



# THIERRY DE MONTBRIAL

## President and Founder of the WPC

I would like to introduce our speaker, who is also a very exceptional man, Shivshankar Menon. Shivshankar Menon is a very prominent diplomat in the Indian civil diplomatic service. Most recently, he served as the national security advisor to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who was one of the greatest Prime Ministers of the contemporary era in India. He is also a very smart intellectual and a great gentleman too. He is particularly well-known for a unique combination of qualities.

He recently published a book within the framework of the Brookings Institution in Washington. The title of the book is *Choices*, and the subtitle is *Inside the Making of Indian Foreign Policy*. This book is extraordinarily interesting, because it takes some of the key foreign policy events from the viewpoint of India in the last few decades. He analyses each case, starting from setting the problem. He examines in detail how choices were made which led to certain conclusions and certain outcomes. He says this modestly, because he was involved himself in all these situations. Some of them were positive results and some of them were positively less positive or controversial outcomes.

The interesting point here is that Ambassador Menon believes that in fact, one should speak more about choices than about options. When intellectuals speak about strategy, they like to speak in terms of options, such as option A, B or C. They present the leaders with options and then the leaders are supposed to choose between A, B, and C. What his book demonstrates remarkably well is that in real life, the situation is quite different. This is why he makes this simple but strong distinction between choices and options.

Now he is going to talk not about the past but about the present and the future. We have agreed with Shankar that he will tell us about four key issues. These are current key issues for Indian foreign policy. He will present us these four main issues, and I suppose he will discuss each of these issues in terms of choices rather than options. I repeat this once more. It is also a good lesson in diplomacy. I was too long, Shankar, but now the floor is yours, and we are very happy to have you with us.