



Moderator Yahya Kamalipour awaits answers on Iran from panelists Christopher Preble of the Cato Institute, PUC professor Richard Rupp and St. Xavier Peter Kirstein.

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## Panel discusses U.S., Iran relations

**By: Calvin Davis**

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Three experts, gathering to discuss U.S. and Iran relations, agreed Thursday Iran should be viewed as a rational nation and the next U.S. President should arrange to talk with its leaders.

The panel, held at The Calumet Conference Center, consisted primarily of professors including Richard Rupp, associate professor of political science and head of the Department of History and Political Science at PUC. Christopher Preble, director of foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, and professor Peter Kirstein of St. Xavier University rounded out the group of experts.

All panelists represented a similar anti-war mindset, although New York Sun reporter Eli Lake intended to attend the event to offer an alternate perspective.

A central issue to the panel was Iran's image and their status as a rational and major power in the Middle East. America's foreign policy under the Bush Administration was criticized a number of times in regard to its hypocritical and, at times, inaccurate portrayal of Iran.

Kirstein was often the most vocal in his criticisms.

"Part of the inherent racism of the U.S. in its pursuit of global hegemony is to describe the most demonic characteristics of those who dare speak up against it," Kirstein said. "We [the U.S.] are probably the most irrational major power in the world since World War II."

While Rupp wasn't completely critical of the United States, he fundamentally agreed with Kirstein's assessment.

"I consider it perfectly rational that Iran is seeking weapons of mass destruction...to deal with a threat from outside," Rupp said.

Another issue tackled by the panel was whether or not the United States should negotiate directly with Iran, a topic currently hovering over the presidential campaign. All three panelists agreed

Bush Administration's isolation policy failed.

"We have isolated Iran for over 28 years," Rupp said. "It matters a great deal that we haven't been getting along with Iranians since theirs is an extraordinarily important and powerful state. We need to develop dialogue and we need to do it soon."

Asked about his advice for the next U.S President, Preble made it clear that negotiations with Iran would simply be a starting point.

"Negotiations are not an end point; they're a means to an end which I think should be Iran committing to not pursuing nuclear weaponization."

Overall, panelists expressed a rather sympathetic view towards Iran, stating that while Washington and Tehran may differ, the citizens of each country have common interests. "The people of these countries have common interests - peace, security, open borders, free trade," Kirstein said. "The governments do not."

The panel discussion, held the night before the first presidential debate, was moderated by Yahya Kamalipour, director of the Center for Global Studies and head of the department of communication and creative arts at PUC.

Kamalipour plans to remain active in bringing similar panels to PUC.

"My goal is to organize at least one public presentation each year that would bring together experts from throughout the nation to debate a crucial issue of our time."

He sees the free flow of information as a key component in understanding issues of the world.

"Without having constructive dialogue and sufficient information...we cannot make the right decisions or effectively participate in the democratic process," Kamalipour said.

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