

## "The Peace on The Horizon - 70 Years after The World War 2 in the Middle East"(4)

[\(Japanese Version\)](#)

[\(Arabic Version\)](#)

### Prologue

#### 4. Britain's triple tongue diplomacy during World War I (1)

When talking about the Middle East after the World War II, it is inevitable to mention about "triple tongue diplomacy" by Britain during the World War I.

World War I was a war between two groups. One was UK, France and their allies including Japan. The other side was Germany, Austria and Ottoman Empire. UK, France and its allies defeated German allies. In 1919 the Versailles Treaty was concluded at the Paris Peace Conference on postwar treatments led by UK and France. This treaty was extremely harsh for the defeated Germany and Ottoman Empire. Germany ceded its territory and also was forced a huge compensation. It was the system called the winner-take-all. The UK and France also did not allow the Ottoman Empire. Leaving Asia Minor as Turkish original territory, UK and France confiscated Levant, Tigris & Euphrates regions from Ottoman Empire, having been the lord in the long history. It was a final game of colonization by the European imperialistic nations starting in the 19th century. The wish of Arabs who had been originally living in that area has been totally neglected.

During the World War I UK made three promises, namely the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence, the Sykes- Pico Agreement and the Balfour Declaration. They were the roots of all of the present disasters in the Middle East. Each of these three promises were concluded by UK with different partners respectively. But they totally contradicted each other. Therefore, these series of UK diplomacy were criticized as triple tongue diplomacy. It was not only criticized, but also brought disasters to the whole region in the Middle East. The disaster has been continuing after more than one hundred years.

##### (1) McMahon-Hussein Correspondence

The first promise was a series of ten correspondences between Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in the Sultanate of Egypt, and Hussein bin Ali, Sharif of Makkah from July 1915 to March 1916. As the reward of the war against Ottoman Empire, McMahon promised independence of Arabs. He wrote a letter to Hussein on 24 October 1915, saying as follows.

"I am empowered in the name of the Government of Great Britain to give the following assurances and make the following reply to your letter:

Subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and support the Independence of the Arabs within the territories included in the limits and boundaries proposed by the

Sherif of Mecca”

Hussein was born in prestigious family as a 39<sup>th</sup> direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. He was the Sherif of Makkah and the King of the Hijaz, reigning the Red Sea coastal zone. Hussein, who was supported by UK, ordered his sons Abdallah and Faisal to attack the Ottoman Empire. Abdallah later became the King of Jordan and was a grandfather of Abdallah II, present monarch. And Faisal became the King of Iraq. Two sons fought guerrilla war against Ottoman Empire.



It was this moment that the British military officer Thomas Edward Lawrence, so-called "Lawrence of Arabia", worked as an advisory staff of King Faisal. The name of "Lawrence of Arabia" might give the impression that Lawrence led Arabs with his own tactics and achieved the victory. However, this was wholly illusion made by UK. He was merely a liaison officer of the British Army. His duty was to handle military logistics such as war chest, weapons and ammunition supplied from the UK to the Arabs.

He himself believed that his country would faithfully keep the promise of the McMahon-Hussein Correspondence. However, after the war, the land actually allocated to the Arabs was far from their expectation. T.E. Lawrence lost the trust of Arabs. His heart was torn. He returned to UK and afterwards lost his own life by a motorcycle accident.

In the Arab world, Lawrence is regarded as "the minions of the UK" and has not been appreciated at all. On the other hand, Western people who is the winner of the war created a hero at one's discretion.

(To be continued ----)

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