

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

[\(Japanese Version\)](#)

[\(Arabic Version\)](#)

Chapter 5: Two calendars (Gregorian & Hijri)

5-3(39) Iraq invasion of 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. Iraq bombed Iranian oil loading facilities offshore in the Persian (Arabian) Gulf. As a counter-attack, Iran bombed Kuwaiti oil tankers sailing over the Persian Gulf and hinted at the blockade of the Holmes Strait at the entrance of the Persian Gulf. But in 1988 two countries finally ceased the fire according to the UN mediation. There was a famous episode that Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran lamented that the acceptance of the ceasefire was more painful than drinking poison.



The Iran-Iraq war forced great sacrifice to Iraq. Iraq faced the crisis of the state. However, Hussein was a tough dictator to deal with crisis. He rushed to retain the power taking advantage of crisis. He took authoritarian politics with his two sons. He compelled loyalty to his subordinates. He oppressed 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 would blow them away. 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 robust.

Iraq was in a state of economic emergency because of substantial debts owe to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. But Hussein ignored the requests of debt repayment by two countries. He told them that Iraq fought against Shiites on behalf of Sunni allies. Iraq sacrificed its soldiers and military equipment for Gulf countries. Therefore, it was no wonder that Gulf oil-producing countries should bear the war expenses. In history, the money spent on war had been 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 enemy, i.e. Germany. 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 proposal for Saudi Arabia and Kuwait seemed to be irrational. But it was not always irrational for Iraq. In the old proverb they say that even a thief had his reasons.

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 of border because Kuwait had pressed Saddam to repay the loan of war expenses. Of course, Hussein's ultimate target was Israel. It was his absolute desire to be the dictator of Arab world.

In the global oil market Kuwait sold its oil with biggest discount at that time. Kuwait was a member of OPEC same as Iraq. However, Iraq was more eager to sell the oil at the higher price to rebuild war-torn country. Hussein thought that Kuwait was bold and arrogant. He deployed his force along Iraq-Kuwait border to stress Kuwait.

Kuwait and international community regarded this as a mere threat. They never believed that Hussein would definitely invade Kuwait. When the Arab League's emergency meeting was held, Iraqi foreign minister made speech very politely. Arab countries thought that the crisis could be resolved through peaceful dialogue. In addition, when the US ambassador to Iraq met with President Hussein, the president was well-mannered. She sent an incorrect signal to Washington that Hussein had no intention of war.

On the other hand, President Hussein himself also misjudged the situation. He believed that Arab and Western countries would not take harsh countermeasures even if Iraq invaded Kuwait. On August 2, 1990 at 2 a.m., Hussein ordered his troops deploying alongside the border to invade Kuwait. It was the thunderbolt to Sabah ruling family of Kuwait. The royal family, including the Emir who was struck asleep, ran away with nothing but the clothes one wears 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. Foreigners living in Kuwait, including Japanese, were kidnapped by Iraq and encountered the calamity as "a human shield". Finally, the Gulf War took place in January 1991.

Iraq invasion of Kuwait was one miscalculation for the international community. There was another miscalculation for Hussein that international community unanimously united to liberalize Kuwait. Hussein used to insist that Kuwait was originally part of Basra State in southern Iraq. But the international community respected the nation states all over the world after the World War II. The annexation of the land by force could be accepted by no means. In November 1990, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution to use the military actions against Iraq. United States organized the multinational Allied Forces. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchy state and even Syria which was controlled by the same Bath party as Iraq joined the Allied Forces. Once Iraq made ally of the whole world in Iran-Iraq war during 1980 and 1988. But this time Iraq made enemies of the whole world.

In January 1991, the multinational forces bombed the Iraqi military base and capital Baghdad by guided missile. The missiles headed towards the target were telecasted. People all over the world watched TV as if they were playing video games. It is the beginning of the Gulf War. In February the allied forces advanced Kuwait and defeated Iraq forces overwhelmingly. The Iraqi army collapsed and withdrew to Iraq. After 100 hours of march, multinational forces stopped fighting and declared a ceasefire.

At that time the multinational allied forces had marched short of capital Baghdad. They might defeat the Hussein regime with just one punch. President George H.W. Bush, a religious Christian and pretending himself as a crusader, have strongly hoped to overthrow a pagan dictator Hussein. However, the United Nations resolution covered only to liberate Kuwait. The UN solution did not cover to overthrow the Hussein regime of Iraq. Iraq's internal affairs should be up to Iraqi people. Noninterference of internal affairs was the prime rule in international society.

Gulf War ceased fire on 28 February 1991. Hussein luckily survived the Gulf War and reigned as a dictator of Iraq for more than 10 years after the war. The long-cherished wish of President G.W.H. Bush to overthrow Hussein regime was realized by his son, President George W. Bush after 12 years. It was Iraq War in 2003.

(To be continued ----)

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