

Princeton panel focuses on trust and politics in Iranian nuclear research (Photos)

IRANIAN NUCLEAR PANEL AT PRINCETON | MARCH 8, 2012 | BY: DEENA WELDE

4 photos

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Giving Iran support to develop nuclear power comes down to a matter of politics and trust, according to a panel of speakers meeting at [Princeton University \(http://www.examiner.com/topic/princeton-university\)](http://www.examiner.com/topic/princeton-university) Tuesday (3/6/12).

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"The issue is not only legal or technical," said [Seyed Hossein Mousavian \(http://www.princeton.edu/event_rep/AmbMousavian02_24\)](http://www.princeton.edu/event_rep/AmbMousavian02_24), who served as Iran's nuclear negotiator from 2003 to 2005. "Iran is the most sanctioned country in the world," he said because no one trusts that it plans no harm.

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Mousavian, Frank von Hippel, and [R. Scott Kemp \(http://www.princeton.edu/sqs/faculty-staff/ronald-scott-](http://www.princeton.edu/sqs/faculty-staff/ronald-scott)

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[kemp/](#) shared their thoughts on "The Crisis Over Iran's Nuclear Program: Is a Diplomatic Solution Possible?" as part of the "Up to the Minute" ongoing lecture series sponsored by the [Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Policy](http://www.princeton.edu/). (<http://www.princeton.edu/>)

Mousavian, a research scholar at Princeton, chaired the Foreign Relations Committee of Iran's National Security Council (1997-2005) and was Iran's ambassador to Germany from 1990 to 1997. Von Hippel translated a book by Mousavian on centrifuges (integral to nuclear research) and is former U.S. assistant director for national security in the White House Office of Science and Technology. He is co-director of the Wilson School's Program on Science and Global Security and a professor of public and international affairs. Kemp is an expert on the technology and the history of nuclear proliferation, and was a lead developer of technical negotiation positions for resolving the nuclear crisis with Iran at the U.S. Department of State. His expertise includes remote sensing for detecting covert nuclear programs, and is also a research scholar at Princeton.

Iran's nuclear development program is not new, Mousavian told the audience, noting it began right after World War II and included negotiations with the U.S. Regime and administration changes, however, limited progress and the success of negotiations. When efforts to obtain needed resources kept failing, Iran began developing its own technology and resources, he said.

"Iran has built a reactor very much like the one India used to produce plutonium for its first nuclear weaponry," von Hippel noted, but "you have to separate out plutonium from uranium, and Iran does not have that (capacity) yet."

There are indications, however, that this situation could change in as little as six months, according to von Hippel, spurring Israel to discuss a military attack to destroy the facility, seeking U.S. support in the process.

President Obama this past week condemned Iran's research and expressed U.S. support for Israel. The U.S. is also imposing severe economic sanctions on Iran.

Iran, meanwhile, has threatened to close the [Strait of Hormuz](http://www.google.com) (<http://www.google.com>)

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Seyed Hossein Mousavian, a former Iranian lead negotiator in nuclear research, shares his perspectives during a panel discussion at Princeton University.

Photo credit: Deena Welde

[/search?q=strait+of+hormuz&hl=en&prmd=imvns&tbn=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=rRYT9-QD4Xj0QH2-9zKDw&sqi=2&ved=0CEwQsAQ&biw=1024&bih=620](#)) to oil shipping, generating market anxiety and significant increases in the price of gasoline. Although Iran is willing to resume negotiations on nuclear research, it does not want to have further research restricted, Mousavian said.

National pride in nuclear research gained greater public support last month, he said, after a nuclear scientist was assassinated by a passing bicycle rider who attached a bomb to his car.

With gas prices rising, the threat of restricted oil shipments, a presidential election, nuclear research moving rapidly forward, and Israel's need for security, resolution of some type is critical for all, the speakers said.

"It's getting late in the game," said von Hippel, noting that Iran could develop weapon-grade uranium within six months. "I do not think that diplomacy has been seriously tried yet, so today we are bringing this argument home."

Monday (3/5/12), [Catherine Ashton \(http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/ashton/about/cv/index_en.htm\)](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/ashton/about/cv/index_en.htm), the European Union's foreign affairs chief, renewed hope by agreeing to Iran's request last month that talks resume. Ashton represents the interests of the U.S., Russia, China, France, Britain and Germany in dealing with Iran.

"I actually believe we now have a better chance for talks and better, serious outcomes," Kemp said. "We have bank sanctions and oil sanctions coming up in July. The U.S. also feels that it must act on some front to prevent Israel from doing a military strike," Kemp added.

Audience members responded with skepticism and genuine interest about what form such efforts might take.

"I am just explaining the Iranian position," Mousavian noted. "Iran has cooperated with the U.S. We helped the U.S. in Afghanistan (after 9/11)."

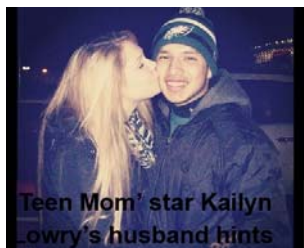
Iran is willing to have its research monitored, he noted, and even willing to limit production on certain types of equipment and resources, if it can be provided for them by other countries. It is also willing to restrict support for terrorist groups, but because national pride is now connected with research, and it is doubtful, under any type of leadership, that Iran would agree to restricting its desire to grow in this arena.

"There are religious issues, you're right," he told one audience member who commented on past conflicts, "but what is the alternative?"

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Deena Welde has a strong background in print journalism and has been expressing herself creatively in writing and photography for more than 20 years. She has been a reporter, bureau chief, weekly columnist, university adjunct, and special education teacher, and her photographs have been...