

The Impossible Peace - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East (18)

[\(Japanese Version\)](#)

[\(Arabic Version\)](#)

Chapter 2 Global wave – The end of colonial era and the emerging two super powers

2-4(18) The Arab world repeats unity and divorce

After World War II, many nations in Asia, the Middle East and Africa achieved the independence. They became free from European imperialism. The reasons of independence were different each other depend on ethnicity, religion, history and so on. But the biggest factor was ethnicity.

Pan - Arabism raised by the Baath Party in Syria was a movement aimed at solidarity of Arab peoples. Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt was a man who was chasing it desperately. In the First Arab Israeli War in 1948, Egypt could not defeat Israel. But when the 1st Asian African Conference (called as Bandung Conference) was held in 1955, Egypt established the prestige in the Arab region as the flagship of non-allied countries. In Suez War (Second Middle East War) in 1956, Nasser lost the war militarily due to the occupation of the Sinai Peninsula by Israel. But politically speaking, he won the war because the world recognized the nationalization of Suez Canal by Egypt. The result of the war was neither victory nor defeat.

Through these experiences, Nasser became confident that the overwhelming alliance of the Arab peoples could be the only way to defeat imminent enemy Israel, and to let the world recognize the unified power of Arabs. Nasser had a thought that the heyday of Arab and Islam started in the era of Caliphate by Prophet Muhammad in Makkah in the 7th century, and the Umayya dynasty of Damascus and the Abbasid dynasty of Baghdad created the great heritage of Arab and Islam. In the era of Umayya dynasty they conquered the Iberian Peninsula in the Western Europe. In the Abbasid era their territory was extended to the east of India. At that time Arab Islamic world was more superior to European Christian world not only in academic field but also in culture. Such accomplishment was attributable to the unity between the ethnicity of Arabs and the belief of Islam.

It could be said that Nasser aimed for an alliance of Arab peoples to regain the glory of old days. In history, it was common that the new rulers used to whisper to the people the banner of conquest: We are the same ethnic group!. There was one example in prewar Japan in the Far East. Japan vocalized the concept of "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere by Asian Peoples". Nasser stirred Arab ethnic consciousness or Islamic belief in the speech more and more. Citizens dreamed with his word.



Nasser offered Syria a coalition state with Egypt. There was no objection in Syria where the Baath party with Arab nationalism dominated. In February 1958, two countries established the United Arab Republic. The new state had the strategic idea to attack Israel from both sides. Arab Federation between Kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq was also launched in May of the same year just three months later as if not to miss the chance.

Both Jordan and Iraq were the kingdoms sharing the same ethnicity and religion, whose descendants were the Hassim family linked to the Prophet Muhammad. But Arab Federation was different from the United Arab Republic by Egypt and Syria. United Arab Republic aimed for solid political integration while Arab Federation had a loose unity. The purpose of Iraq and Jordan was to defend the monarch system itself.

But neither the United Arab Republic nor the Arab Federation lasted long. A military coup occurred in Iraq just two months after the formation of the Arab Federation, and all of the Iraqi royal family were killed. The Arab Federation collapsed so quickly. Regarding the United Arab Republic, the militia of Syria army repulsed against Nasser's attempt to integrate two countries forcefully. The coup d'etat was taken place by the Syrian army officers in September 1961. The coalition between Egypt and Syria was resolved.

On the other hand, the friendship between Iraq and Syria had been deepened by the Baath Party which held Pan Arabism doctrine. At the era of Ottoman Empire, the Mediterranean East Coast region including two countries was called Levant as one solid region. But during the World War I, Syria and Iraq were divided by France and the UK according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Historically Syria and Iraq had been looking for the re-unification. In 1963 the Iraq-Syrian unity was almost achieved but the plan again failed. It was interested in to point out that a terrorist group ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) so-called IS (Islamic State) or Daesh has controlled the region for a while in 2010s. Islamic State insisted that Syria and northern Iraq was the integral part of old Levant.

(To be continued ----)

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