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"The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(50)

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Chapter 6: Genealogy of Islamic terrorism

6-7(50) Arab spring has come

Even after the collapse of Hussein regime in Iraq in 2003, many of the Arab countries remained as authoritarian states or hereditary monarchic states of dictatorship. It was not exaggeration to say that democratic states of Western style were only Algeria in North Africa, Lebanon in the Middle East, and Iraq which was beaten up by the United States and struggling for democratization. Gaddafi in Libya, Assad in Syria, Saleh in Yemen, Mubarak in Egypt and Ben Ali in Tunisia. All of them had maintained the dictatorship for nearly 30 years each.

Dictatorship is not always a bad thing. Dictator has a good skill to grab the hearts of the people. In many cases dictator often appears as a hero when the country becomes unsafe and the people moves about in confusion in social and economic turmoil. They acknowledge that he is a dictator, but they have been tired of the confusion. They expect that dictator may bring stability to society. Dictator materializes the order of society by an authoritarian method and catches the heart of citizens firmly with claptrap policy. People enthusiastically support him. They ask him to stay as a leader as long as possible.

It is a matter of course that dictator manipulates public opinion with cunning manner. The constitution which prohibited the president 's multiple selection is revised unanimously and he becomes the lifetime president. Then the state will be at the discretion of the dictator. His power becomes quite firm and the regime looks like to continue forever. Furthermore, the dictatorship will transfer to next generation. In Syria, president post was taken over from Hafiz Assad to his son, Bashar Assad, in 2000. The same were Gaddafi of Libya and Mubarak of Egypt where the son intended to inherit power from his father.

But absolute power corrupts absolutely. During the long dictatorship, political and social organization erodes gradually. The economy falls into trap of stagflation. Daily life of ordinary people seems not to have been influenced at first sight because the prices of bread, gasoline, water and electricity are maintained in low under the claptrap policy. But the jobless is

wandering on the street and ordinary citizens suffer from a opaque feeling which cannot forecast the future.

Such a desperate feeling of the common people ignited tragedy in Tunisia in December 2010. Police officers arrested a young jobless man who had been selling vegetables on the street without license by the authority. At that time, the unemployment rate in Tunisia reached in 14%. But unemployment rate of the young generation was terribly as high as 25 to 30%. A young man who was deprived of his bread burned himself to death at the square in front of the city hall protesting against the authority. The burning suicide itself is not so rare in the Islamic world. The incident was reported by local newspaper in the trivial article.



However, as one passer-by recorded the incident on the video by chance and posted it to YouTube. The fact expanded at one push. SNS used to spread endlessly once posted on the Internet. The young people who saw the whole story of the tragedy on the Internet immediately launched protests and called for a demonstration. The demonstration quickly spread from the capital Tunis to all over the country. The demonstrators asked President Ben Ali to resign after 23 years reign. Most of the young participants didn't know the other president since they were born. They cried "We are bored with long dictatorship!" i.e. Kefaya! in Arabic. President Ben Ali could not suppress anti-government demonstration. After one month he finally exiled to Saudi Arabia after one month.

The political change in Tunisia was named the Jasmine Revolution after the national flower of the country. The fire of the revolution quickly spread not only in the northern African countries such as Egypt, Libya, Sudan but also to Syria and Jordan in Levant and Bahrain and Yemen in the Arabian Peninsula. In Cairo, the capital of Egypt, a large number of demonstrators gathered in Maidan(square) at Tahrir (Tahrir means revolution in Arabic) in response to Twitter's call. They collided with army force. There were many casualties. Mubarak's speech, which tried to quell the protestors, rather added fuel to the fire. Eventually President Mubarak resigned in February 2011.

The Western media named a series of revolution as "Arab Spring". The Arab Spring inspires anti-government activists in the Middle Eastern countries who were oppressed by tyranny of the dictatorship regime. In Yemen president Saleh was exposed to intense antigovernment demonstrations. His tribal groups and allies in the family betrayed him and he finally gave up dictatorship. One women activist, Tawakkol Karman, who was a leader of the antigovernment demonstration won the Nobel Peace Prize of that year.

(To be continued ----)