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Israeli and Palestinian Perspectives Point-Counterpoint

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Dr. Christopher Bolan, research professor of Middle East security studies, and Dr. Larry P. Goodson, professor of Middle East studies, both of the United States Army War College, delivered opposing perspectives on the Israeli - Palestinian conflict at the January 26 monthly meeting of the Foreign Policy of Harrisburg.

There were 150 members and guests in attendance.

Dr. Bolan, a senior Middle East advisor to Vice Presidents Al Gore and Dick Cheney, gave the Palestinian side. He said Palestinians felt betrayed by the former colonial powers in the region. After the end of British rule, Palestine was left without a state, without a voice, and without the ability to build a better life for itself, he said.

Palestinians see themselves as the rightful occupants of the territory because they have lived there longer. After World War I, the British failed to fulfill political, social, economic, land and immigration promises to the Palestinians, Dr. Bolan said. And when colonization ended, the situation became complex and combative.

Presenting the Israeli view, Dr. Goodson stated two main reasons leading to the establishment of Israel:

First, Jews considered themselves as God's chosen people, but were treated as aliens everywhere they tried to live. Therefore, Jews migrated to Palestine, the land God promised them.

Second, the intervention of Britain in the Middle East during World War I rearranged political states. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 set aside land for the Jews in Palestine. Israel was officially established in 1948.

The professors offered a pair of solutions for the conflict:

A two-state solution with the independent state of Palestine alongside Israel. However, Israeli settlements in the West Bank have made this solution problematic at best.

A one-state solution, Israel, but with a Palestinian majority.

The United States has been committed to a two-state solution since 1967, but both professors didn't see that happening anytime soon.

2017 Program Topics / Schedule

Feb. 23 Cuba Today and After the Castro Brothers

March 23 Russia and the West

April 27 South China Sea Geopolitics

(Please note the switch between the March and April topics.)

May 10 Bus trip to the Polish Embassy and the U.S. State Department in Washington, DC

May 18 Future of U.S. - Iranian Relations

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