

Middle East fellows debate US role in the region

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Nov. 13, 2008 -- Recommendations regarding U.S. involvement in curbing terrorism, peace treaties, regime changes, water conservation, nuclear energy, and nuclear proliferation, were provided by panelists representing 10 countries in the final International Fellows Panel for the Middle East.

On Thursday, Nov 13, Brig. Gen. Anwar Ayasrah of Jordan, Brig. Gen. Naushad Kayani of Pakistan, Lt. Col. Abdullah Halim of Afghanistan, Col. Alaa Al Shaikhli of Iraq, and Lt. Col. Eliezer Toledano of Israel, gathered in Wil Washcoe Auditorium to discuss issues affecting the region, allowing all panelists to comment on the U.S. role in the Mid-East.

The panel, also including Lt. Col. Mohammad Abdullah of Kuwait, Lt. Col. Marwan Azar of Lebanon, Col. Tareq Mubarak of Bahrain, Col. Naif Al Taimni of Saudi Arabia, and Col. Suhail Mohamed of Al Seraidi UAE, began with a briefing prepared by the fellows and followed with a question and answer period engaging students and faculty members in the audience.

The question of an independent Palestinian state dominated the question and answer period, in which panelists urged a peace treaty backed by the United Nations and strongly supported by the United States.

This conflict will likely not be the first issue addressed by the new administration, they thought, as Iraq and Afghanistan dominate current U.S. policy. It was the hope of all panelists, however, that an agreement will be made in the near future.

Overall, panelists reflected faith in international institutions to tackle the tensions associated Palestine and Kashmir, as well as terrorism, water conservation, energy, and nuclear proliferation. Not only did they consider the United Nations for a key role in regional stability, but also the World Bank, the Organization of Islamic Countries, and the International Atomic Energy Association.

The influence of the United States, however, is needed for many of these organizations to be effective, according to panelists.

In order to curb terrorism in the region, panelist recommended continued U.S. involvement with regard to intelligence sharing, counterterrorism training, and ultimately helping the Organization of Islamic Countries reach a regional consensus on combating terrorism.

The fellows also argued that the United States has a role to play within its own borders. Panelists encouraged Americans to try to spread understanding of a peaceful Islam in hopes to improve relations.

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