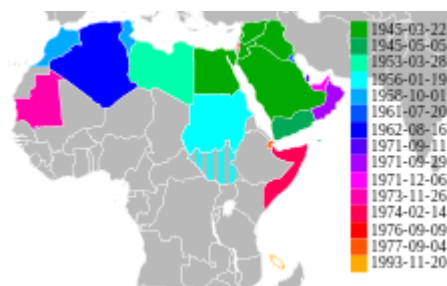


"The Impossible Peace - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(8)

Chapter 1 Wave of nationalism and socialism (1945-1956)

2. Formation of the Arab League

World War II spanned 6 years from German invasion to Poland in 1939 and to surrender of Japan in 1945. The main battlefield was throughout Europe, Southeast Asia, Far East and the Pacific Ocean. The Middle East was escaped from war. In those days the Middle Eastern countries did not belong either to the Allied Forces nor the Triple Alliance. Except Iraq and Iran which participated as coalition forces in 1943, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other countries participated in 1945, when the result of the war almost apparent. The reason why the Middle East was out of the battlefield during the World War II was that Germany faced its enemies on both sides - Britain, the United States and France in Western Europe, and Soviet in Eastern Europe. So Germany could not spare its force to the Middle East.



In March 1945, just before the end of the war, the Arab world's first international organization "Arab League" was formed. The Arab League was originally established with 7 countries of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen (then Northern Yemen) and Saudi Arabia. They have signed the Alexandria Protocol. The Arab League was not born with the voluntary intention of the Arab countries. It was the British strategy that had a strong influence in

this area. To prevent Arab countries from participating in German side during the war, Anthony Eden, then Secretary State for War of UK suggested Arab countries to form the Arab League. The headquarters of the Arab League was placed in Cairo, Egypt, and the secretary general was appointed Egyptian diplomat. Except one-time accident when Egypt made a peace treaty by oneself with Israel in 1979 and was expelled from the League. Egypt rejoined the League in 1987. The number of Arab League member is now 21 countries and Palestine.

The circumstances of the Middle Eastern countries in the first year of post-war were as follows. As for Turkey, Iran and Egypt, three major powers in the Middle East, Turkey has transformed itself into a republic covering Asia Minor and Istanbul after the collapse of Ottoman Empire. Turkey built secularistic state like modern Western Europe nations instead of caliphate state. In Iran, Reza Shah who was a General of the Persian Cossack Brigade took over the power by the coup d'etat in 1921. He founded the Pahlavi dynasty. During postwar era, Iran has been a pro-Western dictatorship monarchy state until 1979. Egypt, one of the three big countries in the Middle East, survived World War II as Muhammad Ali Dynasty. Despite that the dynasty was half-independent state from the Ottoman Empire, UK maintained strong influence. Among other small and medium-sized countries, Iraq, Jordan and Palestine were mandated by UK, and Syria and Lebanon were under the mandate of France.

Saudi Arabia is the only one exception that has escaped the rule of Britain and France. The country established "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" in 1932, and kept independence controlling the majority of the Arabian Peninsula. The reason why the country was able to maintain independence is because the UK and France did not emphasize the strategic value of the Arabian Peninsula.

It was the United States who was aware of the value of Saudi Arabia. The US oil company found a big oil field in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia in 1941 just when the World War II began. The United States was too wise to colonize Saudi Arabia. The United States correctly recognized the future value of oil, and aimed to secure Saudi Arabian crude oil. Just before the end of the World War II, President Roosevelt postponed his return to US after the Yalta meeting and met with King Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia on the ship of the Suez Canal. This fact was a clear evidence that US put weight on Saudi Arabia. (See Prologue 1 "Suez Canal Great-Bitter Lake Meeting")

(To be continued ----)

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