

Part 1 - Follow-up on Houston Connection

Written by Imad Abdullah

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Greetings Peter and welcome to our continuous friendships and healthy dialogues. So far the economy has done better in Houston than many other parts and it has been reasonable. The main projects are by governmental entities and medical institutions, and the private sector is still awaiting the availability of lending. Texas on the overall has done quite well.

I sent a note earlier to Amin on the following as we witness the events in Egypt, which were moving quite fast and conditions were changing daily. There is clarity now after the departure of Mubarak for Egypt, and we're all naturally connected to its culture and history.

The reaction of an autocratic government to the uprising were typical: create pandemonium by removing the police to force the people to seek the government protection, try by force to disperse with tear gas, try to intimidate with camels and horses (this one gets an A+ for stupid ingenuity), and then dig-in in hopes of outlasting the uprising. Mubarak comes from the same school of General Franco, Mussolini, Stalin, and their period leaders, where around 1935 Spain lost 5 million during its revolution. One remembers vividly the early 1970's with the riots in Athens and Spain, and the 1968 student demonstrations in Paris.

Looking ahead, there seems to be a strong revival of "Arabism" which the imperial powers tried to dismantle over the years. The Arabic networks on TV spanning the Arab World built the common bond of Arab culture among all Arabs, and were quite instrumental in the success in Tunis and Egypt. The shared destiny is becoming a rallying point to get the Arabs more closer together.

In perspective, the concept of unleashing Democracy that president Bush touted may result in a retrenchment from the West and closer collaboration between Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Henry Kissinger may be scratching his head, and Israel is having to reassess how long it will withhold peace, and will be blaming Obama for the loss of what it considered was a friendly axis. We'll be watching the US elections of 2012 closely, and already the voices here are coming out.

The next few months will be quite interesting. We are fortunate to have lived and witnessed so much history in our region and to be connected to it through the similar times we lived growing in Damascus. Our lives have been quite enriched by all of it, and by having among us people like you who lived in the Middle East and understand the grand significance, and the historical moment that bonds a population together in such a momentous fashion.

The revolution in Egypt stayed peaceful till the end, and that is a phenomenal feat. I am sure Mahatma Ghandi is watching from high above and savoring the moment as we all are.

All the best.

Imad F. Abdullah, AIA