



SERGEI KARAGANOV

Honorary Chairman of the Presidium of the non-governmental Council on Foreign and Defense Policy of Russia

Dominique Moisi, Special Advisor, Ifri

The fourth speaker is Sergei Karaganov, Honorary Chairman of the Presidium of the Non Governmental Council on Foreign and Defence Policy of Russia, and a very old friend of mine.

Sergei Karaganov, Honorary Chairman of the Presidium of the non-governmental Council on Foreign and Defense Policy of Russia

First of all, Russians are known to be brutal and straightforward.

Dominique Moisi, Special Advisor, Ifri

Also short.

Sergei Karaganov, Honorary Chairman of the Presidium of the non-governmental Council on Foreign and Defense Policy of Russia

Also sincere. That is why, but I want to start with words of admiration for Thierry. It is impossible, but he is managing it again.

I will now go back to the subject, and I will look at it from a different angle. A group of former senior intelligence officers came to my office about 13 years ago after NATO started its land invasion of Afghanistan, most of them were Afghan veterans, and they asked me to explain why. They were flabbergasted, asked whether americans were preparing a foothold to attack Iran, because that was the only explanation. I brought them to the map and, of course, they saw it was impossible to attack Iran from Afghanistan, and I tried to explain to them that it was simply incompetence.

I must say that, looking at the policy of my country and that of most Western countries towards that area during all these years, we have to acknowledge that, contributed immensely to the deterioration of the situation. It was a combination of impotent incompetence or incompetent impotence. Let us put it this way: the situation is much worse than it was 100 years ago when the Ottoman Empire collapsed; then it was divided into sub-colonies for the time being, and then everybody started to compete with everybody. The Americans followed the British and the French, and the situation got worse. Then the Soviets went in, and they started to compete with everybody else, propping up their so-called allies and imposing their Communist and socialist ideas on the population, and of course it totally backfired. It was absolutely a masochist policy on the part of the former Soviet Union, as the more we imposed socialism on them, the more money they demanded from us.

Finally, we collapsed, also because the Soviet Union was the biggest aid donor in the world, including to the countries of the Middle East. Now we have the same kind of policies being conducted by our Western friends and colleagues. When countries are seriously imposing, or trying to impose, democracy, it is again masochism, because the more democratic these countries are the more anti-Western they are: it is obvious. This area is going through a difficult



transitional process, which implies at this juncture deterioration, and we have to deal with this with open eyes. What could we do? We should not interfere, be it with democracy or with the rule of law, or with anything; let the people of this huge area decide for themselves and develop.

What would be my advice? Even here, at a panel like this, we are advising ourselves how to interfere. The more we interfere the worse it is for the peoples of this area. What could be done? Stop exporting democracy or socialism or whatever, and, by the way, stop ostracising Israel. It is the only beacon of stability there, and we see more and more ostracising of Israel. The other beacon of stability in that area we should not undermine is, of course, Iran; it is the most civilised and the most sophisticated country in the area. Instead, for almost 30 years we have been undermining Iran, which, by the way, could have been an island of stability in the area.

Go to the Russians if you want positive advice on what could be done. We did two operations which were largely successful in an area like that, in Tajikistan and Chechnya, but that was on the margins, and only Russians could do that, because we are able to sacrifice our lives and treasure indiscriminately. Other than that, do not interfere, and help where you can, mostly in humanitarian ways. Close borders to terrorists, help those areas which are close to your borders with developmental aid, I am talking now to Europeans: curtail immigration. Suppress the negative elements in your own societies or else or they will suppress you, I am speaking about the growing immigration to which you have been committed.

Then wait, and maybe in 50 things will get better, but if we continue to involve ourselves with incompetent impotence or impotent incompetence, we are sure to make things worse. There are several useful things we could do, and one is to educate some of these people, because the more well-educated people there are there the better, especially in terms of higher education. Then understand that we are unable to do much else.