

The Mind-Set Matters:

Foreign Policy Is Shaped by Leaders and Events, Not Lobbies

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Articles & Testimony

In the July/August issue of Foreign Policy, Institute counselor Dennis Ross joined a roundtable of Middle East experts to discuss the controversy over John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt's The Israel Lobby. [Read \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/opedsPDFs/44a0332166015.pdf\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/opedsPDFs/44a0332166015.pdf) the full text of Ambassador Ross's article in PDF format.

John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt are troubled by the power and influence of the Israel lobby in Washington. The tone and argument of their essay in this magazine is more reasoned than their original working paper, but it suffers from the same flawed premise: U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is distorted by this seemingly all-powerful lobby.

According to Mearsheimer and Walt, the Israel lobby is governed by its concern for Israel, not America. They say it drove the United States into a disastrous war in Iraq and is now pushing for a similarly dangerous war against Iran. Mearsheimer and Walt discuss other maladies caused by the lobby, but it's their concern about U.S. policies toward Iraq that have principally motivated them to "expose" the lobby.

No one questions the propriety of debating our policy choices in Iraq, Iran, or anywhere else. But such debates should be based on reality. To say that the Israel lobby is largely responsible for the U.S. invasion of Iraq presumes that elected leaders, their worldviews, and extraordinary events such as those on Sept. 11, 2001, don't matter. . . .

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