

The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East (49)

[\(Japanese Version\)](#)

[\(Arabic Version\)](#)

Chapter 6: Genealogy of Islamic terrorism

6-6(49) Kefaya ! People bored with long dictatorship

The Middle East and North Africa region is collectively called MENA. It may sound strange to say that MENA region hardly had radical political change before so-called "Arab Spring" in 2011. But from Ramadan War (Yom Kippur War) in 1973 to Arab Spring in 2011, most of Arab countries had no experience of the political change for nearly 40 years because the dictatorship continued so long in most of Middle Eastern countries. The long-dictatorship was not only by secular military power in Egypt, Syria but also by monarchic regime by the Gulf countries.

Most of the MENA countries are ethnically Arabs except Turkey, Iran and Israel. And Muslim occupies a majority religious group including Turkey and Iran. It is difficult to answer that whether the long-dictatorship regime is due to the ethnicity of Arabs or the religion of Islam. It might be said that both of them brought about the long-term dictatorship. Ethnicity and religion are inevitable two facts of Middle Eastern dictatorship. Anyhow it could be the right answer that the political stability had been maintained by dictatorship.

In addition, it can also be pointed out that the political stability in MENA countries could not bring about the progress of science and technology and the economic prosperity of every countries except the Gulf countries which achieved economic prosperity by oil. Despite being a similar authoritarian politics, Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand and Indonesia had in reverse enjoyed progress of industries and economic prosperity during the same period.

Colonel Gaddafi of Libya was the first secular dictator in the MENA region. As mentioned in Chapter 4, he deposed the King Idris I by means of the coup and became the supreme leader in 1969 when he was only 27 years old. He held that position for 42 years then ended the life of 69 during the civil war in 2011.



Following Colonel Gaddafi the second secular dictator in the MENA region was Hafiz al-Assad of Syria. He was born from a minority tribe of the Alawi group in northern Syria, of which religious faction was Shiite. He revealed himself within the Baath party after serving as the Air Force officer. Hafiz was elected to the president in 1971 and established a strong regime. He appointed his second son, Bashar al-Assad as the successor. Bashar al-Assad is the present President of Syria after surviving the long civil war. Reign of father and son of al-Assad has been continuing nearly half a century.

In addition to the above, there were several dictators in MENA. Former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh was general commander of the army. He was appointed president of North Yemen in 1978 when he was 36 years old. He kept the presidential post after the reunification of the South and the North Yemen. He was defeated in the Arab Spring in 2011. The term of his presidency was 33 years. After dismissal in 2011, he formed a coalition forces with Houthi group and occupied the capital Sana'a. Saleh himself was assassinated in 2017.

Former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was an executive officer of Baath Party and became president of Iraq in 1979. He survived in Iran-Iraq War from 1980 to 1988 and the Gulf War in 1991. But in 2003 Hussein regime fell down by Iraq War. Hussein was arrested and executed by a trial. The period of his presidency was 24 years.

In North African countries, not only in Libya but also in Egypt, Tunisia and Sudan had a long-term dictatorship. In Egypt Hosni Mubarak climbed up to vice president from an air force officer through four wars with Israel. He was elected to the president in 1981 when Anwar Sadat was assassinated. Since then he had been the Egyptian president until the end of the Arab Spring in 2011.

Ben Ali became Tunisian president in 1987. He was the first victim of the Arab Spring. He resigned and exiled to Saudi Arabia (He died there in 2019). The seventh dictator in MENA region was Omar al-Bashir of Sudan. After graduating from the cadet in Cairo, Egypt, al-Bashir was promoted in the army and grabbed the power by the coup in 1989. His presidency has been 30 years until he retired in 2019.

All seven dictators started from the lower class in the society and climbed up to the top. But in the Middle East there is another type of powerful dictator. They are the ruling family of the Gulf monarchy such as Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is an autocratic country ruled by the Saud family. GCC (Gulf Cooperation Organization) countries consisting of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain have been the hereditary monarchy for more than one hundred years.

For young people born in the 1970s and 1980s, they were reigned by a dictator at the start of their life. They had the same dictator when they entered school, graduated university and even got married. Their society was wrapped up with stagnation. They unanimously shouted; "We are bored!", which meant in Arabic "Kefaya!"

"Kefaya" spread in the early 2000s as a slogan of the movement to protest the Mubarak regime in Egypt. Through the SNS of Internet this word spread in many MENA countries and deeply affected young people. It was the "Arab Spring" in 2011 that the word turned into an actual revolutionary movement.

(To be continued ----)

By Areha Kazuya

E-mail: areha_kazuya@jcom.home.ne.jp

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