Harry Truman is celebrated for recognizing the new state of Israel, but there is evidence he was never comfortable with the idea of a Jewish state, and would have preferred some sort of Arab-Jewish federation. Largely because of vigorous lobbying by American Zionists urging support for a Jewish state, Truman gave up on the idea of a federation, and the U.S. was the first country to recognize Israel. Judis argues that the campaign to persuade Truman anticipated today’s “Israel Lobby.”

John B. Judis is a Senior Editor at The New Republic. His new book, Genesis: Truman, American Jews, and the Origins of the Arab/Israeli Conflict, deals with the role played by the American Zionist leadership in influencing US policy towards the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine.

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