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"The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(32)

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Chapter 4: War and Peace in The Middle East

4-4(32) "Dar Al Islam (House of peace)" and "Dar Al Harb (House of war)"



In Islam, Muslim calls their world as "House of Peace (dar al-Islam)" and the rest of the world is called "House of War (dar al-Harb)". "Islam" means to believe Allah and Prophet Muhammad only and to live according to the doctrine of the Holy Quran (from Iwanami "Islamic dictionary"). As long as living in the Islamic world as a Muslim, it is a very peaceful world, and the war continues in the outside world of heathens.

It is not only in Islam but also in any other religions that the peaceful utopia would be guaranteed if the religious spirit is cordial. Christianity also has the word "millennium kingdom of bliss". I, the writer who believe neither Islam nor Christianity, am not qualified to comment these words, but I could be allowed to say that "dar al-Islam" and "millennium kingdom of bliss" have the very similar meaning. Other monotheism and polytheism seem to have the similar doctrine as well. It seems to be somewhat different from the world of Buddhism where "enlightenment" has the highest value.

When Islam prevailed, missionary work to deliver the doctrine of Islam lighted up al-Jahiliya (the world of darkness) and built up the Islamic Empire. In the Middle Ages, Ottoman Empire achieved the prosperity by dismissing Christianity in the fight against the Crusades over the holy Jerusalem. It was the time when the world continued to be a "House of Peace (dar al-Islam)". Even if the modern Western people insisted that the Ottoman Empire was the world of tyranny and exploitation, it was a peaceful place for the majority people living in the Empire.

It was the imperialism of Western powers that invaded and destroyed House of Peace. The politicians, the uniforms and capitalists of Western countries expanded the "House of War (dar al-Harb)" one after another in the Islamic world. However, there was one house neither "House of

Peace" nor "House of War" between the boundary of two Houses. Islam named it "House of Peace Treaty (dar al-Sulf)".

After the Ramadan War in 1973, Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty. Since then Arab-Israeli interstate war has not taken place for nearly half a century. It can be said that the "House of Peace (dar al-Islam)" appeared exactly. Speaking of the Middle East war, it usually meant the Arab-Israeli war. It was the ethnic war between Arabs and Jews, and at the same time it was a religious war between Islam and Judaism. It was a simple binary confrontation scheme that was clearly defined ally or enemy.

Non-party country could simply be categorized whether ally or enemy. If one country supported Israel, Arabs regarded that country as enemy, because enemy's ally was enemy. And if the country opposed against Israel, Arabs regarded the country as ally, because enemy's enemy was ally. It clearly appeared in Ramadan War when Arab oil-producing countries (OAPEC) launched an oil strategy. The country that supports the Arab regarded as ally and the supply of oil was continued. On the contrary the United States, strong Israeli supporter, was an enemy of Arabs. Therefore, OAPEC discontinued the supply of oil. OAPEC regarded Japan, close ally of US, as enemy of Arab because enemy's ally was enemy. Japan hastily dispatched Vice Prime Minister Miki to the Middle East expressing that Japan was a friendly country of Arab. Japan could escape from oil embargo by OAPEC after all.

The conflicts in the Middle East after the Ramadan War were not just a simple binary confrontation. The Iran-Iraq war was integrated with ethnic conflicts between Persians vs. Arabs and sectarian conflicts between Shiites vs. Sunnis of Islam. The Arab countries unanimously supported the Iraqi Saddam Hussein regime ruling by Sunnis. But in southern Iraq there were many Shiites who showed religious loyalty rather than ethnicity or nationality. Though they were afraid of the dictator Saddam's central government, they had sympathy on Iran ruling by Shiites.

For Saudi Arabia of Sunni monarchy country, Iran of Persian, Shiites and Republic country was an enemy. Iraq of Arab and Sunni country was an ally though it was republic state. However, it was a big problem for Saudi Arabia that there were many Shiites in southern part of Iraq near Saudi border. In addition, Saddam Hussein had advocated to overthrow of Saudi monarchy before Iran-Iraq War took place.

Ethnicity, religion and ideology (political institution) were intertwined with each other. It became unclear that who was enemy or ally. Enemy's enemy might be an ally or another enemy. Likewise, enemy's ally might be an enemy or another ally. Situation had changed from time to time. The vague political situation was difficult to decide either "enemy" or "ally". Such situation became grew up in the 21st century.

But the Middle East in the late 1970s before Iran-Iraq War was a relatively calm era. Nobody might object to call this a peaceful era. One reason that insured the peace was the wealth of oil generating

in the Gulf oil-producing countries. Non oil-producing ME countries shared the slice of oil wealth. Another reason was the authoritarian states born in Syria, Iraq, Libya and several other countries. All of them were dictatorship states. It would not be wrong to say that temporary Middle East peace after the Ramadan War was brought by oil money and dictators.

(To be continued ----)