

One of the main European Institute's objectives is to monitor developments in transatlantic relations in the context of the global economic crisis and the security challenges ahead. In the light of this, the lecture given by Professor Joseph S. Nye, on 10 May 2011 at the RSA (Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) on the future of power provides an example of how power transition is affecting the 21st century's society.

First of all, two major shifts are determining the future of power: power transition from one set of states to another set of states, and power diffusion from states to non-states actors. On the one hand, power transition is happening mainly from the western countries to the eastern countries. In the 21st century Asia experienced a great change, the so-called Asian recovery, its population and production growing to half of the world's total. As a result, the gap between West and East is narrowing. Although China is rapidly rising, the US is not undergoing a major decline. As a matter of fact, the US is the leading country as far as military and economic power concerns, along with new technologies and soft skills. Therefore, it is highly improbable that China would be able to overpower the United States in the next few decades.

Power diffusion, on the other hand, describes the distribution of power from states to non-governmental organizations. Thanks to the information revolution, the costs of computing power and communication dramatically declined, favoring the participation of non-governmental actors in the game. For instance, if phone calls were once highly expensive and only governments or corporation could afford it to make some, today whoever has access to the Internet can call for free. This is an example of how technology might decrease the entrance barriers and make communication instruments available to an always larger number of users.

Secondly, politics and governmental decisions are often affected by these power shifts. In fact, this information revolution has empowered non-governmental actors, rising, at the same time, new security issues for governments. For example, the use of social media,

such as Facebook or Twitter, has been fundamental for Egypt to overcome problems of coordination during the Arab Spring. Furthermore, Wikileaks has revolutionized the practice of stealing and distributing private files, making them available to the public in one click. For this reason, governments must find new security measures in order not to be subjected to cyber attacks.

Thirdly, there is the need to rethinking power not only as the ability to obtain what is desired by using power over other, but also by using power with others. According to this new concept of power, being powerful can mean being able to satisfy the public with a convincing story, rather than winning a war. This implies that, in the information society, soft powers can be as powerful as an army. Therefore, there is the urgency to work with others, for example with China, to combine hard and soft powers in order to face major changes that will shape the world in the next few decades.

Finally, it is believed that major transformations are happening because of the diffusion of powers from state to non governmental actors rather than by the power transition from West to East. The empowerment of NGOs, made possible thanks to technological innovations, is becoming always more threatening for governments. For this reasons, it is fundamental to be aware of the effect that power shifts may have on politics and try to adapt to this new concept of power.