

Lecture given by Jim Cloos: Strategy development under the CFSP (Luxembourg, 30 November 2006)

Source: L'apport de la PESC à l'action extérieure de l'Union européenne (discours pour l'Université du Luxembourg)/Université du Luxembourg, cycle de conférences, semestre d'hiver 2006-2007 / Jim Cloos, prise de vue : François Fabert.- Luxembourg: CVCE [Prod.], 30.11.2006. CVCE, Sanem. - VIDEO (07:02, Couleur, Son original).

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URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/lecture_given_by_jim_cloos_strategy_development_under_the_cfsp_luxembourg_30_november_2006-en-87574194-632a-4b62-85b2-0399dc5858c3.html



Last updated: 05/07/2016

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[Jim Cloos] Let me say a few words about strategy. As I said earlier, we need strategic discussions. If you want to pursue a foreign policy, you have to be able to sit round a table and say ‘What are our objectives? How are we going to use the means at our disposal in the long term?’ There is another crisis that has taught us how to handle these things better: the Iraq crisis. Or perhaps I should say the crisis in relations with the USA, since it was more that than a crisis over Iraq itself. I’m sure you will remember it, it happened very recently in 2003.

It is very interesting to note that on Iraq there were no strategic discussions in Europe before the leading Member States came out with widely differing positions. At that point Europe no longer existed. There was no way that Javier Solana or anyone else could develop a European policy. We are dependent on the Member States, of course, we can’t just pluck a foreign policy out of thin air, it’s just not possible.

Secondly, the crisis with the USA was initially characterised by a complete absence of discussion. This may have had something to do with the fact that Europe was not in a position to conduct discussions, but it was also certainly to do with the behaviour of the US Administration, which was not interested in discussing the issue with anyone.

I remember that at the time a lot of journalists wrote that this crisis showed two things: first, that the transatlantic relationship was finished. This was obviously a really stupid thing to say. You’re not going to end a relationship which, if only in economic terms, involves trade and cross-investment worth 2.5 trillion euros ... That’s just ridiculous. The real question is ‘What form will the relationship take?’ It’s going to continue, clearly. Secondly, people said at the time ‘This is the end for the CFSP, it will never work’. We’re really good at this in Europe: as soon as there is a crisis or something goes wrong, we say ‘It’s had it, it’ll never work’.

When I worked for Jacques Santer, up to 1998, journalists, all of them very keen observers, used to stand in my office and tell me: ‘We’ll never have the euro’. But I would say: ‘You’re completely wrong. We’ll have the euro and it’ll be here to stay.’ We have this habit of always telling ourselves that nothing is working, it’s all a disaster, and so on. So at the time people said ‘It’s the end for the CFSP’.

What is interesting is that there came a point when the Ministers, at Javier Solana’s suggestion, said: ‘We can’t go on like this either. We’ve created structures, we’re starting to talk about ESDP operations — obviously involving security and defence aspects — yet we’re not having strategic discussions.’ So they asked Javier Solana to develop a ‘European Security Strategy’.

This is a document that I would advise you to read, because unlike a lot of what comes out of Brussels, it’s actually readable. It’s even comprehensible. And it’s short, just 11 pages, and it’s easy to read and very clear. I can tell you that we originally wrote it for ourselves, and we also wrote it, if I am perfectly honest, to send a message to the Americans: ‘Listen, we’re serious about this, we take the threats seriously, but you have to listen to us a bit more’.

So, you can get hold of this European Security Strategy quite easily, read it, it doesn’t take long. It’s in three sections. First, what are the global challenges facing us? Terrorism is one, clearly, but there are lots of others too. Secondly, what are the strategic objectives we need to set ourselves in response to these challenges? Here there are three main elements: prevention policy; the development of a genuine neighbourhood policy so that Europe is surrounded by ‘acceptable’ regimes that are as democratic and stable as possible; and lastly, of course, an area where we are a little different from the USA, effective multilateralism based on law.

This discussion was very helpful in itself, since people began to see things a bit differently and started to ask themselves ‘What do we need to do as part of this strategy?’ After this — and I won’t go into detail here — we developed some fairly important measures on terrorism, for instance, and on combating the proliferation

of dangerous weapons, and we also created certain structures. I'll spare you the details, but it all had a real impact.

Clearly, these strategic discussions need to continue. If I take the example of Iran, which is very much in the news, the approach here has been fairly unorthodox, with three countries leading the discussions, together with Javier Solana, and I think a lot has been learnt, precisely because there has been a huge amount of discussion both within the European Union and with the Americans. And in some respects we have managed to influence the US position.

Unfortunately, up to now this policy has not produced satisfactory results — it's very difficult, because we are negotiating with Iran, which is a rather awkward, complicated country. I can't tell how things will go, but in terms of the procedures and so on at European level, I think it has been a very interesting approach.

Clearly, there are other huge challenges to be faced — I won't start listing all the foreign policy challenges, otherwise I'll still be here tomorrow — but Kosovo is obviously going to be a very, very important issue in the next few months, and will have to be handled very tactfully. There will have to be talks, and these are already happening.

Relations with Russia are also extremely important. There has been a lot of talk about this recently, and it is all very difficult. There are different sensitivities about Russia within the European Union, particularly with the new Member States. People in the Baltic States don't feel the same about Russia as people in Luxembourg do. This is only to be expected, and needs to be discussed. It's another example where we really have to get beyond this lack of dialogue and strategic discussion. But I think we are actually already doing this.