

The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East (38)

[\(Japanese Version\)](#)

[\(Arabic Version\)](#)

Chapter 5: Two calendars (Gregorian & Hijri)

5-2(38) Before or after Hijri 1400 (Gregorian 1980)

Hijri which started on July 16, 622 AD celebrated 1st of Muharram, 1400 on November 21, 1979 AD. It was the last year of the 14th century of Hijri. The 14th century of Hijri started on November 12, 1882 AD. The year of Hijri is shorter than 11 days compared with the Gregorian calendar. The length of one century of Hijri, therefore, is three years shorter than Gregorian.

Before the 19th century AD, ordinary citizen in the Western countries believed the superstition that there would be various disasters at the end of one century. But in the age of modern science of the 20th century, such superstition had gone away. There was a small noise that the computer might be troubled by "Year 2000 problem" when the time passed away from December 31st, 1999 to January 1st, 2000.

Muslims did not make a loud noise about the 1400th year of Hijri. They were more sensitive to monthly events such as Ramadan and Haji (Great Pilgrimage). They haven't so much interest to see the old year out and the New Year in. Therefore, changing of the year from 1399 to 1400 of Hijri did not be emphasized too much. But it would be meaningful that many events took place one after another in Middle East before and after the year 1400 of Hijri.

For example, in Hijri 1399 (1978-79 AD) Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin had concluded a historical Camp David Accords mediated by the US President Jimmy Carter. They won the Nobel Peace Prize for that year. Two countries signed the peace treaty in 1979 AD. But this brought about fierce rejection from other Arab countries. Egypt was expelled from the Arab League. Egypt lost the position as the leader in the Arab and Muslim world in return for bilateral peace with Israel.

The Iranian Revolution took place in January 1979 (Hijri 1399, hereinafter Gregorian calendar will be used for easy understanding). In July 1979, Saddam Hussein assumed the presidency of Iraq. He aimed for the leader of Arab countries taking the place of Egypt. In August 1979, the Great Mosque of Makkah known as al-Masjid al-Haram in Saudi Arabia was occupied by Muslim extremists. The Saud ruling family was heavily shocked. In September 1980 (Hijri 1401, the first year of the 15th century of Hijri) the Iran-Iraq war was broken out. Ayatollah Khomeini, supreme religious leader of

Iranian Shia sect, aimed for the religious leader of whole Islam, while Saddam Hussein of Iraq aimed to be a dictator in the Middle East. Religion and ethnicity competed regional leadership each other.

Saddam Hussein of Iraq insisted that Iran-Iraq War was the battle between Shiite and Sunni sects of Islam. Saddam Hussein ill-used the antagonism between two sects. He withdrew the money necessary for the war from rich Gulf oil-producing countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Both Iraq and Gulf monarchies were the same secular states. The Iran-Iraq War, therefore, was not a battle between religious sects but it was the war between secularism and religious faith. Although Iran was inferior to Iraq at the first stage of the war, the young Iranian volunteers marched in the battlefield one after another. Iranian Shiite Muslims believed that the war against Iraq was the fight against the enemies of Islam, so-called "jihad". They were driven by the sense of religious mission and bravely challenged against Arab secular states.

Saddam Hussein and his ruling party in Iraq were Sunni. But there were many Shiite residents in southern Iraq. Shiites were the majority in Iraq. There were also many Shiites in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. In Bahrain more than 80% of the population were Shiites. Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini allured these Shiite residents in Gulf countries to resist against their rulers. Rulers in Gulf countries had a sense of imminent crisis. It was the reason why six Gulf States formed the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981 (Hijri 1402). They feared that the Shiites might overthrow the monarchy regime. Saddam Hussein commingled the Iran-Iraq War with Islam sectarian conflict. He involved the Gulf oil-producing countries into war. GCC countries have fallen into Hussein's trap.

In December 1979, USSR invaded Afghanistan and the Afghan War broke out. It was the same year with Iran-Iraq War. Iran-Iraq War and Afghan War were continued during 1980s across the 14th and 15th century of Hijri.

Years before and after Hijri 1400 were the era of paradigm shift in the Middle East. The driving force was the Islam. During the first decade of Hijri 15th century (From 1980 to 1990 AD), Muslims fought against apostates whom they thought enemy of true Islam. The first struggle was against atheism of communist Afghanistan government and USSR. The second one was the conflict between two sects of Islam; Shiites versus Sunnis. Iran and Iraq fought each other. The third one was the collision between the Islamic fundamentalists Al-Qaeda and secular powers of Middle East and Western countries. September 11 attacks in 2001 was the biggest tragedy. Until very recently, Islamic State (IS, ISIS or ISIL), the virtual caliphate nation, challenged the modern secular states in the world.

The religious riots used to become radicals gradually. The modern Islamic movement has the same aspect. When the movement reached at the peak, it was self-destructed and lost the support of the masses. Once there had been the similar movement in Japan in the 15th and 16th century. Ikko sect which was the one of the sects of Buddhism became extremely radical and were finally defeated by secular power, Samurai.

In Buddhism, it is said that prosperous must decay. Nobody knows when the struggle will end in the Middle East. It is true that "Only God (Allah) knows".

(To be continued ----)

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Home Page: [OCIN INITIATIVE](#)

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