

May 3, 2012

To: Katonah Great Decisions Participants

From: Fred Piker – Discussion Leader

Re: Summary of 5/1/12 Meeting – “Middle East Realignment: The Arab Upheaval” – Topic Leaders: Mike Kornfield & George Roy

**10:15: KICKOFF**

Welcome and Introduction of Guests & New Chapter Members

Welcome to guest Peter Kuniholm. Also, Bob Krasnow and Richard Korte, guests at recent meetings, have decided to join our Chapter.

Future 2012 and Early 2013 Day Time Meeting Dates

5/15, **AND** 9/18, 10/2, 11/6, 12/4, and 1/8/13

Future Schedule of 2012/13 Daytime Meeting Topics

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

9/18 – Panel Discussion – “The Role of Foreign Policy” – Panelists: Fred Piker & Other Chapter Colleagues

10/2 – Discussion re “Strategic Vision” (Zbigniew Brzezinski) & “The World America Made” (Robert Kagan) – Topic Leaders: Tyler Beebe & Howard Jacobs

11/6 – “China and Its New Leadership” – Topic Leader: Charlie Kimball

12/4 – “Turkey” – Topic Leader: TBA

1/8/13 – “Climate Change” – Topic Leader: Ken Krieger

Backup Topics – “Impacts of an Aging Population” and “Impacts of New Communications Media”

4/24 Planning Committee Report-Sept 2012-Mid Jan 2013 Program-Harry Stanton

Harry distributed and led a brief discussion re the 4/24 Planning Committee Report – copy of which is included with this transmission.

#### 5/15 Year End Luncheon at La Fontane Restaurant

Participants endorsed holding a “social” lunch at La Fontane Restaurant immediately following the 5/15 meeting. Details will follow. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Issues for Current Events Module

See last paragraph of this summary

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### **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 – “Middle East Realignment: The Arab Upheaval”

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

##### **Supplementary**

FPA 2012 Briefing Book – page 18

“Hero: The Life and Legend of Lawrence of Arabia” – Author: Michael Korda

“Liberation Square: Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation” – Author: Ashraf Khalil

“The World America Made” – Author: Robert Kagan

“The Post American World – Author: Fareed Zakaria

“Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power” – Author: Zbigniew Brzezinski

“Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Mission to Promote Peace ... One School at a Time” – Author: Greg Mortenson & David Oliver Relin

“Stones into Schools: Promoting Peace with Books, Not Bombs, in Afghanistan and Pakistan” – Author: Greg Mortenson

WSJ – 2/6/12 – “The Lesson of the Arab Spring”

The Economist – 2/18/12 – “The Arab Spring: A Long March”

The Economist – 2/25/12 – “Egypt’s Revolution: The Next Draft”

WSJ – 3/7/12 – “America Is Stuck With the Middle East”

### **Topic Introduction**

Initially Mike and George provided a brief history of European imperialism in the Middle East, the fall of the Ottoman empire , and the evolution of the Arab Spring, with primary emphasis on Egypt. Subsequently, they discussed U. S. options, the evolution of events over the last several months, and the prospects for stable governments in the region. Following viewing of the related FPA DVD segment, they led discussion re the questions listed below. **(Note – an electronic copy of Mike’s introductory remarks are included with this transmission. George’s notes follow in a separate transmission).**

### **Preliminary Discussion Questions**

**LISTED BELOW ARE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MIKE AND GEORGE. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT SOME OVERLAP WITH THE FPA QUESTIONS LISTED ON PAGE 18 OF THE 2012 FPA BRIEFING BOOK**

1 – In addition to maintaining the flow of oil, what are the overriding U. S. interests in the Middle East?

2-How should the U. S. respond to revolutionary and/or protest movements in Syria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen? What can the U. S. do to prod the new governments in Tunisia and Egypt toward a more favorable direction for our interests?

3-What should be the U. S. role in mediating the internal disputes in Libya and encouraging the development of representative government and the rule of law in Libya?

4-The removal of authoritarian rulers has allowed Islamist organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, to enjoy a resurgence. Are these groups compatible with U. S. interests in the region? What would it mean for the U. S. if Islamist governments came to power? What should govern U. S. relations with these new regimes?

5-How do the events of the Arab Spring relate to U. S. commitments to human rights, women's rights, and democratic values throughout the Middle East?

### **Participant Observations**

-Principal U. S. interests in the Middle East include: (1) Maintaining stability to keep the world wide economic engine going (a key to the latter is maintaining oil price stability) – it was noted that the U. S. currently imports 10% of its oil from the Middle East; and (2) Precluding the region from turning toward radical extremism (shifting the “power balance”) – and potentially unleashing Pakistan's and/or Iran's nuclear capability

-Anti-Americanism is prevalent in the Middle East – much of it related to our military incursions over the last few years – but also by the centuries' old conflict between Islam and Christianity – the fact that the U. S. propped up autocratic rulers for several years (Egypt- Saudi Arabia, etc.) is also a major contributing factor

-Much of the U. S. challenge in the Middle East relates to our lack of understanding re the multiple and diverse cultures, including differences between how our country, economic system, and business are run – e. g. - U. S. contract law vs. carrying on business primarily based on personal relationships and “backsheesh;” education/training – teaching of the Koran vs. “skills building”; transportation/infrastructure; the relationship of credit availability to help drive business vs. Islamic Law which precludes charging of interest (allowance is made, though, for charging of “fees”); the need to establish a consumer market for the purchase of goods; top down governmental control over economic growth/development, including the free movement of capital; an acceptable level of unemployment; and the widespread absence of “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” (Max Weber)

-There are parallels between the widespread ME top down control over economic policy/development and that followed in the PRC – raising the question whether over the long haul the Chinese model is sustainable

-Some participants disagreed with a comment made by one of the resource people in the DVD segment – to the effect that –“to cope with the ME unrest/uprisings, the U. S. needs a grand strategy covering all ME countries.” Their position is since circumstances can vary by country, the U. S. approach/response should also vary.

**12:00 P. M-ADJOURNMENT & COMMENCEMENT OF OPTIONAL CURRENT EVENTS MODULE**

We briefly discussed: (1) The easing as reported in the media of the likelihood of a U. S. and/or Israeli pre-emptive strike on Iran; and (2) Human rights/foreign policy issues associated with the blind PRC lawyer/dissident escaping from house detention and taking refuge in the PRC U. S. Embassy.

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

Hope you can join us on 5/15. Best regards,