Bloomfield, Stewart kick off MIT program on Middle East

(Continued from page 1) Stewart was the “only one who could talk to both sides” and make peace in the conflict. Still, the 1990s were filled with “competition for influence in the Middle East,” Bloomfield explained. He said that after the 1990-91 Gulf War, the two superpowers began “uncompromising pattern of competition for influence in the Middle East.”

Recent UN operations in Iraq changed superpower relations, Bloomfield asserted. He said the United States and the USSR were “building hands and jumping over the cliff together.”

Of the three main factors in U.S.-Middle East relations, Bloomfield said that oil was the “least important until very recently,” largely because the United States did not need the oil. He humorously noted that former President Gerald R. Ford’s Project Independence “increased our need for oil.”

Currently, the United States is “almost dependent on Middle East oil,” Bloomfield said. He said that if Iraq had captured Kuwait and Slim Arab oil, “half the world’s oil would be vulnerable” to price increases.

Bloomfield ended his lecture by stating that the Middle East will become peaceful when a way is found to give the Jewish people a “homeland and legitimacy in the eyes of their neighbors.”

Stewart: America was “Founded on Ideals”

Stewart spoke on three aspects of American foreign policy: “the American public’s inattention to things foreign, the Congress’ inattention to things foreign, and the domestic political influence of various groups.”

The American public is largely uninformed about foreign policy, Stewart said. He said that United States is a nation “founded on ideals.”

In a given year, only nine percent of Americans travel to the Middle East, Stewart said. Furthermore, 10 percent of those who do have the country go to the Caribbean, Western Europe and Japan, which means the Middle East receives very few visitors.

Israel is the only Middle Eastern country the US government keeps travel records for, Stewart said. The records indicate that only two percent of Americans who travel each year go to Israel. Most Americans who follow the news are looking for “human interest stories,” Stewart felt. He argued that despite a Times-Mirror poll indicating that 87 percent of Americans are pro-Israel, the American public kept a close eye on the Middle East during Operation Desert Storm, the public was captivated by stories about individual soldiers and their families, not about foreign policy.

The American public’s inattention to foreign policy has forced Congress to consider making it “dangerous to be attentive to foreign policy,” Stewart asserted. As an example, Stewart discussed Senator Jesse A. Helms’ (R-NC) effort to cut funding for the Foreign Relations Committee instead of the Agriculture Committee and the effect it had on his most recent campaign for reelection.

Finally, Stewart discussed various Jewish and Arab organizations and lobbying in the United States. He said the Jewish organizations were far more successful because of their broad political backing.

Jews are usually politically liberal, which appeals to Democrats, Stewart said. He also said that many “evangelical Christians,” who are generally Republicans, support Jewish causes because they believe a Jewish homeland is necessary for the Second Coming of Jesus.

Arab organizations, on the other hand, are not very successful in the United States because there are only 3,000,000 Arabs in America, Stewart said. In addition, Arabs represent many “different cultures and religions,” making it difficult for them to come together, he said.

Stewart ended his speech by claiming that “most Americans dismiss foreign policy except in times of crisis.” He predicted that in a year, Americans “will be more attentive to the Middle East.”