

## **The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East (28)**

[\(Japanese Version\)](#)

[\(Arabic Version\)](#)

### **Chapter 3: The grace of Allah – Oil boom**

#### **3-6(28) Yom Kippur (Ramadan) War and Oil shock(2) Oil as a weapon**

It was on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1973 that President Sadat of Egypt visited Riyadh in Saudi Arabia and met King Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud secretly. He asked King Faisal to participate in the coming war against Israeli which was planned to deploy on October 6. Sadat requested King Faisal not only to participate in military coalition but also proposed an important strategy to change the character of the war entirely. That was an oil strategy. At that time, petroleum had become an essential energy for the entire world economy. Oil supply has been monopolized by Western oil companies including Seven Sisters. The oil-producing countries that formed OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) were on the stage to show their power.

The mission of Saud dynasty, who proclaimed the guardian of Islam, was to bring back Palestinian refugees to their homeland. They also had the mission to regain Jerusalem in Israel, the third sacred place after Makkah and Madinah in Saudi Arabia. It was the testament of King Abdulaziz Al Saud, the father of King Faisal and the founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. King Abdulaziz met President Roosevelt of United States on the board of cruiser Quincy at Great Bitter Lake of Suez Canal in 1945. They exchanged the view about Middle East after World War II. President Roosevelt asked King Abdulaziz to mediate between Jewish and Arab people. At that time Abdulaziz clearly asserted that there is no solution other than stopping the emigration of Jews to Palestine.



However, as a miserable result of the subsequent three wars between Israel and Arab countries, the hope of Palestinian refugees went far away beyond the horizon. King Faisal was convinced that Saudi Arabia had got a chance to realize his long-standing wish using the oil as weapon. King Faisal dispatched Dr. Ahmad Zaki Yamani, then oil minister, to the neighboring oil-producing countries and asked them to share his idea. Not only the Gulf countries such as Kuwait and the UAE but also Iraq and Iran and even Libya and Algeria in North Africa had promised to participate in his oil strategy. When the Ramadan war had broken out and the oil strategy had been triggered, it proved that this weapon had shown the power far beyond expectation.

On 6th October 1973, the Ramadan War began with a surprise attack by Egypt and Syria. The Egyptian

army had crossed the Suez Canal and landed on the Sinai Peninsula where the Israel had occupied after Six-Day War in 1967. The Syrian army broke through the defense line of the Israeli army on the Golan Heights, where also had been occupied by Israel since 1967. Israeli troops faced the enemies simultaneously from both sides of the country, namely in the Sinai Peninsula and on the Golan Heights. At the first stage of the campaign, the war was in favor of Sadat and his allies. There was a rumor that Israel might use nuclear weapons as the ultimate weapon.

Israel doesn't affirm nor deny the possession of nuclear weapons. But the international society shares the same opinion that Israel conceals nuclear weapons. And no one has no question that Israel might use nuclear weapons for its survival in ultimate crisis. Israel might be willing to do any means to achieve its end. Israel could expect strong support from the United States. Israel might say that even the United States had used nuclear weapon during the World War II or they could stop the war in an early stage by using nuclear weapons. Generally speaking, the inhuman campaign of victorious countries during the war had not raised the dispute after the war. Israel knew the history well.

The ultimate weapon, fortunately, was not used in the war. The Israeli army quickly revived and counterattacked the Arab coalition army. The battle resulted in a stalemate on October 8<sup>th</sup>, the third day of the war. Serious situation which Sadat was afraid of appeared earlier than his expectation. Sadat aimed to ceasefire through mediation by third countries while Arab coalition was in favor in the battle field. But his expectation resulted in failure.

Dr. Ahmad Zaki Yamani, oil minister of Saudi Arabia, took action quickly under the auspices of King Faisal who closely watched the progress of the war game. On October 8<sup>th</sup>, OPEC proclaimed a revision of the Tehran agreement to the Western oil company. Six GCC countries declared to abolish the Tehran agreement on 16<sup>th</sup>. They unilaterally raised the oil price by 70% (Kuwait Declaration). It was the moment when the oil producing countries deprived the right of price determination from the Western oil companies. From this date onwards, OPEC got the dominance of price control. OPEC became the real leader of the world energy issues.

Oil-producing countries continued the battle against oil-consuming countries furthermore. On 17<sup>th</sup> October, 1973, OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries) notified the customers all over the world that the oil supply to the countries who supported the US and Israel should be gradually reduced by 5% every month. It was the supply-cut campaign. Oil consuming countries around the world did not anticipate such campaign by Arab oil-producing countries. Japan was one of the most affected country because it had no domestic oil resources and depended most of oil on Arab countries.

But the real war gradually turned to favor of Israel. The anxiety of Sadat became a reality. He expected the inter-mediator. The United Nations intermediated both side and the ceasefire took place on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1973. Ramadan War (Yom Kippur War) was officially ended when the UN troops started the monitoring of ceasefire on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

The supply cut campaign by oil producing countries continued for a while. It was called as "oil shock". In Japan there was a turmoil that toilet papers had gone out from the shelves of supermarkets.

(To be continued ----)

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