

April 6, 2012

To: Katonah Great Decisions Participants

From: Fred Piker – Discussion Leader

Re: Summary of 4/3/12 Meeting – “Promoting Democracy: Foreign Policy Imperative?” – Topic Leader; Harry Stanton

**10:15: KICKOFF**

Welcome and Introduction of Guests & New Chapter Members

A special welcome to guests Dick Korte, Bob Krasnow, and to Gerry Golub – all from the Chappaqua Great Decisions Chapter. Additionally, Janeen Sudaka-Karlsson and Gerry Golub have decided to become regulars at the Katonah Chapter.

Future 2012 Day Time Meeting Dates

4/17, 5/1, 5/15

Future Schedule of 2012 Spring Daytime Meeting Topics

4/17 – “Exit From Afghanistan & Iraq: Right Time, Right Pace?” - Co-Topic Leader – Tyler Beebe

5/1 – “Middle East Realignment: The Arab Upheaval” – Co-Topic Leaders: Mike Kornfield & George Roy

5/15 – “Mexico & Its Relationships with U. S. and Central America” – Topic Leaders: Joe Adams and Maureen/John Carpenter

Topics Suggested So Far For September 2012-Mid January 2013

(By 5/15 dates and topics will be scheduled. Members’ suggestions are welcomed)

Turkey  
Immigration  
Sovereign Debt/Foreign Policy Issues  
Human Rights  
Role of Foreign Policy  
Climate Change/Foreign Policy Implications  
Future of the Euro

U. S. Military Power  
Islam  
Aging & Population  
Brazil  
Turkey  
Russia & Putin  
North Korea  
India  
Iran  
Potential Change in China Arising from New Leadership  
Book Review-“Strategic Decisions”-Author-Zbigniew Brzezinski

Feedback re the 3/21 Interfaith Dialogue at the Bedford Presbyterian Church

Mike Kornfield reported on the presentation/discussion led by the NYC based Consul General of Israel

KVL Matters

Participants were asked to complete a special KVL survey focusing on possible additional services for those 55 and older. Additionally, attention was called to a 4/18 KVL evening program – “Election 2012: Making Sense of the Presidential Politics” – to be led by Dr. John Barry Kotch. **(Details to follow in a subsequent e-mail).**

Issues for Current Events Module

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None were suggested

**GROUP DISCUSSION**

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

**Readings & References - Pre-Meeting Preparation**

**To ensure an informed discussion, participants are encouraged to review the  
“Priority” readings and time permitting, “Supplementary” readings as well.**

**Priority**

FPA 2012 Briefing Book-“Promoting Democracy: Foreign Policy Imperative”

FPA Website – [www.fpa.org](http://www.fpa.org) – go to “Great Decisions” – then to “Resource Library” – then to “promoting democracy” – you will find several readings

## **Supplementary**

FPA 2012 Briefing Book - page 32

“The Post American World” – Author: Fareed Zakaria

Thomas Carothers – “Think Again: Arab Democracy” – “Foreign Policy” – 3/10/11 – (Free Online)

Economist Intelligence Unit/The Economist Magazine – “Democracy Index 2011” – The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2011 (Free Online)

Huntington, Samuel – “The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century” – University of Oklahoma Press, 1991

Hamid, Shadi & Brooke, Steven – “Promoting Democracy to Stop Terror, Revisited” – (Policy Review #159) - Hoover Institution – Stanford University, 2010 (Free Online)

Kipling, Rudyard – “The White Man’s Burden: Kipling’s Hymn to U. S. Imperialism” – (Free Online)

Liptik, Adam – “We The People Loses Appeal With People Around the World” – NYT - 2/6/10 (Free Online)

Lagon, Mark P. – “Promoting Democracy: The Whys and Hows for the United States and the International Community” – Council on Foreign Relations – 2/2011 – (Free Online)

Sharansky, Natan; Dermer, Ron – “The Case for Democracy: The Power to Overcome Tyranny and Terror” – Balfour Books – 2006

## **Topic Introduction**

Initially Harry provided an overview on the history and evolution of democracy within the U. S. and the shift beginning around the early 1900’s toward promoting democracy abroad. His overview included commentary on Promotion vs Export, Characteristics of Democracy, Related Concepts, the Historical Environment, Policy Conflicts, New Developments, and Tools Available. Subsequently we viewed the related FPA DVD segment. Following the viewing, we turned to the discussion questions listed below. Harry’s introductory comments, together with the DVD, and the discussion questions were directed toward the central question, “What is the U. S. role and responsibility to

promote democracy throughout the world?” (Note – an outline of Harry’s Topic Introduction will follow in a separate transmission)

### **Preliminary Discussion Questions**

**LISTED BELOW ARE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HARRY. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT SOME OVERLAP WITH THE FPA QUESTIONS LISTED ON PAGE 32 OF THE 2012 FPA BRIEFING BOOK**

1 – If you were filling in for the Secretary of State this morning in the Oval Office, how would you advise the President when he asks for guidance on a U. S. strategy to deal with:

The violent reaction of the Assad regime in SYRIA to popular agitation for greater Human Rights reform?

The continuing lack of Democratic and Human Rights Reforms in SAUDI ARABIA and the House of Saud’s continuing financial support for undemocratic regimes in the region?

NORTH KOREA’S resistance to internal reform and its continued bellicose expressions toward its South Korean neighbor ?

EGYPT’S apparent movement to a Muslim Brotherhood led government?

LIBYA’S fledging efforts to assemble a government from the ashes of the Khadafi Regime?

2 - Should new democracies allow foreign NGO’s to play active roles in their internal politics? Should the U. S?

3 – What is the likelihood that democratic reforms will take hold in Iraq and Afghanistan once U. S. military forces are withdrawn?

4 – Is it significant that new democracies seem to favor Parliamentary Systems rather than a division of power as reflected in the U S. Constitution?

5 – Is the U. S. reliance on a 225 year old written constitution a help or a hindrance in responding to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

### **Participant Observations**

Were the U. S. to support the Syrian opposition, we might be going down a slippery slope which could lead to military intervention. Question – how do we draw the line?

If the U. S. were to support the Syrian opposition, it should only be done on a multilateral basis (together with the U N, and/or countries neighboring to Syria, etc.)

In contrast with the Libyan intervention, when going into Syria the U. S. and other organizations/countries would face: (1) A well funded and powerful military; (2) Syria represents a global “fault line” (Note – the long relationship between Syria and Russia – in particular between Russia and the Assad family – which might explain some of the Russian opposition at the U. N. and the reluctance of western nations to intervene); and (3) Syria has some democratic governing features

Prior to providing possible support to Syria or any of the aforementioned countries, the U. S. must first define its objectives

Re the current status in Egypt and Libya, the U. S. should not promote democracy; rather “let the winds take the movement wherever it goes”

Democracy can only succeed in a country if it has an educated and informed population. With only a 30% literacy rate in Egypt, democracy will be a tough sell

Democracy is not a goal; rather a “method.” Also, adoption of democracy indicates the populace perceives “hope” and the opportunity to achieve one’s aspirations; this is the central question for the middle class. Absence of “hope” and perceived opportunities fuel uprisings

To successfully promote democracy, the U. S. needs a strong functioning democracy

A principal objective of democracy is to create a stable society which will lead to opportunity for the middle class

Can we or should we trade in our democratic rights for economic success?

Maintaining control of its global economic empire underlies U. S. promotion of democracy abroad

Rather than emanating from our own creation or efforts, the wealth of the U. S. is now based on borrowed money

Although the President has said sometimes U. S. interests trump human rights issues in a particular country and as a result the U. S. might decline pursuing democratic reforms in

that country, we cannot and should not try to “walk and chew gum at the same time”; rather we should adhere to our principles

A new organization has emerged (reference a recent Bill Moyers program) – called “99% Spring.” It is an offshoot/byproduct of “Occupy Wall Street.” The principal objective of the new organization is to help restore equality

A potential end scenario of U. S. democratic promotion is the U. S. might be forced to relinquish its veto power in the U. N. – do we want to do this?

U. S. promotion of democracy should be “nuanced” – a blend of the realistic and idealistic democratic positions. The U. S. populace does not fully understand this.

The U. S. is not a perfect democracy. We need to be cognizant of how the world perceives us.

Post WWII German democracy succeeded because: (1) The “realists” gave us food; and (2) The “idealists” helped us write our constitution. To successfully promote democratic reform, both ideologies should be incorporated in the effort

### **OPTIONAL CURRENT EVENTS MODULE**

Absent specific “hot button issues,” discussion continued re the 4/3 topic.

### **12:30 P. M. – ADJOURNMENT OF OPTIONAL MODULE**

Hope you can join us on 4/17.

Best regards,