

Middle East Panel discusses regional issues

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Oct. 31, 2008 -- Debates over disputed border regions, economic reliance on oil, nuclear weapon proliferation, and the severe lack of water, arose before of a packed Wil Washcoe Auditorium for the first of two Middle East International Fellow Panels.

With standing room only on Wednesday Oct. 22, Army War College Fellows from 10 countries took questions from students and faculty members regarding strategic issues facing the Mid-East region. The panel began with a briefing given by Brig. Gen. Naushad Kayani of Pakistan that highlighted issues in three main categories geography, demography, and religion.

Geography brought forth an important discussion on two resources facing strong scrutiny in the region, oil and water. Because of oil, the U.S. and much of the world remains engaged in the region said Kayani. The briefing suggested that Mid-East countries will face a problematic future as the world increases their demand for oil. Since oil remains the only valid resource in the region, Kayani said that growing demand and a finite supply may put regional economic stability into question in the near future.

Kayani dedicated several minutes to the water crisis in the region. With the population increasing in the region, demand is only higher, and water even more scarce. Kayani insisted that diplomatic efforts to negotiate water sources must be tackled as soon as possible.

Following the briefing, student and faculty questions covered diverse topics. Notably, one student's question about Kashmir led to an insightful exchange between the Pakistani panel member and the Indian Fellow in the audience, providing both sides to the story for listeners.

Similarly, Afghanistan and Pakistan panelists both voiced opinion about the disputed tribal areas along the Hindu Kush Mountains where the majority of fighting is taking place today. Understanding the culture and will of the people is imperative to success, they both noted.

Additionally, all panelists voiced their main concern in the region as it relates to their respective

country. The overwhelming response was the question of Iran and its advancements to acquire nuclear weapons. Several fellows repeated that weapons of mass destruction would only further damage stability in the region.

Though terrorism was discussed briefly, it will be a primary focus in the next Middle-East panel regarding the role of the U.S. in the region scheduled for November 13.

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