

THE FOREIGN LOBBY INDUSTRY

Back when the Mearsheimer and Walt paper on AIPAC came out, I expressed my hope that they—or somebody—would catalog the way the foreign influence lobby works.

I'm disappointed, too, because I had hoped Mearsheimer and Walt would provide a sophisticated review of the way foreign lobbies influence our government. I made this point recently in response to the conflation of Bush's NSA-related attacks on journalists and the government's pursuit of leaks to journalists in the Franklin case. Our policy-making is unduly influenced by foreign powers. In addition to Israel, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Malaysia, Dubai, and Iraq (in the form of ex-pats) have recently exerted influence over issues that impact American citizens in ways most American citizens cannot. And I was hoping (in this case, not naively, I think) that Mearsheimer and Walt would catalog how this influence works in enough detail so we could begin to do something about it. They do catalog it, but their treatment is uneven and unconvincing.

Ken Silverstein just wrote the article that I had wished Mearsheimer and Walt had written (hat tip Laura Rozen). Silverstein posed as the representative of a business group representing Turkmenistan and got two DC lobbying firms—APCO and Cassidy & Associates, both of which have done similar campaigns for nasty dictators—to propose a campaign to boost Turkmenistan's image. He describes in detail what the firms proposed to do for their \$400,000 to \$600,000 annual fee. The proposals included:

- Meetings with key members of

Congress (APCO claimed to be able to get to to Harry Reid through Don Reigle and Tom Lantos through Don Bonker).

- Development of a coalition—potential business partners, think tank experts and academics—who could speak for Turkmen from an apparently independent perspective.
- Trips to Turkmenistan for Congressmen or their staffers, laundered through a think tank or university to accommodate post-Abramoff lobbying regulations.
- Trips to Turkmenistan for academics and journalists, again laundered through an organization to hide the intent to influence. Silverstein names Ariel Cohen of The Heritage Foundation, Marshall Goldman of Harvard, and Jim Hoagland of the Washington Post as some who have taken similar trips in the past.
- Op-eds written by friendly authors, perhaps think tank "experts."
- A forum at a think tank built around a visit by a Turkmen official. Silverstein names The Heritage Foundation, the

Center for Strategic & International Studies, and the Council on Foreign Relations as three think tanks that sponsor such fora. If such a forum produced a paper, the firms could get a friendly Congressman to read it into the Congressional Record.

- An event hosted by Roll Call or Economist magazine organized around some related theme (in the case of Turkmenistan, for example, energy security). Such an event might be keyed by an Administration official.
- Information shared from the State Department, NSC, and intelligence agencies.

Silverstein shows the cynicism of these lobbyists on several other points. He describes the team from Cassidy & Associates making a joke about Turkmenistan "shuffling" ministers—when in fact many of them have been jailed recently. Neither of the firms did any due diligence on Silverstein's fake Turkmen front group, suggesting these firms will work with anyone. And both promised to sign confidentiality agreements which would effectively hide Silverstein's ties to Turkmenistan.