HERE IS AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD TASK RESPONSE AND A WELL ORGANISED REVIEW – ONE BY A CLASSMATE (2013-2014)

Task 12 – Listening and Writing

“The Future of Power” -Joseph S. Nye’s lecture at RSA

On the 10th of May 2011, Joseph Nye, Distinguished Professor at Harvard School of

Government, gave a fascinating lecture at the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts,

Manufactures and Commerce (RSA), in order to present and promote his new book “The

Future of Power”. Professor Nye easily managed to capture the attention of the 200 people in

the audience, which had the opportunity to address him with straight questions during the 20minutes Q&A session provided, in accordance with the standard RSA format. Since the

distinguished professor touched many issues that are highly pertinent to our mission and

goals, we presume that a short review of his lecture will be intriguing for the European

Institute’s fellows.

The central issue addressed by J. Nye was the shift in world power in the 21st century.

According to the professor, this shift has two different dimensions: transition in power from

West to East and diffusion in power from state to non-state actors. The main question raised

by Nye’s lecture was the following: are US leaders ready to cope with these significant

changes in world power? Despite Nye’s arguable unconcern towards the European Union, we

would like to take into account also the European perspective. In our opinion, indeed, Euro-

Atlantic governments can overcome these changes in world power only if they continue to

collaborate within a common geopolitical strategy.

According to the consummate professional, states have to be ready to face the diffusion of

power among non-state actors, which is shaping the international system after the information revolution and the resulting decrease of costs in technology. In this context -Nye argues -we are moving from a multipolar system to a chaotic one, the evidence of which is the significant increase in power of multinational corporations or terrorist groups. This dimension of the shift in power does not concern only Western countries, but rather, any single State in the world. However, Euro-Atlantic states have been particularly affected by these changes, both by terrorist attacks and, recently, by Wikileaks and Datagate scandals. As a consequence, in our opinion, both American and European leaders cannot deny these changes anymore. On the contrary, they must try to adapt to them, since in the future there will be – quoting J. Nye – less and less “power over” and more and more “power with”.

Power transition from West to East is the second dimension of the shift in world power

illustrated by J. Nye. This is characterised, in particular, by the rise of China. Joseph Nye

analysed this preeminent situation starting from a specific question: is the US a declining

power? Harvard Distinguished Professor briefly illustrated why, according to his view, the

US is not declining and the gap in power between the US and China is still significant.

However, this is only partially true: the US, indeed, is objectively loosing ground in

comparison to China. Even if from the military point of view the gap remains consistent,

from an economic perspective things are tremendously different. In addition, where is the

European Union in this context? Why does Professor Nye take not into account the EU? In

our opinion, also in this competition with China, the US and the EU have to work together in

order to avoid an irreversible shift in world power to the Far East.

In conclusion, this fascinating lecture by Joseph Nye leaves us with this final question: how

should Euro-Atlantic leaderships approach these shifts in world power? The answer is not

easy and univocal. However, it is sure that Euro-Atlantic leaders have to work together. Only

by strengthening their alliance, Euro-Atlantic leaderships can overcome these changes. As a result, organizations and research centres as the “European Institute” have now to play a

fundamental role as political forums for the development and the adoption of an effective

common Euro-Atlantic strategy.