‘So long as mythologies can’t be cast aside . . . peace will remain forever on the horizon.’ —Dennis Ross, p. 6

Fellow Notes
An interview with Next Generation fellow Mehdi Khalaji, p. 3
Dear Trustees,

We are writing this letter on board our flight from Ben Guri-on Airport to New York. We just spent five intense days in Israel participating in the Herzliya Conference on Israeli national security, and in meetings with high-ranking Israeli officials and U.S. diplomats. Rob came to Israel after three remarkable days in Egypt as a guest of the U.S. State Department, delivering an unprecedented set of lectures and television interviews based on his new book, *Among the Righteous: Lost Stories of the Holocaust’s Long Reach into Arab Lands*. Here are a few impressions:

- In Israel, both its people and its leaders are consumed by two issues: the strategic challenge of Iran and the tragedy of internal politics. At Herzliya, two themes dominated discussion: on one hand, unanimity about the urgency of preventing Iran’s acquisition of nuclear-weapons capability, coupled with debate about how best to achieve that goal; on the other, the steady diet of senior Israeli leaders—the prime minister and defense minister, among others—hobbled by scandal, investigation, and suspicion. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert had to wait forty-five minutes to begin his keynote address as a defiant President Moshe Katsav, facing the likelihood of a rape indictment, defended himself before a jury of journalists. Instead of presenting his strategic overview before the Herzliya crowd, Olmert cut his remarks short but still made news by calling for Katsav’s resignation.

- The Palestinian issue ranks, at most, a distant third in priority here. At Herzliya, the topic was almost completely absent. Diplomats—American and Israeli—are engaged on the issue, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has promised to invest her personal time and energy in advancing talks between Olmert and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen). But there is little excitement in Israel and even less optimism for breakthrough. A year after Hamas’s victory in Palestinian elections, there are regrettably few signs that the party’s political support has slipped. On the practical level—in terms of money, training, and even weapons—Israel, the United States, and some Arab states have stepped up their assistance to Abu Mazen and his Fatah Party, in the belief that a showdown of sorts may be coming. But every step forward in the Fatah contest with Hamas seems to be matched by a step backward (for example, Abu Mazen’s trip to Damascus to try to forge a unity government with Hamas leader Khaled Mashal.) The truth is, no matter what diplomatic efforts are made between Israelis and Palestinians, none will matter unless the contest among Palestinians is settled in favor of leaders who believe in coexistence with Israel, not a generations-long struggle against Israel.

- One arena of potential opportunity—both for Israel and the United States—may be found in the growing antipathy toward Iran among the Sunni Arab

continued, p. 8
IA: Describe your childhood in Iran.

Khalaji: I was born in the city of Qom, which is the center of learning and worship in the Shiite world. I was five years old when the 1979 Islamic Revolution took place, and Qom was the center of attention at that time. The clerics of Qom, especially the revolutionary clerics, were quite respected in Iranian society. My father was an ayatollah, a revolutionary man, and my dream was to attend seminary. Students of my generation thought that by studying at Qom, they could become like Ayatollah Khomeini.

IA: What led you to look critically at Iran’s Islamic traditions?

Khalaji: I began to analyze the question of whether a good God would sanction the existence of evil in the world—a critical theological point upon which rests one of the major divisions between Sunni and Shia Islam. I also began to question the justice of the systematic discrimination against women in Islam. For example, in the nineteenth century, Hadi Sabzevari, a prominent Islamic philosopher, wrote that women were animals, and that God had made them beautiful only to make them attractive to men. This vision was disgusting to me. I couldn’t imagine that any rational conception of justice could exist within this framework.

IA: Could you ask these questions openly in seminary?

Khalaji: Those kinds of discussions were forbidden. But eventually, I began studying philosophy at the university in Tehran, which provided a degree of freedom for philosophical discourse. I say that philosophy was my “underground” education. I learned critical thinking from my teachers in Tehran, not Qom.

IA: What is your strongest critique of Islam today?

Khalaji: In Europe, modernity emerged through a critical approach that challenged traditional paradigms. But in the Islamic
world, modernity was a strange, imported idea. Muslims were introduced to it very late and mostly through military force in the context of colonialism. This fact may explain why vigorous debate between modernity and tradition did not take place in the Islamic world and why Muslims are still suffering from a lack of critical thought.

Instead, they live uncomfortably between tradition and reality. Their attempts to reconcile traditional faith with modernity have resulted in a dangerous mix of new technology and radical Islamic ideology. This is the tragedy of contemporary Islam, which has permitted a vacuum to be formed that can only express itself through tyranny, violence, and poverty.

IA: Do Iranian Shiite clerics nevertheless see themselves as leaders of the Muslim world?

Khalaji: When we use the term “Shia Crescent” to describe Shiias in Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran, we undermine our understanding of certain historical realities. Iranian Shiism is fundamentally different from Lebanese, Iraqi, or Gulf Shiism. In Iranian Shiism, the element of “Iranian-ness” is more important than the theological elements. Indeed, religion is not the key to understanding Iran today; we have to look at Iranian identity in an anthropological context that takes into account culture as well as religious belief and practice.

IA: Are Mahmoud Ahmadinezhad’s views on such things as the destruction of Israel shared by most Iranians?

Khalaji: What most Iranian people think and feel differs completely from the Iranian government’s rhetoric. Yes, the government is trying to ally Muslims in the region with money and political support for common anti-Israel causes. But the Iranian people hate to hear that their government is funding Hizballah or Hamas.

Iranians are the most pro-American people in the region.

Most national Iranians do not consider themselves part of the larger Islamic world; in fact, there is a deep, historical Iranian hostility toward Arabs. A sense of cultural superiority exists in Iran, where, for example, Iranians prefer to compare themselves to Europeans. That is why I always say that Israel is not an issue for the Iranian people. They don’t care about the existence of a Palestinian state, and they don’t feel any empathy with such concerns of the Arab world.

IA: How can the United States reach out to the Iranian people?

Khalaji: The United States needs to facilitate the visa process for Iranians. Of course, the regime is under sanction because of its behavior, but the people are not guilty. Iranians are the most pro-American people in the region. Washington does not take this fact into consideration. Before the Islamic Revolution, there were something like 200,000 Iranian students in the United States; now, the figure is more like 2,000.

If the United States could provide cultural exchange through visa provision, then students, professors, and scholars could escape the walls of Iranian propaganda. Instead, the U.S. government gives the Iranian regime a pretext to say, “You see, the United States is not only our enemy, it is the enemy of every single Iranian.”

IA: Short of visa facilitation, how can that message be countered?

Khalaji: You do not need a visa to communicate across borders. The internet, television, and radio are important avenues for reaching the Iranian people. America does not invest enough in this kind of public diplomacy. Currently, U.S.-government-sponsored media that targets Iran is viewed by most Iranians as simple propaganda.

IA: How can the United States reach out to the Iranian people?

Khalaji: The United States opposes the Iranian government because Iran supports terrorism. But the Iranian people are victims of their government, too. Iranians have suffered torture, imprisonment, and restrictions on freedom of expression now for three decades. And they expect the Western world to understand that.

IA: How can the United States reach out to the Iranian people?

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EVENTS AND PHOTO GALLERY

1 Michael and Louise Stein with Martin Gross at the Inaugural Fred S. Lafer Symposium, October 17, 2006, New York
2 Harvey Krueger and Fred S. Lafer, October 17, 2006, New York
4 Martin Kramer, November 29, 2006, Los Angeles
5 Barbi Weinberg, Institute founding president, November 29, 2006, Los Angeles
6 (l–r) Stewart and Suzanne Schweitzer with Sheila Hyman, November 29, 2006, Los Angeles
7 (l–r) Joshua Landes, Steven Glass, and Evan Silverman, October 17, 2006, New York
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UPCOMING EVENTS

February 26, 2007: Palm Beach Reception
Annual event takes place at the Kravis Center, 4:30 p.m. with Marvin Kalb and Robert Satloff. Special event in private home to follow.

Soref Symposium 2007
Our annual spring symposium will take place at the Ritz-Carlton, Washington, D.C., May 9–11, 2007. A special program for donors of $35,000 or more will be held during the day of May 9.

June 5, 2007: New York City Policy Forum
More details to follow.

Weinberg Founders Conference 2007
Our annual fall conference will take place at the Lansdowne Resort and Conference Center, Leesburg, VA, October 19–21, 2007.

Middle East Regional Study Tour for Trustees
November 25 – December 3, 2007
Planning has already begun for a major Institute study tour to key regional states. In addition to intensive meetings, briefings, and site visits throughout Israel and the Palestinian Authority (security permitting), the itinerary is likely to include a visit to Cairo, capital of a powerful and influential Arab state. Thirty years after Egyptian president Anwar Sadat’s historic journey to Jerusalem, the Institute will meet with Egyptian political, diplomatic, civil-society, and economic leaders at the highest levels. Full itinerary and per person cost to be announced.

Contributions using IRA rollover now possible!

Recently signed into law, the individual retirement account (IRA) rollover provision allows otherwise taxable distributions of up to $100,000 yearly from an IRA to be excluded from gross income when used to make charitable gifts.

To qualify, you must be at least age 70 1/2 and must direct your IRA manager to transfer funds directly to the charity. This incentive applies to contributions made in taxable years 2006 and 2007 only.

For more information, contact Laura Milstein at 202-452-0650, ext. 219.
Thanks to its reputation for solid, objective research, The Washington Institute is a highly respected and widely quoted source in the policymaking community and the media. Institute experts appear in the national and international media virtually 365 days a year.

A sample of recent appearances in the major media by TWI experts:

- **David Schenker** ABC News, 12/20/06
  Institute Arab politics expert David Schenker appeared on Nightline to discuss September’s attack on the U.S. embassy in Damascus.

- **Washington Institute Policy Forum** C-SPAN, 12/12/06
  Institute executive director Robert Satloff, counselor Dennis Ross, and Iran expert Mehdi Khalaji discussed the Iraq Study Group’s regional proposals at a Special Policy Forum, broadcast live on C-SPAN.

- **Simon Henderson** BBC, 12/30/06
  The BBC interviewed Institute Baker fellow Simon Henderson, a biographer of Saddam Hussein, about the former Iraqi dictator’s execution.

- **Emily Hunt** Fox News, 11/4/06
  Institute Soref fellow Emily Hunt appeared on Fox News to discuss the implications of U.S. elections on the war on terror.

- **Andrew Exum** Voice of America, 1/19/07
  Institute Soref fellow Andrew Exum discussed the new U.S. policy toward Iraq on Voice of America’s On the Line.

- **Robert Satloff** NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, 12/26/06
  Institute executive director Robert Satloff appeared on PBS’s NewsHour to discuss his new book, Among the Righteous.

- **David Makovsky** U.S. News & World Report, 12/13/06
  Institute peace process expert David Makovsky published a critique of former president Jimmy Carter’s new book.

- **Soner Cagaptay** NPR, 11/28/06
  Institute Turkey expert Soner Cagaptay was interviewed on NPR’s All Things Considered concerning secularism in Turkey on the occasion of the Pope’s visit.

- **Patrick Clawson** Fox News, 11/20/06
  Institute Iran expert Patrick Clawson appeared on Fox News to discuss Syrian and Iranian attempts to stabilize Iraq.

- **Michael Eisenstadt** CNN, 12/10/06
  Institute military and security expert Michael Eisenstadt appeared on CNN to discuss the publication of the Baker-Hamilton Iraq Study Group Report.

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**Don’t Play with Maps**

Dennis Ross
*New York Times*, 01/09/07

I became embroiled in a controversy with former president Jimmy Carter over the use of two maps in his recent book, *Palestine Peace Not Apartheid*. While some criticized what appeared to be the misappropriation of maps I had commissioned for my book, *The Missing Peace*, my concern was always different.

I was concerned less with where the maps had originally come from—Mr. Carter has said that he used an atlas that was published after my book appeared—and more with how they were labeled. To my mind, Mr. Carter’s presentation badly misrepresents the Middle East proposals advanced by President Bill Clinton in 2000, and in so doing undermines, in a small but important way, efforts to bring peace to the region.

In his book, Mr. Carter juxtaposes two maps labeled the “Palestinian Interpretation of Clinton’s Proposal 2000” and “Israeli Interpretation of Clinton’s Proposal 2000.”

The problem is that the “Palestinian interpretation” is actually taken from an Israeli map presented during the Camp David summit meeting in July 2000, while the “Israeli interpretation” is an approximation of what President Clinton subsequently proposed in December of that year. Without knowing this, the reader is left to conclude that the Clinton proposals must have been so ambiguous and unfair that Yasir Arafat, the Palestinian leader, was justified in rejecting them. But that is simply untrue.

In actuality, President Clinton offered two different proposals at two different times. In July, he offered a partial proposal on territory and control of Jerusalem. Five months later, at the request of Ehud Barak, the Israeli prime minister, and Mr. Arafat, Mr. Clinton presented a comprehensive proposal on borders, Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and security. The December
proposals became known as the Clinton ideas or parameters.

Put simply, the Clinton parameters would have produced an independent Palestinian state with 100 percent of Gaza, roughly 97 percent of the West Bank and an elevated train or highway to connect them. Jerusalem’s status would have been guided by the principle that what is currently Jewish will be Israeli and what is currently Arab will be Palestinian, meaning that Jewish Jerusalem—East and West—would be united, while Arab East Jerusalem would become the capital of the Palestinian state.

The Palestinian state would have been “nonmilitarized,” with internal security forces but no army and an international military presence led by the United States to prevent terrorist infiltration and smuggling. Palestinian refugees would have had the right of return to their state, but not to Israel, and a fund of $30 billion would have been created to compensate those refugees who chose not to exercise their right of return to the Palestinian state.

When I decided to write the story of what had happened in the negotiations, I commissioned maps to illustrate what the proposals would have meant for a prospective Palestinian state. If the Clinton proposals in December 2000 had been Israeli or Palestinian ideas and I was interpreting them, others could certainly question my interpretation. But they were American ideas, created at the request of the Palestinians and the Israelis, and I was the principal author of them. I know what they were and so do the parties.

It is certainly legitimate to debate whether President Clinton’s proposal could have settled the conflict. It is not legitimate, however, to rewrite history.

Mr. Arafat’s rejection of the Clinton ideas by suggesting they weren’t real or they were too vague or that Palestinians would have received far less than what had been advertised. Mr. Arafat himself tried to defend his rejection of the Clinton proposals by later saying he was not offered even 90 percent of the West Bank or any of East Jerusalem. But that was myth, not reality.

Why is it important to set the record straight? Nothing has done more to perpetuate the conflict between Arabs and Israelis than the mythologies on each side. The mythologies about who is responsible for the conflict (and about its core issues) have taken on a life of their own. They shape perception. They allow each side to blame the other while avoiding the need to face up to its own mistakes. So long as myths are perpetuated, no one will have to face reality.

It is certainly legitimate to debate whether Clinton’s proposals could have settled the conflict. It is not legitimate, however, to rewrite history. . . .

And yet peace can never be built on these myths. Instead it can come only once the two sides accept and adjust to reality. Perpetuating a myth about what was offered to justify the Arafat rejection serves neither Palestinian interests nor the cause of peace.

I would go a step further. If, as I believe, the Clinton ideas embody the basic trade-offs that will be required in any peace deal, it is essential to understand them for what they were and not to misrepresent them. This is especially true now that the Bush administration, for the first time, seems to be contemplating a serious effort to deal with the core issues of the conflict.

Of course, one might ask if trying to address the core issues is appropriate at a moment when Palestinians are locked in an internal stalemate and the Israeli public lacks confidence in its government. Can politically weak leaders make compromises on the issues that go to the heart of the conflict? Can the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, compromise on the right of return and tell his public that refugees will not go back to Israel? Can Israel’s prime minister, Ehud Olmert, tell his public that demography and practicality mean that the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem will have Palestinian and not Israeli sovereignty?

The basic trade-offs require meeting Israeli needs on security and refugees on the one hand and Palestinian needs on territory and a capital in Arab East Jerusalem on the other. But producing such trade-offs won’t simply come from calling for them. Instead, an environment must be created in which each side believes the other can act on peace and is willing to condition its public for the difficult compromises that will be necessary.

So long as mythologies can’t be cast aside, and so long as the trade-offs on the core issues can’t be embraced by Israelis or Palestinians, peace will remain forever on the horizon. If history tells us anything, it is that for peace-making to work, it must proceed on the basis of fact, not fiction.

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states of the Middle East. It is difficult to exaggerate the depth and breadth of this sentiment, which is certainly triggering all sorts of unusual behavior in Arab countries. In Cairo, for example, Rob was free to talk to many audiences about a normally taboo topic: the Holocaust in Arab lands and the importance of including Holocaust education in Arab educational curricula. He believes this unprecedented openness to candid discussion of the Holocaust was the direct result of a desire among Egyptian leadership to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the president of Iran. Similarly, in his own trip to Jordan, David Makovsky learned that Sunni Arabs—such as the mosque preachers in Amman—who were angry over the hanging of Saddam Hussein did not direct their outrage at Americans or Iraqis but at Iranians, whom they hold responsible for the execution. These cultural signposts have strategic implications. Indeed, one of the agenda items in our meetings with senior Israeli leaders during this trip was how to translate this common antipathy toward Iran into practical cooperation between Israel and Sunni Arab states. (Just after we returned to the United States, we had the opportunity to explore these possibilities during a ninety-minute private meeting in the Institute’s offices with outgoing Saudi ambassador Prince Turki al-Faisal.)

Whether the United States has the leadership and staying power to address both current strategic challenges (such as the Iraq war) and future existential challenges (such as the prospect of a nuclear Iran) will prove a critical factor. In Rob’s speech at Herzliya, he closed with a stark warning about the fragility of the U.S.-Israeli relationship. He noted that while popular support for Israel among the American public remains strong, there are worrying signs of erosion among the foreign policy elite that shapes and defines policy.

We know that many of you share this concern. For that reason, one of our top priorities in 2007 is to strengthen outreach to key constituencies in the policy and media communities with a special focus on the urgency of the Iran challenge. While we all hope that diplomacy can effectively address this difficult problem, it is essential to invest now in raising awareness, in the event that our national debate moves to a serious discussion of all possible ways to prevent Iran’s acquisition of nuclear-weapons capability.

In coming months, we look forward to talking with you further about how we are addressing this critical issue and reporting on our progress.

With best wishes for a healthy and peaceful 2007,

Howard P. Berkowitz, President

Robert Satloff, Executive Director