

Scona : Middle East challenge

Interdependent world changes foreign policy

By MARY McWHORTER
Staff Writer

The Middle East remains a potent area of conflict not only for the countries and political groups directly involved but also for the United States and the Soviet Union, Joseph Sisco said Friday at the Student Conference on National Affairs.

Sisco, former under-secretary of state for political affairs, said, "The question it remains such a critical area for the potential for conflict between us and the Soviet Union because the Soviets have the advanced technology and obviously important and major interests of the Soviet Union and the United States are involved."



Dr. Joseph Sisco speaks at the Student Conference on National Affairs.

America no longer has military superiority, he said.

"The second fundamental change is economic," he said. "In the early days after World War II, we were by far the dominant power economically," Sisco said. "We helped rebuild Japan. We certainly, with the Marshall Plan, re-built Western Europe. We took the lead in the United Nations in the whole de-colonization process. (We did this) not out of humanitarian interests, but largely because the national interest of the United States is best served in a world environment of relative peace and stability."

But, Sisco added, today we are operating in an interdependent world where we are dealing economically with our Western European allies as equals and partners, not as dependencies.

"While we are still the number one economic power in the world,"

Sisco said, "the fact of the matter is that we are much more dependent in this interdependent world on the interaction between ourselves and other countries and it is no longer a United States that can apply overwhelming economic resources and resolve a number of these issues as clearly as we might have been able to do in the early days after World War II."

Finally, Sisco said President Reagan has brought back a strong executive leadership that had been lost during the Vietnam War and Watergate.

"Our most productive periods historically have been periods of strong executive leadership supported by bipartisan Congress," Sisco said. "From World War II to Vietnam there was a consensus on security issues. Vietnam fractured that consensus. We began to doubt. Our policy became less predictable."

Reagan now has achieved a strong pattern of cooperation between the executive branch and the legislature, one that Sisco said has been the earmark of a strong American leadership.

Sisco added that he expected to see continued conflict in Lebanon and in Iran and Iraq. He said that neither Iran nor Iraq had enough military power to end their war and that the only solution seemed to be the death of Iran's leadership.

Finally, Sisco said that the United States does have a good deal of influence in the Middle East and can use it to help solve the problems there.

"The great diplomat, President Sadat, was very fond of saying that 'what you Americans have got to understand is that when it comes to the Middle East and the Gulf, the cards are all in your hands if you have the wisdom to play them effectively.'"

Israeli, Arab call for peace in Mideast conflict

By SONDRICK PICKARD
Staff Writer

An Israeli professor and an Arab professor called for peace and de-escalated their respective positions in a century-old, Arab-Israeli conflict as part of the Student Conference on National Affairs.

Moshe Ma'oz, chairman of the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and Ambassador Clovis Maksoud, permanent observer of the League of Arab States to the United Nations and chief representative of the League in the United States, were the participants in a panel discussion titled "The Israeli conflict."

Gordon S. Brown, director of the Center for Arabian Peninsula Affairs, moderated the discussion.

Ma'oz, presenting the Israeli viewpoint toward the conflict, said progress for peace in the Middle East is slow.

"When we achieve a settlement or a ceasefire, a recession is possible another war," Ma'oz said. "If all parties are committed to achieve a breakthrough through dialogue, the course of peace."

Ma'oz said 70 percent of the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians results from a psychological barrier between the two peoples.

"I'm sure the Palestinians don't regret it if Israel vanished tomorrow," he said, "but it's not going to happen. The Israelis and Palestinians are stuck together whether they like it or not."

Although some Israelis recognize the positive efforts within the Palestine Liberation Organization, the majority doesn't trust the PLO because of its recent terroristic activities and its failure to fulfill its commitments, Ma'oz said.

Those who hold this view, Ma'oz said, the best solution is to the West Bank and Gaza, not to religious, historical or national reasons but for security.

Ma'oz described the conflict as a vicious circle whereby extremists on both sides force their positions.

"There is a feeling among Israelis that we can't go on dominating another nation," he said. "This is against the authentic values of Zionism, and it's eroding the fabric of society."

"There is no ideal solution to the Middle East problem — maybe there's no solution at all — but I'm talking about an alternative to stalemate and war."

"The Palestinians on the West Bank, no doubt, would prefer an independent state under the PLO, but they may settle for second best."

Ma'oz said the main stumbling block to such a plan is the PLO, which is the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

But Maksoud said the roots of the conflict lie in the structuring of the Israeli state at the ultimate expense of the disenfranchisement and dispossession of the Palestinian people.



Gordon Brown (left) moderates a discussion between Clovis Maksoud (center) and Dr. Moshe Ma'oz.

Putting the problem into its historical context, Maksoud said Israel agreed to absorb the Western world from the guilt of the persecution of Jews during World War II, if, in return, the Western world would absorb Israel of whatever action it plans to take against the Palestinians and the Arabs.

"To the conservative American, Israel is addressed as if it were the only projection of Western civilization in the Third World," Maksoud said.

He said the Arabs are caught in a "claustrophobia of noncommunication" in which they sometimes have to "shriek" in order to have their voice heard.

The historical and future Arab-Israeli conflict is something in the realm of the philosophic and intellectual, Maksoud said, while what is being pressed for is a pragmatic, realistic and diplomatic solution.

He said Arab nationalism is not an attempt to distinguish the Arabs from others, but to seek equality with others.

"Arab nationalism goes beyond racism and fundamentalism of any sort," Maksoud said. "Discrimination to the Arabs is a problem, while discrimination in Israeli ideology is a pattern and a policy."

The Palestinians and the PLO have undertaken acts of reconciliation which have gone unnoticed and sometimes have been deliberately ignored, Maksoud said. He said they advocated a secular, democratic state that recognized the Jewish presence in Palestine, but that Israel reacted negatively.

Stressing the importance of the PLO to the Palestinian people, Maksoud said the group has become much more than just a liberation organization, but "a state of mind in the absence of their state."

"It has become the framework of their peoplehood, the mechanism of their national unity and the vehicle by which Palestinian frustrations and aspirations are articulated," Maksoud said. "Hence, whenever anybody seeks to negotiate the ultimate destiny of the Palestinians without the PLO, they are performing an exercise of futility."

Marketed as an incentive for peace, Maksoud said, the Camp David agreements have subsequently developed into a license for Israel to proliferate more settlements in occupied Arab territories.

"What Camp David constituted is not simply an agreement," Maksoud said, "but an attempt to reduce Egypt's involvement and functional participation in the Arab national challenge, thereby setting in motion a process of disintegration."

Maksoud said the Arabs seek a genuine peace where all the states in the region are living equally.

"Arabs argue a great deal amongst themselves and sometimes this spills over into violent debates," he said. "But one thing is sure — we are all moderates if our rights are forthcoming — but we are all radicals if there is a level of hopelessness, which the international community allows to develop."

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