

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

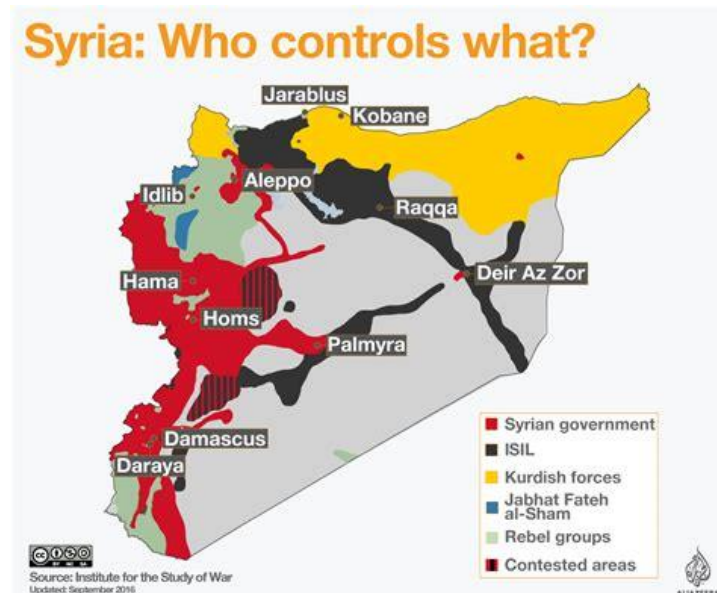
[\(Japanese Version\)](#)

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Chapter 6: Genealogy of Islamic terrorism

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

The civil war in Syria was a military struggle between the government and several anti-government entities which demanded the resignation of President Baser al-Assad. Iran and Russia supported the Assad government to strengthen their influence in the region. Iran supported Assad because the clan of al-Assad was from Alawite sect which was one of Shiite faction. Russia supported Assad due to military purpose. Russia held a navy base in Syria which faces to Mediterranean Sea. The sea lane from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean through the Bosphorus Strait had a significant strategic meaning for Russia compared with that of the Atlantic Sea through Baltic Sea where was frozen in winter. On the other hand, Western countries including the United States supported anti-government entities to overthrow the autocratic Assad regime. Saudi Arabia and Turkey of Sunni faction unanimously support anti-government entities. Their purpose was to keep countermeasures against the Shiite faction of Assad and Iran.



However, anti-government entities in Syria were not solid. They were like “bitter enemies in the same boat”, or crowd without order. Leadership had changed from time to time. The main wing was 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, ISIL, ISIS or Daesh) was the independent power different from neither government nor

anti-government entities.

YPG, a leading force in the SDF, was a military organization by Kurds who lived 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 and/or autonomy. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is secular military forces of Sunnis and supported by the US,

Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Turkey tries to eliminate YPG from SDF to constrain the Kurdish independence movement in the country.

Al-Nusra Front was the descendent of international terrorist organization al-Qaeda. They were one of the religious wings which advocates Islamic fundamentalism and Salafism. Islamic State (IS) was originally called Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). They started terrorist activities in December 2013 when US President Obama declared the end of the Iraq war and withdraw US military forces from Iraq. Islamic State expanded its activity to Syria and renamed "Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)". They declared the independence of "Islamic State (IS)" in 2014. Although they proclaimed an independent state, it was identified that they were cruel terrorists and burglary group. No countries have recognized IS as a independent state.

Foreign powers wondered which sect should be supported because the leadership 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 the liberal forces got no meaningful power. West European type of democracy had little influence in the Middle East. Military and financial aid were wasted like spraying water in the desert.

Saudi Arabia and other Gulf secular monarchs supported the Syrian Democratic Force. This was their last option. GCC countries feared that Sarafist (Islamic extremist) of Sunni like the Al-Nusra Front or IS (Islamic State) would endanger their monarchs. At the same time GCC monarchs thought that the Syrian government supported by Iran was more unacceptable. And as far as they kept pace with Western countries, their absolute monarchy system was stable for a while. GCC monarchs supported SDF as the last option although they were wary of liberal democracy. Despite military support by US and financial support by the Gulf countries, Syrian Democratic Force was much inferior compared to other rebels in the military power. They can only protect themselves.

The Islamic extremists, Al-Nusra Front (now Al-Qaeda in Syria) and Islamic State (IS), have deep religious faith and high combat capability. They are willing to self-sacrifice in the battle. But the religious power was up to the top leader. They tended to split into several pieces. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Husseini al-Qauraishi left from Al-Nusra Front and established Islamic State (IS). IS did not rely on foreign aid. IS aimed to get hegemony not only in Iraq and Syria but also in whole Middle East. They did not acknowledge the current border based on the Sykes-Picot Agreement which was drawn by UK and France during colonial era. IS planned to establish an ideal Caliphate Islamic religious state. They recruited young people living abroad by using the Internet and converted them to combatants.

Islamic State (IS) was 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 were anti-government entities. Legitimate Syrian government supported by Russia and Iran confronted against these anti-government entities. In summerly, Russia and Iran supported the Iraqi government and the Middle Eastern and European country and the United States supported anti-government entities. Situation in Syria was extremely in chaos.

Then foreign countries focused on the destruction of Islamic State (IS) as the common goal. IS stood in inferior situation. IS called for Muslims living in the US, Europe and Russia to carry out the suicide bombing. Some IS combatants were requested to go home and participate in terror activities. The former was called homegrown terror and the latter was called hometown terror. To prevent homegrown or hometown terrors, IS had to be destroyed completely as soon as possible. Only Syrian government's army and the Kurdish force of the Syrian Democratic Force could be effective against the IS. However, Kurdish troops are not in a position to get support from Russia, Turkey and Iran.

Ultimately, Western countries including the United States put aside the elimination of President Al-Assad for the time being. They focused to the fight against IS. They overlooked the military operations by Syria and Russia. Government and anti-government forces bombed the Islamic State (IS) separately.

Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries once supported the Syrian Democratic Force of Sunni were abandoned by the United States. Was the enemy' enemy a friend or another enemy? The chaos in Syria was deepened. The future of the Middle East was invisible now.

(To be continued ----)

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