New Party fights Globalism in Georgia | Pascal Lottaz

All is not lost! There are forces around the globe trying to organise political frameworks against the war mentality of the Political West. One new locus of resistance is emerging in caucasus nation of Georgia. Let me introduce to you the first "Tbilisi Forum on Neutrality", and explain why Georgia's history, territorial disputes, and regional position shape this debate. The following is the opening session of the forum and it features speeches by Vato Shakarishvili, Bidzina Giorgobiani, and myself. We explore neutrality as a framework for sovereignty, economic cooperation, and peace. They argue that Georgia could connect competing powers rather than become an arena for confrontation. Lottaz stresses that neutrality is no universal remedy: any Georgian model would require sustained diplomacy, careful balancing, and attention to the country's circumstances. Forum Links: Tbilisi Forum on Neutrality: https://tbilisi-neutrality-forum.offpower.chatgpt.site United Neutral Georgia: https://neutralgeorgia.com/ Neutrality Studies Links: Neutrality Studies Substack: https://pascallottaz.substack.com Support Neutrality Studies: https://neutralitystudies.com/donate Neutrality Studies shop: https://neutralitystudies.com/shop Time Stamps 00:00 Pascal's introduction from Tbilisi 01:23 United Neutral Georgia and the forum 02:49 Georgia's history and territorial disputes 05:00 Neutrality as a framework for settlement 06:32 International experience and the conference 10:39 Opening session and Vato Shakarishvili 15:55 Bidzina Giorgobiani: sovereignty and cooperation 22:13 Pascal Lottaz: a bridge for peace

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies, today with a special episode. As you can see, I am not in my office. I'm actually at an airport—the airport in Tbilisi, Georgia. That's the country, not the state. I'm here because I just attended a very interesting conference that I also helped co-organize, which was, unsurprisingly, all about neutrality. So it turns out that, since last year, the country of Georgia has had a political party called United Neutral Georgia. And, well, they are very serious about what they want to do. They've got a vision for a neutral Georgia, a neutral country—a Georgia that functions a bit differently in international relations, like Switzerland or Austria or Ireland, just better. Because I don't need to tell you that all over Europe, we have huge problems with neutrality.

And as a matter of fact, we had one speaker at this conference, Sakari Linden, who's a Finnish politician. He's been on my channel before. And he came and talked to us a bit about why Finland gave up its neutrality. And, you know, we had four panels. We spent two days together, during which we discussed basically the ups and downs of neutrality, the challenges, but also the opportunities. And I want to share all of that with you. So this is just the introduction to the opening, actually. The neutrality forum that we had in Tbilisi was opened by two of the politicians, two of the

leaders of this party, who have both been working on this for years. But they are now starting to work systematically to introduce a discourse on neutrality into Georgian society for real.

They are not in parliament. This party, again, was only formed a year ago, in 2025, and their goal is to win seats in Georgia's national parliament in the elections in two years, in 2028. So they are very systematic, very methodical about what they are doing. They are a group of realists, I would say. There are not only politicians who defected from other parties and came to this one. There are also former ministers, former generals, a former chief of staff of the armed forces, and former ambassadors who are part of this party. And the discussions that we had over here in Georgia were hugely interesting.

I mean, it just shows once again that, overall, realism has this tendency to assert itself, because these are the people who saw not only the war in 2008, but who remember the wars in the early 1990s and who have a very comprehensive picture of what happened. I mean, you might, of course, know that Georgia used to be a Soviet republic and then, in 1991, got its independence together with all the other Soviet republics. Then followed a period of civil war. And Georgia, to this day, has two provinces, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, that are split off from the rest of the country and have Russian troops in them. And, you know, the history of all of this is long and sad. It's not unlike Ukraine. But unlike Ukraine, Georgia actually had a kind of national reckoning with its policies of the 2000s.

Between 2005 and 2012, during the Saakashvili government, Georgia’s policy was very aggressively anti-Russian and very aggressively pro-European. And that kind of policy, well, in 2008, it led to a short war. And it was a diplomat from my country, a fellow Swiss named Heidi Tagliavini, who then wrote the independent report about what happened in 2008. And it is established beyond doubt and absolutely clear that the first shots were fired by Georgia, by the forces of Saakashvili’s government, and that the Russians then responded to that. They already had peacekeepers in these two provinces at that time. And one thing led to another.

And long story short, the very sad fact of the matter is that, to this day, around 30 kilometers from here, from Tbilisi, there are Russian troops. And these territories are, well, under occupation or liberation, or whatever you want to call it. But there is no solution. There's a territorial dispute, and it's a very important territorial dispute for them. And it is, in this sense, very, very similar to what Ukraine was before 2022. Now, again, unlike Ukraine, there has been a major rethink inside Georgia. And the people that we just spoke to were the ones who have this kind of realist outlook on life, saying, well, you know, military force obviously ain't going to get us these territories back.

So if we want them back, if we want a unified Georgia, then the only way forward is to create some form of framework, some kind of political setup that would convince our people, the people in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the Russians to say, “Fine, let's do this. Let's try to resolve the conflict through this framework.” Now, this framework, in their conception—and it's something that I, of course, support—is neutrality, neutrality for Georgia. Naturally, this would have to go hand in

hand with some form of federal setup and with a specially agreed status for these provinces and whatnot. But all of this comes downstream.

What comes first is the international setup of Georgia as a neutral country. So the interesting thing to me as a researcher is, of course, that they came up with this all by themselves. This is a naturally grown kind of intuition, which just once again proves that, you know, neutrality is a grassroots thing. It works from the bottom up. Now, what we did here at this conference was to discuss the subtleties, what kind of pitfalls there might be, and what the experiences of other countries were. Again, this is just an introduction. Right after this, I will show you the speeches of the two party leaders who spoke, and also my own contribution to the opening ceremony.

You will see that the conference was very professionally done. We had around 200 to 250 people in the audience. It was fully organized, which also speaks to the professionalism with which the Georgians are approaching this topic. And I do think this has a lot of potential, not only for Georgia but for other neutrality movements in the world, because Georgia is not the only country that's actively thinking about neutrality. We have this in various forms, in various ways, in other places. We have it in Indonesia. We have it in Malaysia. We have it in South American states.

We have Colombia, which has had a neutrality movement. We have it in Germany. We actually have it in Australia. And I'm not saying that all of these places will become neutral, not at all. The point is, this is something that's being thought about worldwide because, as you will also see from my introduction and my remarks later, the problem is we have a lot of conflicts. Neutrality is one potential answer to conflicts. And we have a lot of them, to varying degrees. We have full-scale wars, we have low-level territorial disputes, and so on. But all of them are quite worrisome. And all of us understand that if we don't do something, if we do not create the structures needed to de-escalate, well, then we might well go into various kinds of wars.

We already have two very bad wars, right? We have Ukraine, we have Iran. We have the genocide in Gaza. We have Israel's relentless wars on all of its neighbors. So there's a lot of warfare already going on. But this could get much worse if we do not find the political frameworks, again, to somehow turn things around. Now, there are very large problems in the way. One of them is, of course, the ideological nonsense that's currently being developed in Europe. The EU is at its saddest stage in its entire history, with an ideological deadlock that really leaves no space for intelligent discussions about peace and prosperity. They are firmly engulfed in their very own discourse about how to defeat Russia, while, of course, lacking any and all resources to do so.

But this is one of the things that we also discussed and one of the factors that needs to be taken into consideration, right? The world is not a perfect place, and it's not how we want it to be. We have to work with the world that we have. And based on that, we have to create the structures, the trajectories, and the processes that can get us somewhere. Now, my claim is, of course, that

neutrality is one of the things that can lead to a process, that can lead to a framework that could then help us solve a couple of issues in the future—or at least, even if we don't solve them, somehow deal with them without warfare.

Now, with this out of the way, let me just reiterate that I think these are valuable discussions and that anyone interested in this might want to watch them. There are introductory remarks and then four different panels. They will all also be on my homepage. And thanks to AI, there will be summaries and shortened versions. So if you don't have time to watch everything, try to find the summaries on my homepage in a couple of days. And if you want to get in touch with anyone, do let me know. We are currently working on building a network of neutrality organizations and neutrality movements so that we can learn from each other and hopefully push the discussion forward. Please enjoy.

#Vato Shakarishvili

Welcome to the Tbilisi Neutrality Forum, United Neutral Georgia. This is the Tbilisi Neutrality Forum.

#Vato Shakarishvili

Greetings. Welcome to our guests visiting Tbilisi. Let me welcome the representatives of the diplomatic corps. Let me welcome everyone. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm very happy to host the first international forum dedicated to neutrality, a forum that creates a platform for discussing Georgia's foreign policy orientation. This is a place to conduct an academic discussion based on real politics, not on illusions. One of the main goals of establishing our party is to introduce a qualitatively new discussion, a new discourse in politics. We can say that we have been able to do that, and today's forum is proof of it. We think that, not only for our party but for our country, the strategic objective should be to address the issue of neutrality and to ensure that it is on the agenda and on the table in major negotiations.

#Pascal

The world really remembers the…

#Vato Shakarishvili

important issues and important moments, for example, the Versailles Conference and the Yalta Conference. Today's reality also indicates that we are approaching the same turning point. We all understand that the war in Ukraine cannot be ended only by discussing the territorial issue. Peace can be built only after a new security architecture is agreed upon, and Georgia's neutral status should be part of this big agreement. Georgia is a connecting space linking big states and different

poles. This is why what is natural for us should become our state's long-term strategy. Georgia is not a place for confrontation between North and South or East and West. This is a place where all these different approaches can be addressed, and we can do this through neutrality.

And neutrality is becoming more achievable because none of the global powers can have an exclusive presence in the South Caucasus. We can see that the role of China is increasing in international politics, and its economic interests are also increasing in our region. So we see a balance of power, and in these circumstances, neutrality is the best way forward for our country. It is an absolute illusion that NATO and the EU are creating opportunities for Georgia to develop. This is not a safeguard for security. This is a threat to our country. We need to escape this utopia. There was also propaganda financed from other sources that was harming the idea of neutrality. They artificially created the false perception that neutrality is just a luxury for economically strong countries. But it is actually the opposite, because wealth and welfare are things that accompany neutrality.

Neutrality is not just military non-alignment. It is a concept of economic development that protects us from becoming a party to somebody else's war, but it also creates opportunities and a solid basis for building a welfare state. Georgia's geostrategic location, our characteristic features, and the new multipolar order that is now being established right in front of our eyes dictate that we pursue a new path. This is the path of neutrality, and we believe in neutrality. This is one of the first steps towards implementing this idea in the country and also beyond its borders. The main slogan of our forum is not just words. This is our vision, and this is our offer to other countries of the world: Georgia as a platform for peace and cooperation. Thank you very much indeed.

#Vato Shakarishvili

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much for being with us. I would like to welcome our visitors and guests to Georgia and to this first forum on neutrality. The title of my speech is "Georgia's Neutrality: From Historical Experience Towards a New Purpose, a New Objective." Georgia's history is the history of a country that has had to fight to maintain its independence because of its geographic location. Our country has been a place where interests clashed. We were also used as an instrument of democracy or as a means of advancing other interests in our country. We can see that the interests of many other countries have been represented here and have come into conflict. But now we can speak about how Georgia can become a space of opportunity where these different ideas can meet—a place of peace.

And here, there is an opportunity to understand these opposing ideas differently, because our country has often been the site of imperial clashes. But in the future, Georgia can become a space for consensus and cooperation among different parties. Countries like Georgia, which are not very wealthy, have to maneuver to safeguard and protect their interests. They try to find a place where they can maintain their independence. They do not need a metropole or other institutions to assess the risks, because they have a very strong sense of pragmatism. And we can see that small

countries prioritize building pragmatic relations with competing hegemonic powers instead of being linked to one of them through a military alliance.

And I think that this is how we can establish Georgia's neutrality and a new concept of neutrality in Georgia. Neutrality is not just distancing ourselves from military blocs or making a temporary maneuver. That is not a complete understanding of this concept. Now, it is important to highlight the second question: what a country creates with its independence, how it can benefit its citizens, its neighbors, and its international partners, and why they should be interested in preserving Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This is where the logic of our thinking as a state can change, because if Georgia remains a buffer zone between confronting states, then its significance will be dictated by other countries.

But if Georgia can become a space for cooperation, for economic or transport connections among different states, then it will acquire a different significance. Our objective is not to make Georgia a weapon of confrontation among other states, but to make Georgia a country of cooperation, a space for cooperation among other countries. And Georgia's geographic location really gives us this opportunity. There is the Black Sea, the South Caucasus, the Caspian region, and Asia, and all these territories are interlinked. But being only a transit corridor is not enough. Georgia should try to become an active part of these connections and interactions. And this leads us to a new understanding of our historic significance.

For many centuries, protecting our country meant defending our land, religion, culture, language, and statehood from other forces. But today, we can give new meaning to protecting and defending our country. This is not only about preserving our history. It is about building a state for future generations, a state that can identify and determine its interests independently. And this is why, for Georgia, it is important not only to decide which political spaces to cooperate with, but also to identify Georgia's significance in the modern world. These are two different issues, but they are not mutually exclusive. One is about foreign policy, and the second is about the objective and purpose of our existence.

And this is why we think that Georgia's neutrality should not be reduced to a question of foreign policy. No, it can become an opportunity for a new understanding of our future. In the past, Georgia' s main objective was to survive amid confrontation between empires. But now our purpose is to make sure that Georgia's independence becomes a precondition for cooperation among different states. This is very important for Georgia now, as an independent actor in international relations and cooperation. And this is the difference, and this is where we can see the foundation for Georgia's new development. Georgia is an independent actor in international cooperation.

#Pascal

Neutrality Studies will speak now.

#Vato Shakarishvili

The founder of Neutrality Studies, please.

#Pascal

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. Thank you very much to the organizers for putting together such a beautiful event in such a beautiful location, in beautiful Tbilisi, in beautiful Georgia. And this is one of the things that I would really want to stress. When we discuss neutrality today, what we are discussing is an abstract concept. We're discussing a possible framework for foreign policy, and we're discussing the possibilities. We discuss what it would imply. We discuss what would have to be done, what would have to be avoided. But we do so because the core reason for this discussion is to safeguard the beauty of Tbilisi and the beauty of Georgia, and to safeguard the country.

And beyond that, to safeguard peace among the nations in the immediate vicinity of Georgia. I've now studied neutrality for the better part of a decade, together with colleagues who will be speaking today, including my dear friend and colleague Heinz Gärtner and others who've been discussing neutrality for many, many years. In addition, we've got people here who are great geopolitical experts and who have been working on these issues for many decades, actually. And the core issue that we need to figure out together is what the geopolitical configuration is and how to use that configuration for the benefit of Georgia.

Neutrality is not a silver bullet with which you can solve all problems, but it is a tool that states can use not only to keep themselves safe, but also to add something to the international community—to actually do what both previous speakers said and what this party understands very well: to be a bridge between others instead of a wall against someone. Neutrality thrives when the neutrals are able to bridge the gap between those who don't like each other very much. This is a very, very difficult position. It is something that needs constant balancing. It's something that needs constant maintenance. So the question about Georgian neutrality is not, "What are the bullet points?"

"And then, once we have these 10 bullet points fulfilled, we are properly neutral." These bullet points will change over time, and there is no perfect cookie-cutter approach that you can use to create Georgian neutrality. Neutrality is always and everywhere a reaction to conflict. So we need to study the conflicts that are ongoing in order to understand how to use neutrality in the most appropriate way to achieve these national and international objectives. If Georgia manages to be the bridge, not only for economics but also for politics, and somehow helps the Russians, the Iranians, the Turks, the Europeans, and the Americans all get more out of this region, then Georgia can be the linchpin of peace and security in the entire region.

We've seen this before. Other countries were fulfilling that purpose in their immediate environment. Austria is one of them. Switzerland is another. We've got several examples in Southeast Asia, too. We've got Yugoslavia, which in the past, during the Cold War, actually had kind of a similar role. But

it's always different. Neutrality is always context-specific. And so Georgia's neutrality, if it ever becomes a reality, will not be the same as Switzerland's neutrality or Finland's in the past. It will be Georgia's own kind of creation, and it will be a tailored suit.

So what we're doing here today is thinking about the form of the suit, what kind of fabric is needed, what the size is, and what would be a realistic way of approaching this beyond just the immediate necessities of the local political environment. We're also looking at the international scene and listening to people from other countries, including Iranians, Indonesians, and colleagues from Finland, about their experiences and perceptions. So in this sense, I thank United Neutral Georgia again for organizing this forum so that we can discuss and learn together how this exercise could work. Thank you very much.