

World-Renowned French Analyst Discusses EU Politics at AUBG

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The celebrated French political analyst Thierry de Montbrial discussed the current political situation in Europe with students, faculty, and staff at a public lecture held at AUBG on Sept. 20. De Montbrial visited Blagoevgrad at the invitation of the organizers of the Ambassador Elena Poptodorova Distinguished Lecturers series.

“The world is in a no peace–no war situation. There are just frozen conflicts,” said de Montbrial by way of introducing his favorite subject – European politics. In his opinion, these frozen conflicts date back to World War I and its peace treaties, which explain many of the current political problems like the Middle East crisis and Central European issues.

De Montbrial spoke engagingly, often addressing himself to his younger listeners. “Most of you were very little when the collapse of the Soviet empire struck the world,” he told them. “It was unexpected, we were all unprepared, but you should know that it is thanks to the European Union that there wasn’t a war afterward. The EU’s been able to maintain a relatively peaceful situation in Europe.”

The strategic importance of the EU was a recurring theme during de Montbrial’s talk. “A lot of people are skeptical about EU, but it is in fact the greatest, [most] extraordinary political constitution since the time of Napoleon. It is an area where the concept of peace has been totally established. I try to tell you that it is very important to be optimistic about the EU. One thing to remember – be positive about the European construction process. You should spend time to understand how the EU works and what the European world represents, because Europe is now yours,” he said.



One of the highlights of the lecture was a discussion about Turkey and Russia's potential accession to the EU, a subject raised by students. "It is rather unlikely that Russia would want to join the EU, since it is already very powerful," he explained. As for Turkey, de Montbrial said that he would be surprised if Turkey became an EU member. "The question of the Turkish membership is not the most immediate question. Other issues are faced by the EU right now," he said.

On the Bulgarian question, he gave an explicit answer: "Bulgaria is slowly developing. It has deep fundamental problems in the system, but it is on its way to improvement. There is another big problem with immigration. Maybe if more young people concentrate on coming back and working for the future of their country, Bulgaria would be a better place. Students from AUBG, for example."



Students' engagement and spirited participation caused de Montbrial to remark that the atmosphere at AUBG is amazing and the students very promising.

Giang Nguyen, a student from Vietnam, said she found de Montbrial's answers to be straightforward, especially on the subject of Russia. "He was very normal and grounded and his speech was accessible to everyone, because he didn't use only [specialized] terms when talking about politics."

Thierry de Montbrial is a French politics and economics expert, well-known mostly for the fact that in 1979 he founded and now continues to lead the French Institute for International Relations, based in Paris. De Montbrial is not only the head of this leading European think tank but also a foreign member of the Bulgarian Academy of

Sciences and Doctor Honoris Causa of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and of Galatasaray University in Turkey.

De Montbrial is one of the many distinguished public figures to have lectured at AUBG as part of the Ambassador Poptodorova series, along with Bulgaria's first democratically elected president, Dr Zhelyu Zhelev, former Bulgarian EU Commissioner and current presidential candidate Meglena Kuneva, and the renowned scholar and member of the European Parliament George Schopflin, among others.

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