

Home Page: [OCIN INITIATIVE](#)

([Japanese Version](#))

([Arabic Version](#))

([Table of contents](#))

"The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(53)

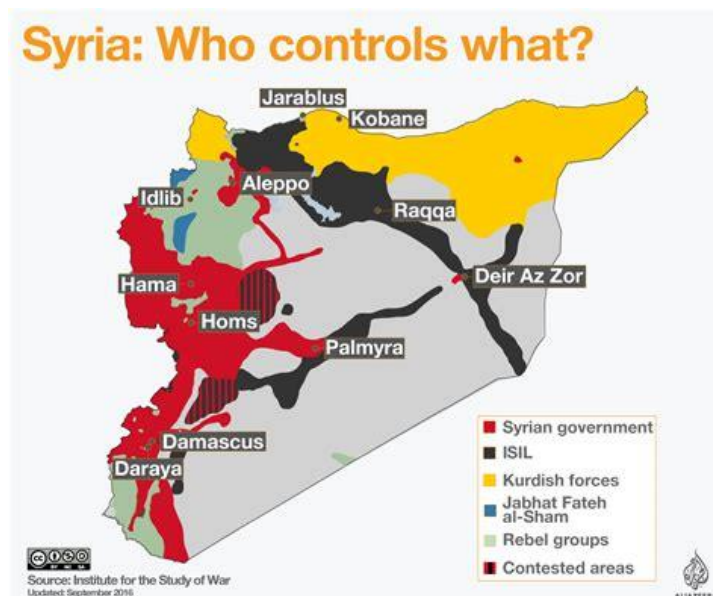
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Chapter 6: Genealogy of Islamic terrorism

6-10(53) Syria: Enemy's enemy is ally or another enemy?

The Syrian civil war is basically a military struggle between the government and anti-government organizations demanding the retirement of President Baser al-Assad. Iran and Russia are supporting the Assad government from the view point of international balance of power. Iran's main reason is that the clan of al-Assad was from Alawi which is one of Shiite faction. And Russia holds a navy base in Syria which faces to Mediterranean Sea. For Russia, the route from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea through the Bosphorus Strait has a significant strategic meaning compared with the Baltic Sea. That is the reason why Russia support the Assad regime. On the other hand, Western countries including the United States support anti-government organizations to overthrow the autocratic Assad regime and establish a free democratic regime. Saudi Arabia and Turkey of Sunni sect unanimously support anti-government organization. This is a countermeasure against the Shiite power of Assad and Iran.



However, Syria's anti-government organization was not monolithic. It was "Bitter enemies in the same boat", or mere crowd. The ups and downs of members were intense. The main wing is the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) consisting of Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and several Arab anti-government forces including Al-Nusra Front. Islamic State (IS), i.e. ISIL, ISIS or Daesh, was the third power which was different from neither government

organization nor anti-government organization.

YPG, a leading force in the SDF, is a military organization by Kurds who live in the northeastern Syria. The Kurds are scattered in the four countries of Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq. They are confronting with respective governments for independence. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is secular military forces of Sunnis and supported by the US, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. But Turkey tries to eliminate YPG from SDF to constrain the Kurdish independence movement.

Al-Nusra Front, now al-Qaeda in Syria, is the descendent of international terrorist organization al-Qaeda and is a religious sect which advocates Islamic fundamentalism and Salafism. Islamic State (IS) was originally called Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). They began terrorist activities from December 2013 when US President Obama declared the end of the Iraq war and withdraw US military forces. IS extended its activity to Syria and renamed "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)". They declared the independence of "Islamic State (IS)" in 2014. However, even though they proclaimed that IS was an independent state, their nature was a cruel terrorist and burglary group. No countries have recognized IS as a state.

Foreign powers wondered which sect should be supported because the leading power was changed frequently one sect to another. The United States tried to provide military training and supplied weapons to the Syrian Democratic Forces, which was liberal democratic sect among rebels. But in the Middle East where West European type of democracy was unpopular, the liberal forces were weak. Weapons and financial aid were scattering like spraying water in the desert.

Saudi Arabia and other Gulf secular monarchs took part in the Syrian Democratic Force. This was a last option with the elimination method. In other words, GCC countries feared that Sarafist (Islamic extremist) of Sunni like the Al-Nusra Front or IS (Islamic State) would endanger Gulf monarchs. At the same time GCC monarchs thought that the Syrian government supported by Iran was more unacceptable. As far as they keep pace with Western countries, the absolute monarchy system will be stable for a while. GCC monarchs supported SDF as an option with elimination method although they were wary of liberal power. Despite military support from US and financial support from the Gulf countries, the actual warfare ability of Syrian Democratic Force was much inferior to other rebels. They can only protect themselves at best.

The Islamic extremists, Al-Nusra Front (now Al-Qaeda in Syria) and Islamic State (IS), have deep religious consciousness and high combat capability because they are willing to self-sacrifice. But the forces having religious background are up to the character of the top leader and is easily torn in several pieces. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Husseini al-Qauraishi, the leader of ISIS (Islamic Stat of Iraq and Syria), split from Al-Nusra Front and established his own Islamic State (IS). IS did not rely on foreign aid. IS aimed to be not mere domestic power against the central government but to be the regional power. They did not acknowledge the current border according

to Sykes-Picot Agreement which was drawn by UK and France during colonial era. IS aimed to be an ideal Caliphate Islamic religious state. They recruited young people living abroad by using the Internet and converted them to combatants.

Islamic State (IS) is a lone wolf terrorist group. Al-Nusra Front relies on Al Qaeda's network. Syrian Democratic Force was supported by Kurdish force with assistance from the West and the Gulf countries. All of them are anti-government forces. Legitimate Syrian government, which confront these anti-government organizations, is supported by Russia and Iran. In summerly, Russia and Iran support the Iraqi government and the Middle Eastern and European country and the United States supported anti-government power. Situation in Syria is extremely confused

However, the common goals of foreign countries recently have been focused on the destruction of Islamic State (IS). In response, IS who stood in inferior situation called for Muslims living in the US, Europe and Russia to do the suicide bombing. IS fighters also may to return to their home countries and conduct terrorist activities. The former is homegrown terror and the latter is terror in hometown. To prevent homegrown or hometown terror, IS must be destroyed completely as soon as possible. Only the Syrian government's legitimate army and the Kurdish force of the Syrian Democratic Force can compete against the IS right now. However, Kurdish troops are not in a position to get support from Russia, Turkey and Iran.

Ultimately, Western countries including the United States left the demand of resignation of President Al-Assad on one side for the time being and bombed the Islamic State (IS). They overlooked the military actions of the Syria and Russia. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries , who supported the Syrian Democratic Force of liberal anti-government forces as the last choice because their true enemy was the Shiite, were abandoned by the United States.

Is the enemy of the enemy a friend or another enemy? The situation in Syria, where confusion is deepened, can be said to be the invisible Middle East situation itself.

(To be continued ----)