

News

Professor Says American Publisher Turned Him Down

By ORI NIR

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John Mearsheimer says that the pro-Israel lobby is so powerful that he and co-author Stephen Walt would never have been able to place their report in a American-based scientific publication.

"I do not believe that we could have gotten it published in the United States," Mearsheimer told the Forward. He said that the paper was originally commissioned in the fall of 2002 by one of America's leading magazines, "but the publishers told us that it was virtually impossible to get the piece published in the United States."

Most scholars, policymakers and journalists know that "the whole subject of the Israel lobby and American foreign policy is a third-rail issue," he said. "Publishers understand that if they publish a piece like ours it would cause them all sorts of problems."

In their paper, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," the two professors accuse "the lobby" of "policing academia," intimidating scholars and stifling dissent on campuses, mainly through accusing critics of being antisemitic.

Mearsheimer said that he and Walt expected to be accused of being anti-Israel and antisemitic, so they made a point of stating in the study that the establishment of Israel was morally justified and that America's support of Israel, in principle, is justified as well. He said the paper takes issue with

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the extent of American support for Israel and the role that the pro-Israel lobby plays in pushing for such assistance.

Asked if the study may have been initially rejected by the American publisher because of poor research, Mearsheimer said that the "evidence in the piece is just the tip of the iceberg," and that the study's observations are supported by a large body of evidence. He did concede, however, that none of the evidence represents original documentation or is derived from independent interviews. All the additional supporting material — just like the references footnoted in the paper — is of a secondary nature: citations of books and newspaper articles, Mearsheimer said.

Mearsheimer dismissed accusations and insinuations that people or entities hostile to Israel encouraged him and Walt to write the paper or that they did so to appease Arab donors to their universities. "We did this independently," he said.

Mearsheimer said that he and his colleague do not intend to become "policy advocates" calling for diminishing the role of America's pro-Israel lobby in foreign policy.

"We decided to write a really serious piece on what we thought was a very important subject and put it in the public domain and hopefully that would open up the debate or the discussion in a civilized tone," he said. "But there was no intention to write a piece that was anti-Israel or that would in any way shape or form challenge the legitimacy of the State of Israel. That was not our intention."

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