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## **"The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(30)**

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### **Chapter 4: War and Peace in The Middle East**

#### **4-2(30) Dictatorship shadows peaceful civic life**

Citizens in Egypt and Israel felt relief when the Ramadan War was over. The Palestinians also shared the same feelings, who had been chased away from the land inherited for a long time ago, and escaped to Jordan, then moved to Kuwait or Saudi Arabia.

Shatila who was employed by a Japanese company that started oil development in the neutral zone between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia married to a distantly related Palestinian woman. He spent busy but peaceful days. Every weekend he drove a second-hand American car with his wife and visited parents living in Kuwait. The road was unpaved rough one for a while beyond the border. But from entering Burgan oil field area, comfortable paved road of double lanes continued straight to the city center of Kuwait. When Shatila arrived his father's home, he did never fail to visit the neighbors, Al-Yassin family. Two families are comrades who have moved together from Palestinian city Turkam to Jordan and even to Kuwait. The Al-Yassin got one girl named Rania in Kuwait. Shatila loved a cute and clever Rania.

In midtown of Kuwait, there were many prestigious hotels of Europe and the US origin. Inside the comfortably air-conditioned shopping center, many shops of famous brands in the world attracted shoppers. This happened because the war was over and oil boom took place. Kuwaiti people and foreigners enjoyed peace and abundance, and they hoped that such a life would last forever. The neighboring non-oil-producing countries also benefited from aid by oil-producing countries, or remittance from migrant relatives.

However, when such a peaceful life continued, it was strange that dissatisfaction had grown little by little in the heart of people. It was not lack of supply of goods. Low-income citizens were awaked to the economic disparity in their daily life and asked for change. It was dictators who took the opportunity in such atmosphere and came into the power keenly. The dictator was not a tyrant from the beginning. At first he often appeared as a person with nation-wide popularity. This phenomenon

was not limited in the Middle East but found in many developing countries such as Eastern Europe, Asia, South America or Africa. But it was worthy to say that the dictatorship in the Middle East appeared intensively after the Ramadan War, and has kept power for a very long period of 30 to 40 years since then. It was surprising that some of them still keeps power.

Taking the incidents in historical order, the duration of dictatorship in the Middle East was as follows; Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in Libya (1969-2011), President Hafiz and Basher al-Assad in Syria (1971- present), President Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen (1978-2012), President Saddam Hussein in Iraq (1979-2003), President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt (1981-2011), President Ben Ali in Tunisia (1987-2011) and President Omar al-Bashir in Sudan (1989-present). Shortest tenure was 24 years of Saddam Hussein in Iraq or Ben Ali in Tunisia. Assad family of Hafiz and Basher is still sitting in a dictator's chair even after nearly half century.

As you can understand from the history, it was in 1970s and 1980s that they first came to power, and the years of sliding down from power were concentrated in 2011 and 2012. This obviously implicates the result of the "Arab Spring" that began at the end of 2010.

The process of getting dictatorship was different from each other depending on the political and social situation of each countries and their ways of taking power. But some dictators had common character. Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, Hafiz al-Assad of Syria, Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Abdullah Saleh of Yemen, Omar al-Bashir of Sudan were all soldiers. Military experience was the shortest course to dictator.



Take Libya's Muammar Gaddafi as an example. He overthrow the United Kingdom of Libya by the coup d'etat in 1969. He grabbed power and established Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. Jamahiriya means direct democracy. He did not allow people to call him president. Therefore people called him the supreme leader and he called himself as "colonel". Gaddafi esteemed Egyptian president Nasser who had a title of colonel during his military career. Gaddafi used carrot and stick distinctively to control tribes. At the same time, he survived in the turbulent international politics with exquisite maxim. But finally he was killed in the civil war following the aftermath of the "Arab Spring" in Tunisia and ended the dictatorship for 42 years in 2011.

(To be continued ----)