

March 8, 2011

To: Katonah Great Decisions Participants

From: Fred Piker – Discussion Leader

Re: Summary of 3/1/11 Meeting – “Failed States, U. S. National Security, and The Horn of Africa” – Topic Leader: Joe Adams

10:15: KICKOFF

Welcome and Introduction of Guests

Guests Dale Schlein and her husband, Dick Bailey, have decided to join our Chapter.

Forthcoming Winter/Spring 2011 Day Time Meeting Dates and Topics

NOTE: REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE - TOPIC LEADER/CO-LEADER ARE NEEDED FOR 5/10. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, PLEASE LET ME KNOW.

3/15 – Banks, Governments and Debt Crises – Topic Leader: Charlie Kimball

3/29 – Germany’s Ascendancy – Topic Leader: Tyler Beebe

4/12 – Rebuilding Haiti – Topic Leader: George Roy

4/26 - The Caucasus – Topic Leader: Dick TenDyke

5/10 – Making Sense of Multilateralism

Great Decisions 2012 Topic Preferences

Participants were asked to indicate via a FPA schedule their topic preferences for the 2012 FPA Great Decisions Briefing Book. 17 participants completed the schedule and submitted them to yours truly. I will aggregate the preferences, transmit them to the FPA, and subsequently share the results with Katonah Chapter participants.

Feedback re Forthcoming FPA 3/1 & 3/3 Programs

No Katonah participants plan to attend the programs

Forthcoming KVL Foreign Policy Evening Forums

April 6 – Lt. Colonel David Jones from West Point

May 4 – Saarwar Kashmeri – Author of “NATO 2.0 – Delete or Reboot?”

Further details to follow

3/6 KVL Korean Culture Day

Participants were reminded re the forthcoming program

GROUP DISCUSSION

*CHAPTER MOTTO - “DISCUSSIONS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED WITHOUT
FONDNESS FOR DISPUTE OR DESIRE FOR VICTORY” – BEN FRANKLIN*

Pre-Meeting Preparation

Readings and References

Priority

2011 FPA Briefing Book – Topic #3 – “The Horn of Africa”

Summary of February 8, 2011 Chapter discussion – “Reshaping U. S. National Security” (**Access via HYPERLINK "http://www.bedfordny.com" www.bedfordny.com – then go to “Katonah Great Decisions”**)

HYPERLINK "http://www.fpa.org" www.fpa.org – go to “Resource Library” – then to “Horn of Africa”, AND “Africa African Union”, AND also individual countries: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan, including “U. S. State Department Background Notes” re each country

www.CIAworldfactbook.com : ditto for aforementioned countries

Supplementary

Recent media reporting re Libya, Bahrain, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Iran, and Yemen uprisings and related articles re further potential impact on other North African and Middle

Eastern countries

Topic Introduction

Drawing on his extensive experience of living and working on the African continent, including “The Horn of Africa”, Joe provided numerous insights and observations beyond the FPA Briefing Book reading. Subsequently, we watched the FPA DVD segment re the 3/1 topic. Following the DVD, we turned to the discussion questions.

Preliminary Discussion Questions

- 1-Why should/does the international community care about the Horn of Africa region? What political, economic and humanitarian interests play a role in the continued efforts to resolve the region’s crisis?
- 2-What lessons can be learned from various operations in the Horn of Africa? What have been the objectives of the international community, and separately the U. S., in the region – and how effective/successful have the strategies employed been to achieve those objectives?
- 3-What SHOULD BE the objectives of the international community in the region and what strategies should be employed? Ditto for the U. S.? Should the international community/U. S. just throw its hands and walk away?
- 4-What opportunities and dangers are posed in the recent vote by South Sudan to separate from Sudan and become an independent state?
- 5-What parallels and/or lessons can be drawn between the history/situation in the Horn of Africa and the current dramatic developments in North Africa and the Middle East? Is there potential for the current North Africa/Middle East uprisings to spread/impact on the Horn of Africa? If so, why and how?
- 6-In light of the very dramatic developments in the region as a whole, is it time for a major reassessment of U. S. foreign policy?

Participant Observations

In addition to discussion of the Preliminary Discussion Questions, participants queried Joe on the numerous political, economic, human rights, and military issues associated with The Horn of Africa and the current Arab/Middle East uprisings. Principal issues raised included:

- The U. N. and U. S. diplomatic and/or military role re the current Libyan crisis
- Tradeoffs associated with closing down or retention of the U. S. base in Djibouti,

(including its relationship to the U. S. fleet based in Manama) and the extensive U. S. military presence around the world

-Whether many African countries can govern themselves due to their tribal nature, the arbitrary drawing of many African country boundaries by the former colonial powers, and the general absence of established political and education infrastructure

-The changing geopolitical role of the U. S. (e. g. - “rise of the rest” – Fareed Zakaria in his recent book, “The Post American World”), U. S. inability to continue as the world’s policeman, need to get other countries and institutions to share the policeman burden (rather than “go it alone”), and its concurrent need to address internal priorities – infrastructure, education, debt, size of the defense budget

-Increasing Chinese involvement and ownership on the African continent – purchase for its own country needs of agricultural land, oil reserves, and other natural resources

-Need for the U. S. to reassess its entire Middle East/African foreign policy in response to Horn of Africa and related Arab/Middle East issues (failed states - lack of functioning Somalia government and piracy, poverty, high unemployment, continuing Israel/Palestinian stalemate, autocratic and dictatorial leaders, general lack of educational infrastructure to prepare citizens for the 21st century etc.)

-Without major refurbishment/reorganization, whether the U. N. can function effectively

-Prior U. S. missteps in Horn of Africa intervention (Somalia – Ethiopia)

-Ineffectiveness of U. S. backed governments in Yemen and Somalia

-To ensure the flow of oil and the sale of U. S. arms, the U. S. and the West continue to turn a blind eye toward repression in many African/Middle East countries

-Potential for further uprisings and/or democratic reform in the Africa/Middle East regions

-Leadership succession in the event of Qaddafi’s departure

-The current confrontation between Africa/Middle Eastern autocratic/dictatorial style of governing and a young populace seeking greater rights and an improved quality of life

Meeting Assessment/Feedback

The topical nature of the subject combined with Joe’s insights and observations led to continuation of the Group Discussion during the Optional Current Events module.

12:30 – ADJOURNMENT

Hope you can join us on 3/15.

Best regards,

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