

LASHA DARSALIA

First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia

Thierry de Montbrial, Founder and Executive Chairman of Ifri and the WPC

Thank you. I am now going to give the floor to Lasha Darsalia. Your country, Georgia, is geopolitically in a very difficult situation. You are small and beautiful. You have very important, significant minority issues. You have a very complex history with Russia. You also have some inclinations towards the Western world, particularly the European Union. You are currently going through very significant deep turmoil in the country. How can you find or hope to find a new equilibrium that could fit with this idea of a multi-vector approach to international relations?

Lasha Darsalia, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia

Thank you. Thank you very much. First of all, I want to use this opportunity to express my appreciation to you, Mr. de Montbrial, and to the World Policy Conference for inviting me to attend this important session, and I want to welcome the distinguished audience. Thank you for this question. While today we have heard a lot, and we will hear in next sessions as well, about the current challenges of the international system, talking about multi-vector foreign policy is really appropriate at the moment.

As you rightfully mentioned, Georgia has several features, I would say. First of all, with its geographical location, being between East and West, being in the middle of the so-called middle corridor, which I would rather call the central corridor, of course, it is very rational for Georgia to exploit this opportunity and to have good relations with different countries, with different dimensions. However, the major challenge Georgia faces is, unfortunately, Russian imperialism. Georgia has two key issues. As it exists, it has lasted 30 years as an independent country. This is an issue of the territorial integrity and European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Unfortunately, through the occupation of Georgia's territories, the first problem was created by the Russian Federation to stop or hinder Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Now, when you are in the Russian neighborhood, when you are even an immediate neighbor of Russia, unfortunately, especially now when it became the revisionist country in the international system and the responsible player, your choice is either you become part of some collective security solution, like NATO, or even the European Union, though it is not security, or, if you fail, then war is imposed on you, like Ukraine now or Georgia before. Before Ukraine, it was Georgia. Russia made the very dangerous precedence when occupying territory of a neighboring country and trying to forcefully change the internationally recognized borders, and unfortunately, it was Georgia who experienced this.

Therefore, in this situation, for Georgia, multi-vector foreign policy means only one thing. In our case, unfortunately, our neighbor interprets this divisible world as either a world which is based on international norms and rules or a world which is based on some practical or rational choices. For Georgia, there is only one choice. We hope that the world will be based on international law and that world international politics will be based on the rules and norms of a civilized world. Unfortunately, this is not the case in our neighborhood. Therefore, our choice is obvious. We are on the side of where the civilized world stands, which is reestablishing the rules-based international system. Therefore, any other choice about which organization to join or where to go is based on this critical concept. Unfortunately, as I said, the situation is difficult for us because of our neighborhood. I would compare Georgia's situation to living in a cage with a wounded bear. The rest is just the strategy of survival.

Thierry de Montbrial

Thank you very much. Clearly, for an outside observer, Georgia represents a situation, on a smaller scale, which is similar to that of Ukraine. I am one of those personally who thinks that the Ukraine war should never have taken place. However, the problem now in Georgia is that we could have a tragic evolution, and that illustrates well the feasibility, the sustainability of a concept such as multi-vector policy. Because in order for such a policy to be what I called structurally stable in a speech this morning, there must be a will of the different parties to find rules of the game that allow such structural stability. We see clearly that right now, in the case of Georgia, nobody is able to say how the situation will evolve in the next weeks or months. Thank you very much.