

# PIERRE MOREL

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## **Pierre MOREL**

Thank you, Thomas, Thierry and everyone at IFRI contributing to the World Policy Conference for this very successful and stimulating eleventh session. I will touch on three topics that have been given little attention here, if any at all: questions about identity, the conflict in Ukraine and the unilateral withdrawal from the new INF treaty by the United States.

### **1. Identity**

This topic has been mentioned here and there. It is not an easy topic to grasp and, at the same time, we have seen this theme rise in domestic politics, as well as in international politics. Basically, everyone nowadays can recognise that there is very direct interaction between globalisation and the identitarian reflex. However, it is not just a reflex, a kind of compensation that we could refer to as natural. It goes much further: it is a true step backward, in many cases, and it is a subject that must be addressed.

Very modestly, in small boutique format: the Pharos Observatory which we launched, with a group of friends, about ten years ago, tried to address this subject more directly in zones of conflict, threat and pure reduction of minority populations. I will not go into this now, but we can clearly see that there is a threat spreading, a kind of disease spreading, a regression, a reduction of the other. This is a phenomenon that we are a little too inclined to immediately place on religious field. Of course, the religious minorities are threatened, not just in the Near and Middle East. But it's not just religious. That is why we insist on cultural and religious pluralism. The counter-example I always take is to say – sorry to our Spanish friends – “go to Barcelona. If you find signs of religion, all the better”. But we are dealing with identitarian reflexes that I do not want to describe in any greater detail, except to say that they have nothing to do with religion. It would thus be simplistic, even if there is a degree of truth to it, to use that term. The religious component here is not necessarily a return to religion, but a mobilising force behind the identitarian reflex, and it has become something that, obviously, is a bit obsessive.

All the problems we are facing tie back in to the fact that we are taking a simplistic approach to identity and, basically, it is an identity of rejection that we are trying to mobilise. Whereas, if you look at the history, you can refer to a history of endeavours instead. Why is there such a reduction when, in reality, what we can try to define as identity evolves over time – it is not set once and for all – depending on the context. We cannot deny this. This is a historical reality and even a need that must be recognised today. However, it should not be essentialised, or reduced to a single dimension. This is where the danger becomes very real, because it can feed conflict and confrontation and elimination – radical, if need be. The Nobel Prize was awarded to a Yezidi recently: we have seen what it means to reduce, reject and eliminate a minority in an almost irreversible way. It is not the only minority in this situation, far from it.

I think we need to keep an early lesson in mind here: how should we talk about this topic? To deny it would be absurd, but at the same time, to essentialise it would be to risk sliding the slippery slope into drama and crime.

### **2. The conflict in Ukraine**

I think we have said almost nothing about Ukraine over the past three days. My apologies, but insofar as I, along with an entire team from the OSCE, am in charge of the specifically political mediation around the negotiations being held to settle this conflict – though unfortunately, at best, we are not doing much more than conflict management, because this is a serious circumstance, and what I refer to as a forgotten tragedy. It is worse than that: it is not forgotten – it is being trivialised. That goes without saying, in a sense. We are approaching, more or less, the one hundredth session of negotiations. Let me remind you of some figures:

- One war, in 2014, that lasted four months and left 10,000 dead in Europe;
- One contact line – that is what we call it, so as to not refer to it as a “front” – where there are incidents every week, children stepping on mines, queues hit by mortar attacks, etc. stretching 500 kilometres, in the most random manner: a farm can be on one side, while its field is on the other;
- Along these 500 kilometres are four crossing points with endless queues of valiant ladies carrying bags. You are well aware that, in this region, it is -20°C in January and February. I need say no more;
- One thousand OSCE observers on the ground to analyse the violations. This is not a United Nations force. It is the OSCE that is working to the maximum of its capabilities to identify whether this is heavy weapons fire, 80mm or 120mm mortars, and determine their direction. We are using drones to the greatest extent possible, but these are being fired on, jammed in some cases, when in principle, all the parties have committed to this monitoring mission on the ground.

This just goes to show how serious the matter is, and that in the end, this trivialisation is affecting a population of about 4 million inhabitants (3.5 million on-site and 1.5 million refugees). These refugees did not go to the capitals or to our borders. No, they have been suffering these conditions for the past four years, mainly in Ukraine, some in Belarus, some in Russia. This is a situation to which we have become accustomed, in a way.

Yet in reality it is not a frozen conflict. I want to stress this: it is not Karabakh, it is not the crisis in Georgia, nor is it Moldova. It so happens that I have held responsibilities, more or less and, in some cases, at length, in all three of these conflicts. They did not upset the European security order. The conflict in Ukraine has challenged the security order in Europe, with all its strengths and weaknesses. However, that security order is 40 years old. It goes back to the Helsinki Final Act. That is where we stand now. The collective security regime, *de facto*, on the European continent – and as you know the OSCE includes the United States and Canada as a result of other alliances – has been suspended by this conflict. Until we can emerge from this conflict, we will have a regime that vacillates, is uncertain and can condone further abuses and developments, not to mention the deepening suffering and especially the disorder that is taking hold. The region has gradually lost all norms, all laws. It is time to find a way to define the rules.

### **3. Unilateral withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty**

My last point is intended to serve the interest of European security. I am referring to the unilateral withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty just announced by the United States. Here too, a Treaty signed in 1987, after lengthy negotiations. You will recall: the Pershings, SS20s, etc. Thirty years of stability. Thousands of missiles destroyed and a number of codes put in place. We are seeing the immediate consequences of this today. It's obviously easy and, in addition, we can expect the Russians to say: “yet again, the United States are going back on an agreement. They are the ones responsible. They are entirely at the root of this”. Yet, as you know, serious questions have been raised about Russia's compliance with the Treaty during certain missile tests and preparations. More generally speaking, for all the others it is seen as an opening of sorts. We know full well that this kind of abolition and refusal leads Chiefs of Staff to elaborate plans. The situation needs to be addressed on a five- to ten-year horizon. A Chief of Staff, a Minister of Defence will think: “I can no longer ignore this dimension”. So armament programs are prepared in response.

We could think: “another howler”. I would like to slip an idea in here – an option. After all, since this treaty, in a way – this is the American rationale – has left aside the powerful rise of other intermediate nuclear force capabilities in Asia (as the subject is vast, I will not go into it), why not try to bounce back? An example occurred to me in this respect. For four years, I was part of the team developing the Chemical Weapons Convention. These negotiations had been going on for seven years. At the end of the Iraq-Iran war, there occurred this tragedy with the use of chemical weapons against the Iraqi population by Saddam Hussein on Halabja in 1988. United Nations General Assembly. Burst of conscience. Initiative from France. Special conference in Paris to revive negotiations on the prohibition of chemical weapons. And in two years' time, we settled what had been dragging on for seven years. It is a very distinct combination of circumstances: the sense of unacceptable horror. But in the end, we knew it and had been negotiating tirelessly, getting bogged down ever more in technical problems: then the political will emerged.

I ask you the question. The signature process was initiated in 1983. There were three years to get everything finished. Why not reopen these negotiations on intermediate nuclear forces? You will ask: in what setting? Who should participate? Of course, it will not be easy. A conference? Today, how can we still go on organising international conferences? It's very striking. We have meetings, Astana Groups, meetings in Istanbul, Geneva, bits and pieces, a kind of perpetual zapping. Perhaps we should start with in-between formats: holding regional panels or, quite simply, just setting out the issue. First, a good expert report raising the question of intermediate nuclear forces in the world and the risks they represent. I'm putting the idea out there. I simply see that if we let things go on as they are, without first experiencing a kind of burst of conscience, followed by political and strategic reflection on the consequences, we will be preparing an additional round, as though there were not enough arms races going on.

When it comes down to it, we are faced with this choice again today between what I would call total cynicism, resignation, the brutalism of initiatives here and there and, ultimately, the prosperity of unilateralism. Everyone is against unilateralism officially, but everyone is starting to practice it. What we have not achieved is a kind of multilateralism where everyone, in essence, would look at each other. We have multi-unilateralism. If we want to continue, we can. We know where it will lead us. I think the few examples I mentioned are reminders to try to react. Thank you very much.

**Thomas GOMART**

Thank you, Ambassador. I think that the transition is ready for Artem, who, in my opinion, will not rebuff this proposal for discussion on the conditions of weapons under control between Russians, Americans and Europeans in particular.