influence and on historical and political moment. During a few last decades the character of the international relations has greatly changed. The sovereign state has lost it's power to other actors like international organizations, supra- and transnational actors. This has lead to funda-

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<sup>3</sup> D. Mitrany, *A working peace system*, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London 1943; K. Deutsch, *The Analysis of International Relations*, Prentice Hall College 1988; L. Hooghe, G. Marks, *Unravelling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-level Governance*, *American*, "Political Science Review", vol. 97, no. 2, (2003), p. 233–43.

mental changes in the international dialogue, which so far was mainly political in its nature. Now, social, cultural and trade exchange seem to play almost equal part.

The European dialogue follows the same pattern. Various actors constantly influence the process of continent's integration, which is based on many different elements. One of them is a regional element, which pays attention to West-East and North-South gap. More appealing seems however distinction between integration center and peripheries. The European Union plays a central role, as a single integrative actor on the continent. Consisting of 27 nations it gains more influence on the global scene. External environment more and more often seems to notice not only economical but also political and humanitarian roles of the EU. New needs connected with the Union's potential are being reflected in the European Neighborhood Policy, which aims at cooperation with direct neighbors from Central Europe, Middle East and Mediterranean Sea. The new policy binds together three previous policies of the European Union: "Northern Dimension", "Eastern Dimension" and Barcelona Process. Simultaneously, the dialogue with the Russian Federation will stay as one of the main goals of the Union's foreign policy. Increasing dependence on natural resources mainly gas and oil led to economization of bilateral relations, and easing down political elements.

Besides external position the Union must still pay much attention to its internal coherence. It is not clear what is the nature of the European integration. Extensive quantitative enlargement – which brought inside 12 new members – must be now accompanied with to new qualitative measures. Convergence criteria are not enough to create union of citizens. What Europe needs is a new vision, which would define to what extent integration is a political process and to what strong cultural, social and national. No matter what answer is to be given, dialogue between politicians, researchers, mass-media and normal citizens should be the basis for building a common understanding of what the EU stands for.

Ongoing discussion on the nature and the future of the EU should not overshadow general question of the pan-European dialogue. It shouldn't be narrowed to institutional matters, as being "an European" means something more than being a member of the EU. Europe is an area of common identity, although often based on various historical experiences and traditions. What is now especially important is to make this identity a main integrative factor. It is especially important in case of such countries as Russia, Turkey, Israel and Caucasian nations, which in many aspects create and share European values.

The debate on our European identity, traditions and values should include everyone who feels not only physically but first off all mentally incorporated into the continent. Wide spectrum of ideas, thoughts and proposals is anticipated as the integration should be understood as a process of communication, learning and an

acceptance for differences. Europe should be bound by intellectual and practical vision, one resembling Robert Schuman's grand concept.

One of the steps which aims at reaching that goal is a wide scientific discussion of Polish and foreign researchers, who focus on the European agenda. In 2005 The Department of Political Systems (University of Łódź) and The Polish Political Science Society initiated a new series titled "The European Dialogue" published Adam Marszałek Publishing House. Prof. Czesław Mojsiewicz chairs the Program Council, which include prof. Andrzej Antoszewski, prof. Alejandro Barral, prof. Andrzej Chodubski, prof. Michał Dobroczyński, prof. Wiktor Garadza, prof. Albin Głowacki, prof. Stefan Höjelid, prof. Adam Koseski, prof. Walery Kowalenko, prof. Krystyna Kujawińska-Courtney, prof. Kazimierz Łastawski, prof. Bogdan Łomiński, prof. Teresa Łoś-Nowak, dr Joanna Marszałek-Kawa, prof. Donat Mierzejewski, prof. Edward Mühle, prof. Edward Olszewski, prof. Kazimierz Pająk, prof. Janusz Ruszkowski, prof. Teresa Sasińska-Klas, prof. Lidia Tagako and prof. Adam Wojtaszczyk. Prof. Alicja Stępień-Kuczyńska is the chairman of the editors committee. In the series both monographs and group works are published. So far there are two titles "European West-East Dialogue. Politics-Economy-Society" edited by Alicja Stępień-Kuczyńska and Tadeusz Jałmużna and "The Politics of Sweden and Finland in the Baltic Sea Region" by Katarzyna Dośpiał-Borysiak. In close future the reader will be offered two next works "European Dialogue. Politics-Economy-Society" edited by Alicja Stępień-Kuczyńska and Jerzy Kmiecinski and "Russia: towards Europe. From Russian-Union Relations" by Alicja Stępień-Kuczyńska.

One very essential aspect of activities enriching the concept of "The European Dialogue" are seminars and conferences organized in order to bring the researchers from different countries together. In 2005 the international conference *European West-East Dialogue* took place in Łódź. The organizers were: the Department of Political Systems of University of Łódź with Polish Science Academy, Scientific Society in Łódź and the Polish Political Science Association. The area covered by the conference was a continuation of two previous meetings: *Pan European Integration. Chances and Threats* (2001) and *Countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the Process of Integration* (2002).

During three days several dozen of papers were presented by authors from Polish and foreign universities of Belarus, Germany, Russia and Slovakia. European institutions, as well as local and national business circles, were present.

In November 2007 the Department of Political Systems (University of Łódź) and the Polish Political Science Association will organize the next conference "European Regionalism. Preconditions-Challenges-Perspectives. The partners will include the Polish Science Academy, the Scientific Society in Łódź, the Peace and Agreement Foundation in Moscow. The aim of the conference is to define the role of regions in

pan-European dialogue. The topics will include among others: theoretical aspects of regionalism, classification of the European regions, regional factors of integration, the European Neighborhood Policy, regional policy of the EU, multilevel governance, regional aspects of European security, the impact of globalization on the European regions and Europe on the global scene.

As it is essential to extend the present group of scientists we would like to invite everyone interested in cooperation within “The European Dialogue” initiative. More ideas, proposals and even critical thoughts on European issues are necessary.