

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"(49)

By Areha Kazuya

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

Chapter 6: Genealogy of Islamic terrorism

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

The Middle East and North Africa are collectively called MENA. It may sound strange to say that MENA region hardly had political change. Since the so-called "Arab Spring" in 2011, the area was hit by a storm of intense political change. However, 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. 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. At the same time, Muslim occupies a majority religious group including Turkey and Iran. Whether the origin of the long-dictatorship regime is in the ethnicity of Arabs or the religion of Islam is difficult to define. It might be said that both of them brought about the long-term dictatorship. The answer is not easy in comparison with the Western countries. But ethnicity and religion are inevitable two elements. Anyhow it could be the right answer that the political stability maintained by dictatorship.

It can also be pointed out that the political stability in MENA countries did not bring about the progress of science and technology and the economic prosperity of each country, of which exception was that the Gulf countries achieved prosperity through the oil boom. Despite being a similar authoritarian politics, Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand and Indonesia had differently enjoyed economic prosperity.

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



Hafiz al-Assad in Syria appeared after Colonel Gaddafi. Hafiz al-Assad from a minority tribe of the Alawi group in northern Syria, which is a Shiite faction, revealed himself within the Baath party after 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 President of Syria until now surviving the long civil war. Reign of al-Assad dynasty has passed nearly half a century.

In addition to those who ran up to the top of the country in the 1970s and continued dictatorship for a long time afterwards, there were several dictators such as former Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh or former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein. After serving as general commander in the army, Saleh was appointed president of North Yemen in 1978 at the age of 36 and kept the presidential post after the reunification of the South and the North Yemen. He was defeated in the Arab Spring in 2011 and lost his position. The term of office of the president was 33 years. After he was dismissed, however, he formed a coalition forces with Houthi insurgency, and occupied the capital Sana'a. Saleh himself was assassinated in 2017.

Saddam Hussein of Iraq was an executive officer of Baath Party and appointed president of Iraq in 1979. He survived in Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War. 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 held a long-dictatorship regime. 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 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. The last man 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. He is still sitting in the presidential seat after almost 30 years.

These seven gentlemen were the ones who started from the bottom and reached 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 a century period.

Young people born in the 1970s and 1980s in these countries had to notice that the head of state was unchanged when he or she became an adult and got married. Young people grew up in a society 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 various countries and deeply penetrated among young people. It was the "Arab Spring" in 2011 that the word turned into an actual revolutionary movement.

(To be continued ----)