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At The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a private think-tank where he worked from 1994 to 2001, Makovsky wrote widely on various Middle Eastern and Turkish topics. He also founded and directed The Washington Institute's Turkey Research Program.

At the State Department, where he worked from 1983 to 1994, Makovsky variously covered southern European affairs and Middle Eastern affairs for the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. He also served as Political Advisor to Operation Provide Comfort (1992) and as Special Advisor to the Special Middle East Coordinator (1993-94).