

The Foreign Policy Association
of Harrisburg, Inc.
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The Sunni - Shia Divide

Scribed by Mai Phan
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John B. Craig, former U.S. ambassador to Oman and former White House advisor on counterterrorism, said the centuries-old division between the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam is a major cause of instability and hostility among countries in the Middle East. He addressed a packed house of over 190 members and guests of the Foreign Policy Association on January 25 at the Radisson Hotel Harrisburg. Extra chairs were brought in to accommodate the overflow crowd.

Mr. Craig noted that although 85 percent of the region is Sunni, the fact that Shia Iran poses a potential nuclear threat is unsettling to neighboring countries, especially Saudi Arabia. The two countries currently are backing opposite sides in the armed conflict in Yemen.

The divide occurred soon after the death of the prophet Mohammad in 632, Mr. Craig said. Mohammad failed to name a successor, so two factions emerged. One was led by Ali, the prophet's cousin and son-in-law; the other by Abu Bakr, the prophet's father-in-law.

Shias believe that leadership should stay within the family, supporting Ali, while Sunnis feel that the leader should be among the elite of the community. They support Abu Bakr.

Mr. Craig was named ambassador to Oman by President Bill Clinton and served as White House advisor under President George W. Bush. He currently is ambassador in residence at the Center for Global Understanding and Peacemaking at Elizabethtown College.

Friends of FPA Award

At our January 25 meeting, President Michele Sellitto presented the first Friends of the Foreign Policy Association Award to four members for their outstanding commitment and service in building the organization.

The award, consisting of a handsome glass plaque, went to Robert Glasscock, Mechanicsburg; Frank Matunis, Susquehanna Township; Marianne McManus, Camp Hill, and Lou Thieblemont. Camp Hill.

Welcome, New Members

The Foreign Policy Association is pleased to welcome the following new members:

Susan L. Bailey and Barbara J. Klaiber, Harrisburg; Robert R. Cassel, Elizabethtown; Dan Deibler and Catherine E. Johnson, Harrisburg; Peter P. Millvan, Camp Hill; and Trevor Shearer, Marietta.

2017-18 Program Topics / Schedule

- Feb. 22** India - Pakistan Relations
- March 15** U.S. - Iranian Relations
(Note change in date and topic.)
- April 26** Foreign Policy Challenges and Opportunities
- May 17** The Koreas
- May ??** Embassy Trip to be Determined

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