The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East(27)

(Japanese Version)
(Arabic Version)

Chapter 3: The grace of Allah – Oil boom

3-5(27)　Yom Kippur War and Oil shock(1) Anwar Sadat: Capable Man

Gamal Abdel Nasser was defeated by Israel in Six-Day War in 1967. He passed away by heart attack as incumbent Egyptian President in 1970. Anwar Sadat, the vice president, was the successor. Sadat was an ally of Nasser as a member of the Association of Free Officers who had overthrown King Faruq I. Nasser had been honored by Egyptian people as a charismatic leader. He was also a hero in the Arab world. In contrast Sadat was always behind Nasser. People looked down Sadat that he succeeded the presidency by chance. He was presumed as a short relief until someone else would overtake his post. But it became clear shortly that he was an excellent military strategist. He proved himself to be a politician with vision. He was a realist.

Arab world lost common goals after the Six-Day War. They devoted themselves in internal conflicts. Immediately after the war, communist regime was established in Southern Yemen supported by USSR in November 1967. The bloodless coup followed in Iraq in 1968. In Libya, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi overthrew the Idris dynasty and grabbed the power in 1969. In September 1970, Jordanian government and the PLO fought each other fiercely and the PLO was deported to Beirut in Lebanon (so-called Black September). In Syria coup d'etat took place and Fafiz al-Assad was appointed as president in January, 1971.

Despite the chaos in Arab world, President Sadat looked for the chance of counterattack against Israel. First of all, he expelled the USSR military advisory group. The USSR, which penetrated deeply into Egyptian regime during the Nasser era, aimed to implant the socialistic revolution to the Arab world. Marxist South Yemen realized USSR's intention. But the socialist ideology did not take root among Arab countries. Before socialist ideology would become dominant, the Arab world had already been caught up not only by the inherent bond of "blood" like a tribe or ethnic group but also by the lullaby of "religion" of Islam. There was little room for "ideology" which would be taught in higher education. It looked like impossible for Arabs to implant socialist ideology.

There was another reason why Sadat tried to weaken the influence of USSR. He was eager to modernize the armament of the Egyptian army with American weapons. As long as they depend on weapons made in USSR, they could not compete with Israel at all. Sadat tried to approach the United States after expelling the USSR military advisory group. For the military personnel like Sadat, the

greatest mission was to win the war. Their way of thinking was sometimes more rational than non-military personnel.

Sadat planed out to defeat Israel in a rational and precise manner. His plan was to counterplot Israel and terminate the battle within a short period of time. Israel, being surrounded in every corner of borders by enemies, always kept tight guard. Israel army was very strong and patient. It was clear that there was no chance for Arab to win if the war was prolonged.

Sadat tried feint attack to cheat Israel. When Egypt showed a gesture of attack, Israel quickly mobilized all of their soldiers. Israeli efforts resulted in vain. Egypt carried out the same campaign several times. The war weariness spread in the Israeli society. In addition, Israeli citizens who became accustomed to the victory of wars in the past. They became self-conceit and carelessness.

In 1973, Sadat asked Syrian president to attack Israel together on October 6. It was a holy day for both Jewish and Muslim. It was "Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)" which was the most sacred day for Jewish, and it was the sacred "Ramadan (Fasting) day" for Muslims. Even Mossad, one of the most powerful intelligence agency in the world, could not anticipate the attack by Arabs on such a sacred day at all.

On October 6, 1973, the war began at two battlefronts in Egypt and Syria simultaneously. This war was called the Yom Kippur War in Western countries. In the Arab world it was called Ramadan War. The war had religious meaning both for Islam and Judaism. There were four wars between Israel and Arabs during 1948 and 1973. The first Arab Israeli War in 1948 was called as "Israel Revolutionary War", which had political meaning. The second war in 1956 was the "Suez War" with economic meaning, and the third war in 1967 was "Six-Day War" showing the superiority of Israel military power. The fourth Arab-Israeli war in 1973 had the religious meaning. It was important both for the Arab and Israel to remind each citizens the religious belief. The surprise attack on the day of Yom Kippur reminded Jews the religious belief. It looked like the attack by Japanese army against Pearl Harbor on Hawaii Islands in US. US President inspired American people saying "Remember Pearl Harbor!" during the Second World War.

The joint maneuver by Egyptian and Syrian army force brought Arabs irresistible success so far. But Sadat knew that predominance by Arab side would be over sooner or later. He adopted another strategy. It was to involve the Arab oil producing countries and to use their oil as a weapon against the consuming countries in Europe, the United States and Asia. It was also the strategy to divide Israel and its allies in the western hemisphere.

(To be continued ----)

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