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"The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(39)

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Chapter 5: Two calendars (Gregorian & Hijri)

5-3(39) Iraq invasion to Kuwait & Gulf War (AD 1990-91, Hijri 1410)

The Iran-Iraq war, which began in the year 1400 of Hijri, i.e. 1980 AD, was a war of attrition. The battle had been seesawing onshore, and offshore in the Persian (Arabian) Gulf they bombed the opponent's oil loading facilities. Iran, furthermore, escalated its strategy to attack oil tankers sailing over the Persian Gulf and hinted at the blockade of the Holmes Strait where was the entrance of the Persian Gulf. But in 1988 the two countries finally ceased the fire according to the UN mediation proposal. It was a famous episode that Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran said that the acceptance of the ceasefire was more painful than drinking poison.



The Iran-Iraq war had given great sacrifice to Iraq. Iraq faced to collapse. However, Hussein was a dictator who was very hard to deal with. He rushed to retain the power taking advantage of crisis. Inside the country he took authoritarian politics with his two sons. He compelled loyalty to his subordinates and oppressed the residents of the Shiites in the southern region and the Kurds in the northern region respectively. Hussein and his faithful subordinates were Sunni minorities. They were aware that if they lost power the harsh retaliation awaited them. That is the reason why his subordinates swore absolute obedience to his orders and repressed rebels. It might be reasonable

that the absolute dictatorship is unexpectedly robust.

Turning the eyes to outside problem, Iraq was in a state of economic collapse with substantial debts in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. But Hussein ignored debt repayment requests from both countries. He told them that Iraq fought against Shiites on behalf of Sunni allies. Iraq provided soldiers and military equipment. Therefore, it was no wonder that Gulf oil-producing countries should bear the war expenses. Generally speaking, the money spent on war was always squeezed from the defeated country after the war. Such principle was upset by the United States after World War II. The rich and

generous United States prohibited the allies to squeeze from the defeated Axis powers. It was a lesson from a bitter experience after World War I in which the victorious country France squeezed from the defeated Germany, resulting the rise of the Nazis and led to World War II.

Hussein's argument was irrational, but it could be twisted that there was a little bit of truth in his claim. In the old proverb they say that "The wrongdoer never lacks a pretext".

In the next year of ceasefire of Iran-Iraq War, Khomeini has passed away at the age of 86. Iran was isolated in the international arena. Saddam Hussein's next target was Kuwait in the south, and his ultimate target was Israel. It was his absolute desire to be the dictator of Arab world. Kuwait had pressed Saddam to repay the loan of war expenses which was a proper requirement for Kuwait. At the same time, Kuwait sold its oil with biggest discount in the global oil market. Kuwait was a member of OPEC. On the contrary, Iraq which joined in OPEC was more eager to sell the oil at the higher price to rebuild war-torn country. Kuwait was the obstacle for Iraq. Hussein deployed his force along Iraq-Kuwait border and brought pressure upon Kuwait.

The international community including Kuwait, however, regarded this as a mere threat, and they did not believe that Hussein would definitely invade Kuwait. When the Arab League's emergency meeting was held, Iraqi foreign minister made speech quite calmly. Arab countries believed that the crisis would be resolved through dialogue. In addition, when the US ambassador of that time met with President Hussein, the US ambassador sent an incorrect signal to Washington that Hussein had no intention of war due to his attitude like gentleman.

President Hussein himself also misjudged the situation. He believed that Arab and Western countries would not take hard measures even if Iraq invaded into Kuwait. In the beginning of August 1990, Hussein ordered troops deployed at the border to advance Kuwait. It was the thunderbolt to Sabah ruling family of Kuwait. The royal family, including the Emir who was struck asleep, ran away with his bare life to Saudi Arabia in south of the border. In Kuwait, there was hardly any battle, and within half a day Iraqi troops controlled all of Kuwait. Iraq's occupation of Kuwait had continued about half a year until the Gulf War was open fired in January of the following year. Meanwhile, foreigners living in Kuwait, including Japanese, were kidnapped by Iraq and encountered the calamity as "a human shield"

Iraq invasion to Kuwait was one miscalculation for the international community. And the unanimous counterattack by international community for liberalizing Kuwait was another miscalculation for Hussein of Iraq. Hussein used to insist that Kuwait was originally part of Basra State in southern Iraq. But the international community respected the nation state in the world since the end of the World War II. The consolidation of the territories by force did not totally accepted. In November 1990, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution to allow the use of force. Multinational forces led by the United States were organized. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchy state and even Syria which was

controlled by the same Bath party as Iraq joined the Allied Forces. In Iran-Iraq war Iraq drew the whole world into an ally. But this time Iraq made enemies of the whole world in return.

In January 1991, the multinational forces bombed by guided missile on the Iraqi military base including Baghdad. The missiles headed towards the target were telecasted. People all over the world watched them as if they were playing video games. It is the beginning of the "Gulf War". In February the ground forces advanced Kuwait and then Iraq with great vigor. The Iraqi army collapsed. After 100 hours of march, multinational forces stopped fighting and declared a ceasefire.

At that time the multinational allied forces were close to Iraq 's capital Baghdad. They might defeat the Hussein regime with just one press. President George H.W. Bush, a religious Christian and pretending himself as a crusader, should have strongly hoped to overthrow a pagan dictator Hussein. However, the United Nations resolution was the liberation of Kuwait to the end and did not allow to overthrow the Hussein regime of Iraq. It was the first rule that noninterference of internal affairs and Iraq's internal affairs were up to Iraqi people. President Bush 's wish was to be realized by his son, President George W. Bush in the form of Iraq War after 12 years.

Gulf War ceased fire on 28 February 1991. Hussein was a very lucky man because he survived and reigned as a dictator in Iraq for more than 10 years after the Gulf War.

(To be continued ----)