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"The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(29)

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Chapter 4: War and Peace in The Middle East

4-1(29) Brief tranquility: Peace between Israel and Egypt

The Yom Kippur (Ramadan) War ended on October 25, 1973. It was not as expected by Sadat who expected favorable cease-fire conditions on the Arab side with the victory in early stage. In any case a momentum of reconciliation was formed between Egypt and Israel.

Egypt and Israel had fought four times during the quarter century since the First Arab-Israeli War in 1948. Both countries were totally exhausted. War weariness mood had prevailed among the people. It was not only in the two parties that were tired with the wars in the Middle East. The United States, Israel's largest asylum, was besieged by President Nixon's international currency crisis in 1971 (Nixon shock). On the diplomatic front US could not escape from the muddy Vietnam War. US citizens were distressed deeply. The European countries that had to be taken a load of atonement for Jewish people after World War II bored the Israel's arrogant behavior and had thought in the depth of their heart that it was enough. The mood of anti-Israel government began prevailing. Of course, it didn't mean that Western people backed up Arabs or Muslims.

In Asia, most of countries had no deep concern and had pretended no relations with Middle East conflict. But when the Arab oil-producing countries forced the oil embargo in Ramadan War in 1973, Asian countries, especially Japan, were called up roughly from peaceful dream and affected heavily, They tried to get favor of Arab oil-producing countries.

The moment of avoidance of war was also the very thing that realist Sadat hoped. Some of other Arab leaders still kept crying out the reckless cheer calling "Beat down Israel to the Mediterranean!", But the Arab ordinary citizens felt it was a nonsense pipe dream. President Anwar Sadat shared the same feeling with ordinary citizens. An excellent army officer used to look at the reality calmly. Just a mere leader who was heated by his own speech would be defeated someday. It was acceptable that only leader himself would step down from the stage. But it would be the tragedy that thousands of soldiers had to die to make one hero. In this regard, Sadat was a wise man.



Sadat turned his stance towards the United States after the Ramadan War. His stance was contrasted with his predecessor Gamal Nasser who had been a close friend with the USSR. In the US, Henry Kissinger, Advisor for National Security and later Secretary of State, deployed Detente foreign policy with Nixon and the subsequent President Gerald Ford Jr. By Détente policy the reconciliation between the US and China was realized and

the Vietnam war was over. Momentum for the peace was born all over the world. Sadat attempted to improve relationship with Israel. In 1977 he suddenly visited Israel. In 1978 the Democratic idealist James Carter took office as US President. Peace between Egypt and Israel has become real according to the change of US regime from the pro-Israel Republican Party to the liberal Democratic Party. President Carter invited two leaders of Egypt and Israel to Camp David in Washington in 1978. Both leaders agreed to sign a historical peace treaty. Accordingly, the Sinai Peninsula, which Israel occupied since the Six-Day War, was returned to Egypt.

In 1978, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin were honored to receive the Nobel Peace Prize as the culmination of these activities. Since the Nobel Peace Prize started in 1901, Sadat was the first Arab recipient.

Taking these facts into consideration, there might be no question that Sadat would be regarded as a peace maker of Egypt and the Arab world, even though he was not a hero in any meanings. But the reality was quite the opposite. Egypt's peace treaty with Israel has been highly appreciated by countries other than the Arab world. Among the Arab countries, however, his policy was taken as betrayal against Palestinian fellows. Sadat was isolated both at home and abroad. Military politicians like Sadat could be hero only by winning war. However, if the war was over under the condition of uncertainty whether winning or losing, and cease-fire was brought by diplomatic skill, the ordinary citizens blamed Sadat as a "traitor".

There was another miscalculation thereafter. In 1979, the Islamic Revolution occurred in Iran. President Sadat accepted the exile of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran on humanitarian consideration. However, the Shah trampled down Sadat's favor and skipped from Cairo to the United States. Egyptian people fiercely rebelled against this incident. They directed their condemnation to Sadat who had brought peace to the Middle East and got back the Sinai Peninsula. People were quite volatile.

In October 1981, when President Sadat has been on inspection tour of the military parade in commemoration of the Ramadan War, he was assassinated by squad of Egyptian army.

(To be continued ----)