

# THIERRY DE MONTBRIAL

## Founder and Chairman of the World Policy Conference

Let me just say a few words about this panel and the way it integrates with the rest of the program. Initially, we had a slightly different panel, but as you could see, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar had to leave earlier, so he was our guest of honor for lunch, and the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran in charge of the Arab Countries and Africa, Mr Hossein Amirabdollahian, is coming, but on Sunday morning. So, the discussions on the Middle-East are split into three parts; under the current circumstances, it's the best we could do. But we have a very distinguished panel tonight, so let me introduce you briefly the speakers, just in the order they figure here – but the order they will speak will be slightly different, and they do not know it yet, by the way.

To my left, Youssef Amrani, whom you know because he already participated in the WPC. He is a diplomatic advisor to the King of Morocco.

Elisabeth Guigou, qui est président de la commission des Affaires étrangères de l'Assemblée nationale française, et que je remercie de tout cœur d'être venue aujourd'hui, parce que c'était en plus assez compliqué – tout est compliqué, ces jours-ci. Mais je remercie très vivement Elisabeth d'être parmi nous ce soir et je crois que sa présence, compte tenu des circonstances, revêt aussi une importance toute particulière.

Mona Makram-Ebeid, que vous connaissez bien également, qui est sénatrice égyptienne, avec une très grande expérience publique et académique. Nous avons pensé unanimement que le point de vue de l'Egypte devait être représenté.

Since I cannot switch to Russian, I will say it in English: Vitaly Naumkin. Vitaly Naumkin is now the Scientific Director of the Oriental Studies Institute in Moscow – he was, until recently, the Director – and he is, I can tell you, unanimously considered as the best expert on the Middle-East in Russia today. He was, I think, if I am not mistaken, the successor of Yevgeny Primakov, who was later on Prime Minister of Russia and passed away recently. Thank you very much for being with us tonight.

Jim Hoagland, who already spoke this afternoon, and who is very well known from all of you.

And last, but not least, a very interesting personality, Bernard Siman, who is a British citizen but born in Iraq, as an Iraqi citizen. He is an investment banker and, as many of you know, bankers usually know and understand politics quite well, so he is extremely well-informed.