Chapter 2

The Spread of Radical Islamism:
The Middle East and International
Community after the "Arab Spring"

The international community today faces the threat of radical Islamism, represented in particular by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). ISIL has succeeded in extending its influence by taking advantage of the military vacuum and social turmoil arising in the Middle East since 2011 as a result of the withdrawal of US Armed Forces from Iraq and the Syrian Civil War. By 2014, parts of Syria and Iraq were under the control of ISIL. Furthermore, ISIL has extended its influence to neighboring Arab countries such as Egypt and Libya, where the existing governments collapsed after the Arab Spring and confusion continues to reign. Originally ISIL was just one branch of al-Qaeda, but since its split with al-Qaeda in 2014, ISIL and al-Qaeda have become rival organizations. As ISIL has expanded its influence to various countries, radical groups that once supported al-Qaeda have shifted their allegiance to ISIL, or have split into factions supporting either al-Qaeda or ISIL. This has dealt a blow to al-Qaeda, but as the terrorist attack on the Paris headquarters of the magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015 shows, al-Qaeda is still capable of committing terrorist acts outside the Middle East.

In order to undermine ISIL, it will be necessary not only to defeat it militarily but also to eliminate the root causes of its rise by ending the Syrian Civil War and sectarian conflict in Iraq. However, as long as the Iraqi armed forces on the ground are unable to build their capabilities and there are no strong partners available inside Syria, it will be difficult to defeat ISIL only through air raids by the US-led coalition. In September 2015, Russia started bombing in Syria, but its main targets are said to have been antigovernment factions apart from ISIL. Since there are no signs of any end to the sectarian conflicts in Iraq or the civil war in Syria, the situation on the ground remains favorable to the survival of ISIL. Furthermore, a comprehensive strategy is required to weaken ISIL, including not only military means such as bombing but also nonmilitary means such as countermeasures against online propaganda and the cutting off funds.

East Asian countries have also come under threat from ISIL, including incidents such as the killing of Japanese nationals who traveled to the Middle East and a terrorist attack on an embassy of the Republic of Korea. A map of ISIL's planned expansion shows that it has territorial ambitions in China, and Chinese nationals and people from other East Asian countries have joined ISIL as foreign fighters.

1.　ISIL's Expansion in Syria and Iraq

(1)　From the Birth of ISIL's Predecessor to the Establishment of "Islamic State"

Although ISIL has received wide attention in Japan only since 2014, when it took control of extensive territories in both Iraq and Syria, ISIL and its predecessor organization have a history going back more than ten years. ISIL's predecessor organization finally took the name of "Islamic State" after several changes to its name. In this report the name ISIL is used when referring to the organization in general, but in the following account of its history the name it adopted at each stage of its development is used.

The first name used by ISIL's predecessor was the Tawhid and Jihad Group, which is said to have been established before the US military action against Iraq in 2003.[1] As a Sunni radical Islamist organization, the Tawhid and Jihad Group was hostile to the United States, its allies, the Shiite Muslims who form the majority of the Iraqi people, and the Shiite-led Iraqi government. It embarked on its terrorist activities and gained notoriety in the wake of the chaos following the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime.[2] While that organization operated in Iraq and its many members were thought to be Iraqis, its founder and leader, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was a Jordanian and its leading members included other non-Iraqis.[3] Since the governments of Jordan and most other Arab countries had strong domestic security capabilities and took severe measures against radical Islamists, it was difficult for them to be active in their own countries. For these radicals, Iraq, where the security situation deteriorated greatly after the fall of the Hussein regime in 2003, provided an ideal environment where they could freely conduct their activities. This is one reason why Zarqawi chose Iraq as the base for the Tawhid and Jihad Group's operations. When he was operating in Afghanistan from the 1980s to the 1990s, Zarqawi is thought to have met Osama bin Laden and other leaders of al-Qaeda, but his Tawhid and Jihad Group did not belong to al-Qaeda. One of the terrorist acts committed by the Tawhid and Jihad Group in Iraq was the kidnapping and beheading in May 2004 of a US national, a video of which it posted online. In this video, in which Zarqawi himself is thought to have carried out the beheading, the US hostage wore an orange prison jumpsuit. This was modeled on the orange jumpsuits worn by the radical Islamists held at the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, whom the United States had taken captive in

Afghanistan and other countries after the 9/11 terrorist attacks of 2001.[4] It appears that the US hostage was forced to wear these prisoners' clothes as revenge against these US actions. This method of making hostages wear the same prison uniforms, executing them and posting a video of the execution online was also adopted by the organizations that succeeded the Tawhid and Jihad Group. In the killing of Japanese nationals by ISIL in 2015, for example, both of the victims wore the same orange prison jumpsuits. The Tawhid and Jihad Group had the following five distinctive features: (1) it was led by non-Iraqis; (2) its area of operations was almost entirely limited to Iraq; (3) it had no organizational links to al-Qaeda; (4) it did not call itself a "state"; and (5) it did not have any controlled areas.

In October 2004, the Tawhid and Jihad Group became affiliated with al-Qaeda and changed its name to al-Qaeda Organization of Jihad in Mesopotamia. With this, the organization became the Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda, and is usually referred to as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Al-Qaeda subsequently established other regional branches, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)[5] in 2006-2007, which was in effect its branch in Algeria, and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)[6] in 2009, which was in effect its branch in Yemen. Among these branches, AQI was established at a relatively early stage.[7] As the history of the emergence of AQI shows, most of these branches were not formed by dispatching al-Qaeda members from its core leadership hiding in Afghanistan or Pakistan but rather grew out of existing local independent radical Islamist organizations which chose to go under the umbrella of al-Qaeda. The core and branches of al-Qaeda do not have a "command and obey" relationship; each branch operates autonomously while nominally recognizing the superiority of core al-Qaeda.[8] AQI, which emerged in this way, continued to commit terrorist acts. Most of these attacks took place in Iraq, but some were committed overseas. For instance, AQI was responsible for a suicide bomb attack at a wedding in Amman in Jordan in November 2005 that killed more than fifty people. In this incident, an Iraqi woman member of AQI was arrested as a would-be suicide bomber and sentenced to death. In 2015 ISIL, which had developed from AQI, demanded the release of this woman as a condition for the freeing of a Japanese hostage.[9] Compared to its predecessor the Tawhid and Jihad Group, AQI has the clear difference of its organizational links to al-Qaeda. However, it is not different from the Tawhid and Jihad Group in the following four respects: (1) it is led by non-Iraqis; (2) with a few exceptions, its area of operations is limited to Iraq; (3) it does not call itself a

"state"; and (4) it does not have any controlled areas.

In January 2006, AQI joined five other radical Islamist groups to form the Mujahidin Shura Council (MSC), an umbrella organization of six groups. Zarqawi maintained his position as AQI's leader and the leader of the MSC was Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi. While Zarqawi, as his name indicates, came from Zarqa in northwest Jordan, Baghdadi was an Iraqi from the capital city of Baghdad. This gives the impression that the reorganization with Baghdadi as leader of the MSC replaced a non-Iraqi-led organization with an Iraqi-led organization.[10] However, there is very little information about the new leader. In view of this, some people say that the MSC was not in fact established and was simply contrived to give the impression that an Iraqi had taken over the leadership, in order to avoid criticism that Zarqawi was an outsider and ensure the smooth continuation of operations in Iraq.[11] In June 2006, Zarqawi was killed in an attack by the US troops and was replaced as leader of AQI by Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, an Egyptian national,[12] thus continuing to have a non-Iraqi leader. In October, the MSC unilaterally announced the establishment of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), led by Abu Umar al-Baghdadi. ISI claimed the six governorates of Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, and Ninawa, and parts of Babil and Wasit governorates as its territory. In April 2007, ISI announced the members of its new cabinet, in which al-Muhajir was appointed minister of war.[13]

Through these developments, the organization embracing AQI changed, at least nominally, from being simply a radical Islamist group into a "state" that possessed its own territory, head of state, and cabinet. Since ISI's leader, Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, was apparently from Iraq, it seemed that an Iraqi now governed a new state in Iraq. This Abu Umar al-Baghdadi was considered by some to be the same person as Abdullah Rashid al-Baghdadi and by others to be a different person. With so little information available, it is difficult to judge.[14] Compared to its predecessor AQI, there were two clear differences: it was led by an Iraqi, at least formally, and it called itself a state. However, there was no change regarding its continuing organizational links with core al-Qaeda, the fact that its area of operations was almost entirely restricted to Iraq, and that it did not have any controlled areas. Since ISI is a Sunni organization, the governorates that it claimed as its territory were regions whose populations included a high proportion of Sunnis, and the operations of ISI were mainly conducted in these regions.[15] Although ISI did not have control over these governorates, it took control of many

of these regions during the period when it came to call itself Islamic State (IS). ISI is thus considered to have achieved its original objectives.

(2)   Establishment of Controlled Areas in Syria and Iraq

ISI's territorial expansion did not proceed smoothly. The formation of ISI was announced in October 2006, but in the previous summer homegrown Iraqi Sunni groups, who had grown increasingly discontent with the continuing deterioration of public order, had formed militias known as "Awakening Councils" with the aim of overthrowing AQI (and ISI after it was formed from AQI).[16] For the Sunni group ISI, this emergence of a strong hostile force from within the Sunni camp was a setback. In April 2010, ISI suffered another blow when its leader al-Baghdadi and "Minister of War" al-Muhajir were killed in a joint operation of US and Iraqi forces. The Iraqi Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was appointed as the new leader of ISI.[17]

Two turning points that contributed to the expansion of ISI's power occurred in 2011. The first was due to the actions taken by the prime minister of Iraq, Nouri al-Maliki, when Iraq was freed from US pressure after the withdrawal of US troops in December 2011. Maliki proceeded to give preferential treatment to Shiites while giving the cold shoulder to Sunnis. As a result, antigovernment feelings arose among the Sunnis and the ground was laid for an increase in the number of Sunnis joining or cooperating with ISI.[18] The second turning point was the spread into Syria of the antigovernment movement known as the "Arab Spring" that occurred in Arab nations in 2011. As a result of this, a civil war broke out in Syria between the Bashar al-Assad regime and antigovernment groups, making it possible for ISI and other radical organizations to operate freely inside Syria.

Although the composition of the forces fighting the Syrian Civil War is complex, it can be basically described as a conflict between the minority Alawites, to which President Assad belongs, on the government side and the majority Sunnis who form the antigovernment forces. However, these antigovernment forces are not monolithic; they are divided into many groups and there have been many battles among these groups. One of these antigovernment Sunni groups is the al-Nusra Front—the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda—formed in January 2012.[19] Led by Abu Muhammad al-Julani, the aim of the al-Nusra Front is to overturn the Assad regime and establish an Islamic state in Syria. Julani is a Syrian national who was sent by ISI to Syria from Iraq.[20] Some people say that, since then-al-Nusra Front was receiving aid such as funds and weapons from ISI, it was in fact

the Syrian branch of ISI rather than the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda.[21]

On April 8, 2013, by which time the al-Nusra Front had grown into a powerful antigovernment force, ISI announced that it merged the al-Nusra Front and ISI into one group, Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS, or ISIL). In other words, the Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda declared that it absorbed and merged with the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda.[22] Since Sham (the Levant) refers to Syria in its narrow sense and Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, and the Palestine autonomous areas in its broader sense, this declaration meant that the "territory" of the self-proclaimed state extended at least across the whole of Iraq and Syria.[23] At this time, like other antigovernment groups, the al-Nusra Front had gained control of parts of Syria, and this made it more realistic than before for ISIL to call itself a state. However, both the al-Nusra Front and core al-Qaeda rejected the merger. The al-Nusra Front announced its rejection of the merger two days later on April 10. The following June, core al-Qaeda also ruled against the merger with ISI, stating that the al-Nusra Front and ISI should confine their operations to Syria and Iraq, respectively.[24] ISI in turn rejected this ruling and reasserted its position that it had absorbed the al-Nusra Front and become ISIL. This deepened the conflict between ISIL and core al-Qaeda and in February 2014 ties were severed between the two.[25] Thus al-Qaeda lost its branch in Iraq, and ISIL, which had been the Iraqi branch of al-Qaeda, grew into a rival of al-Qaeda. A conflict of opinions arose within the al-Nusra Front about which policy to follow. As many members including foreign fighters broke away from the al-Nusra Front and joined ISIL, both the al-Nusra Front and ISIL remained in Syria.[26] Compared to its predecessor ISI, ISIL was the same in that it was Iraqi-led and called itself a state. However, there were also clear differences: it severed its organizational ties with al-Qaeda; it extended its area of operations to both Iraq and Syria; and it acquired controlled areas.

Following its establishment in 2013, ISIL, while extending its controlled areas in Syria as one of the antigovernment groups fighting in the civil war, also gained and expanded its control over territory in neighboring Iraq, where the situation became increasingly volatile under the influence of the Syrian Civil War. In March 2013, for instance, before the establishment of ISIL, antigovernment forces including the al-Nusra Front seized Raqqa in northern Syria.[27] As a result of fighting among various groups, Raqqa fell under the almost complete control of ISIL in January 2014[28] and subsequently became ISIL's headquarters in Syria.[29] In the same month, ISIL also captured Fallujah in Anbar governorate in western

Figure 2.1. Map of Iraq and Syria

Iraq.[30] The following June, ISIL forces attacked in Iraq, seized Mosul, the largest city in northern Iraq, and took control of Tikrit, the capital of the Salah al-Din governorate and birthplace of the former president, Saddam Hussein.[31] ISIL thus gained control of a wide area spanning Syria and Iraq, securing the important bases of Raqqa in Syria and Mosul in Iraq. At the end of June, it announced the establishment of a "caliphate," changing the name of its state from ISIL to Islamic State (IS) and naming its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as caliph.[32] Conceptually, the caliph is the supreme leader of all Muslims throughout the world, and there can only be one caliph. Historically, the sultans of the Ottoman Empire were also caliphs, but following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in 1922, the caliphate system was abolished in 1924 and the caliph ceased to exist.[33]

The fact that the organization changed its name from Islamic State of Iraq and Sham to simply Islamic State, removing geographical limitations, and chose to call its leader the caliph shows that IS conceptually views the

Table 2.1. Changes in ISIL's name

| Period	Name
?–2004	Tawhid and Jihad Group
2004–2006	al-Qaeda Organization of Jihad in Mesopotamia
2006	Mujahidin Shura Council
2006–2013	Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)
2013–2014	Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS, or ISIL)
2014–	Islamic State (IS)

Source: Compiled by the author.

whole world as its territory. At nearly the same time as this renaming, a map believed to indicate IS future territory was posted on the Web. In addition to the whole of the Middle East, this projected future territory of IS covers a wide area including Eastern Europe, the Iberian Peninsula, and central Asia.

IS subsequently continued to expand its controlled areas in Iraq and Syria. In Iraq, although it lost Tikrit in April 2015, it controlled Ramadi, the capital of Anbar governorate from May to December in 2015, and still has control of extensive territory, mainly in western and northern Iraq.[34] In Syria, after gaining control of territory in the northern and eastern parts of the country, IS extended its control to central Syria after seizing Palmyra, a city famous for its ancient ruins, in May 2015. As result of this expansion, IS had gained control of more than half of Syria.[35] In 2015 IS's controlled areas in Iraq and Syria are said to have decreased by 14 percent. However, IS continues to hold the two important bases of Mosul and Raqqa. Unless it loses at least one of these two bases, it is difficult to consider IS as weakened.[36]

Compared to its predecessor Islamic State of Iraq and Sham, IS remains unchanged in that its leaders are still Iraqis, it calls itself a state, it has no organizational ties with al-Qaeda, and it has controlled areas. However, as explained below, there are two clear differences: its area of operations expanded beyond Iraq and Syria and it came to have territorial ambitions on a global scale.

The main reasons why ISIL was able to expand its controlled areas in Iraq over a short period of time are as follows. Firstly, since the Shiite-led Maliki government gave Sunnis the cold shoulder after the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq at the end of 2011, some Sunnis became hostile toward the government and gave their support to ISIL. For instance, in Anbar governorate, immediately before ISIL expanded its territory there in January 2014, Shiite-led security forces suppressed

Figure 2.2. Area included in the map purportedly indicating the future territory of "Islamic State"
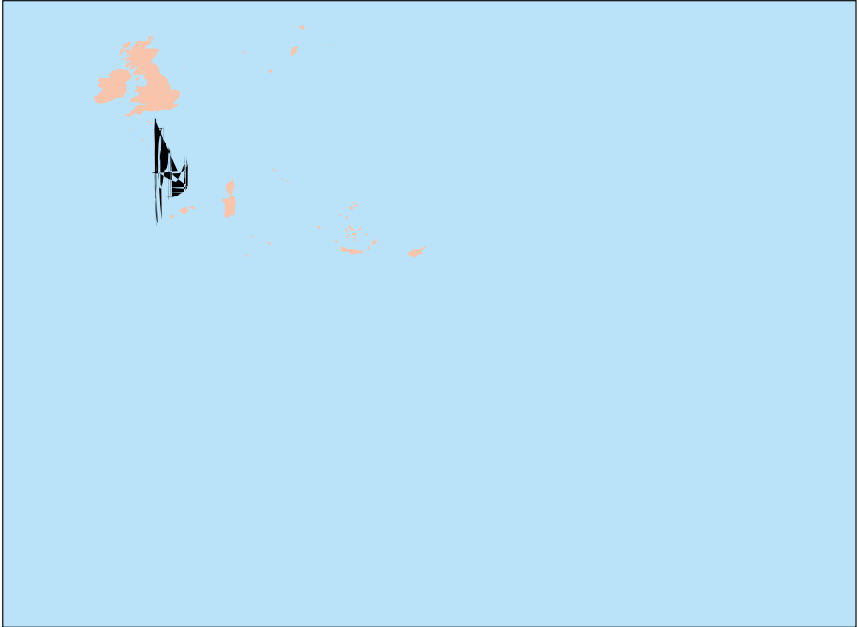
antigovernment protests by Sunnis, killing and injuring many people and arousing their anger toward the Maliki government.[37)] Sunnis make up the majority of the residents of the main regions under the control of IS and these Sunnis feel dissatisfaction towards the government. As a result, Iraqi security forces were unable to obtain from Sunni residents the information they needed, and this was one cause of their defeat in battles with IS.[38)]

Secondly, although the original members of ISIL were almost entirely limited to Sunni Islamists, ISIL later succeeded in making use of sectarian antagonism to recruit people who were Sunnis but not necessarily Islamists. Former Baath Party members who had worked for the government and armed forces of the Saddam Hussein regime fall into this category of non-Islamist Sunnis. The Army of the Naqshbandi Order, an antigovernment armed group led by Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, who was the second man in the former Saddam Hussein regime, is thought to be composed mainly of former Baath Party members. Judging from its name, which

is derived from a Sufi order, the members of the Army of the Naqshbandi Order can be viewed as secularists rather than Islamists. Nevertheless, ISIL succeeded in recruiting this group, bringing to its side old hands of the former regime who had great military and administrative experience.[39]

Thirdly, the Iraqi security forces, which had to deal with ISIL without support from foreign armed forces after the withdrawal of US troops at the end of 2011, were undermined as a fighting force by chronic corruption and sectarian prejudices and were frequently defeated by ISIL.[40] For instance, it was pointed out that the security forces included at least 50,000 "ghost soldiers" who were on the payroll but did not turn up for work and that officers unlawfully received these soldiers' pay.[41]

Fourthly, under the influence of the civil war in neighboring Syria, the situation in Iraq has become increasingly volatile and unstable since 2011. In Iraq, Sunni residents' protests against the Shiite-led government intensified from that year, provoked by fighting in Syria between Sunni antigovernment groups and the non-Sunni Assad regime.[42]

2.   Expansion of ISIL into Neighboring Arab Countries

(1)   Egypt—Expansion of Terrorism through ISIL-Sinai Province

Because several radical Islamist groups came under the umbrella of ISIL after the announcement of the establishment of Islamic State in June 2014, ISIL succeeded in expanding into countries other than Iraq and Syria. In November 2014, ISIL-Sinai Province was established in the north of the Sinai Peninsula in northeast Egypt as a result of the developments described below.[43]

Following the outbreak of antigovernment demonstrations in Egypt in the wave of the Arab Spring in January 2011, the radical Islamist organization Ansar Bait al-Maqdis (ABM: "Supporters of Jerusalem"), the predecessor of ISIL-Sinai Province, was formed in the Sinai Peninsula in February. Even before the birth of ABM, radical Islamists had been active in the Sinai Peninsula. In 2012 ABM committed terrorist attacks in the Sinai Peninsula such as bombing the pipelines that carry gas from Egypt to Israel, launching rockets aimed at southern Israel, and attacking an Israeli border patrol. All of these attacks targeted neighboring Israel. Before the Muhammad Morsi administration was ousted by a de facto coup by the Egyptian military in July 2013, the Egyptian government was not the target of ABM's attacks. But after the fall of the Morsi administration, the government

Figure 2.3. Map of Egypt

became ABM's main target. This change of target is ascribed to the fact that both ABM and the Muslim Brotherhood, the base of the Morsi administration, are Islamist organizations while the Egyptian military which led the interim government after the fall of the Morsi administration is hostile to Islamism.

ABM continued to commit terrorist acts in Egypt against the interim government and the following Abd-al-Fattah al-Sisi administration. In October 2013, for instance, ABM claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing attack on the headquarters of the security forces in the south of the Sinai Peninsula.[44] Furthermore, its area of operations extended beyond the Sinai Peninsula to the Egyptian mainland. For example, the group claimed responsibility for the assassination attempt on Minister of Interior Muhammad Ibrahim Moustafa in Cairo in September 2013.[45]

In Egypt, the security situation deteriorated due to the weakening of the police and the political confusion after the fall of the Muhammad Husni Mubarak administration in the wave of the Arab Spring of 2011. Besides, after the fall of the Morsi administration in July 2013, the continuing opposition by supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood through acts of violence and demonstrations calling for

the restoration of the Morsi administration led to confrontations with the government and the further deterioration of security in Egypt. The supreme leader of the Brotherhood, General Guide Muhammad Badie was arrested in August, and the interim government designated the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist group in December.[46] These hard-line measures failed to eliminate opposition by the Muslim Brotherhood and are even seen as having intensified the antigovernment activities of some of its members. For instance, although the Muslim Brotherhood itself denied involvement in the attack in March 2014 on a military bus in Cairo in which one officer was killed and others were wounded, the military expressed the view that members of the group were responsible.[47] Furthermore, after the fall of the Morsi administration, several radical groups of uncertain origin that did not advocate Islamism, such as the Popular Resistance Movement and the Revolutionary Punishment Movement, emerged and committed many terrorist acts, and the media favorable to the Muslim Brotherhood expressed approval for these groups.[48] It therefore seems likely that the Muslim Brotherhood played some part in these terrorist acts with the aim of dealing a blow to the government.

The security situation in Egypt deteriorated from 2011 onwards in the confusion following the Arab Spring. Besides, amid worsening security in 2013 caused by the confrontation between the government and the Muslim Brotherhood after the fall of the Morsi administration, the situation deteriorated even further when ABM started targeting its attacks against the government. It is not clear whether organizational links exist between ABM and the Muslim Brotherhood. However, because both groups intensified their attacks against the government in the same period, it could be said that they form in effect a united front.[49]

In November 2014, ABM became affiliated with ISIL and changed its name to ISIL-Sinai Province.[50] The new name shows that the group views the Sinai Peninsula as an ISIL enclave. Considering that ABM was receiving instructions from ISIL via the Internet regarding effective strategic operations even before it came under the ISIL umbrella,[51] it is highly likely that cooperation between them became closer after that. After the name change, ISIL-Sinai Province continued to commit terrorist acts. At the beginning of July 2015, for instance, it implemented attacks targeting multiple Egyptian military checkpoints. In response, the Egyptian military conducted an operation to eradicate it. As a result, more than one hundred fighters of ISIL-Sinai Province and seventeen soldiers of the Egyptian army were killed.[52] In August, ISIL-Sinai Province kidnapped a Croatian man on

the outskirts of Cairo and posted his picture on the Internet, later announcing that he had been executed.[53] Radical Islamist groups had frequently kidnapped and murdered foreigners in Iraq and Syria prior to this, but this was the first time that such an incident had occurred in the outskirts of Cairo in Egypt. The incident showed that ISIL and groups under its umbrella are expanding the areas where they can commit terrorist acts. At the end of October, the crash of a Russian passenger aircraft that had just taken off from Sharm el-Sheikh in the Sinai Peninsula had a serious impact, leading to the suspension of flights to Sharm el-Sheikh by some European countries and the suspension of all flights to Egypt by Russia. ISIL-Sinai Province claimed responsibility for the incident, stating that it had brought the aircraft down by putting a bomb on board.[54]

There are differences in the factors leading to the rise of ISIL (and groups under its umbrella) in Iraq, Syria, and Egypt. In Iraq and Syria, against a background of poor treatment of Sunni residents by non-Sunni-led governments, ISIL took advantage of sectarian conflict. In Egypt, however, where the great majority of Muslims are Sunnis, such sectarian conflicts between Muslims are not likely to arise. There are two main factors behind ISIL emergence in Egypt. Firstly, after the Arab Spring of 2011, the security situation continued to deteriorate over a long period, enabling ISIL and other radical groups to operate freely. Secondly, there emerged a new trend where moderate Islamists switched to the radical Islamist side within the Islamist camp after the collapse of the Morsi administration in 2013, and a considerable part of those who were believed to be moderate Islamists such as the Muslim Brotherhood switched to the radical Islamist side and committed terrorist acts, allowing ISIL to take advantage of this new trend to extend its influence. However, there had been an opposite trend where radical Islamists switched to the moderate Islamist side within the Islamist camp, namely, some existing radical Islamist organizations had reorganized themselves into moderate Islamist organizations in order to participate in lawful political activities in the period from the collapse of the Mubarak administration in the Arab Spring in 2011 through the democratic elections and the resulting establishment of the Morsi administration in 2012 to the fall of the Morsi administration in 2013.

The al-Sisi government formed in June 2014 has implemented both security and economic policies to contain Islamist groups such as ISIL-Sinai Province and the Muslim Brotherhood and restore stability in Egypt. On the security front, the

government imposed new antiterrorism laws in August 2015. These new laws, which offer additional protection from legal consequences for military and police officers who have used force, establish special courts for trying terrorist suspects and impose fines on journalists who contradict official accounts of terrorist attacks, have also been criticized as undermining freedom of speech.[55] On the economic front, the government has launched a huge infrastructure and construction drive to counteract the severe outlook for tourism, Egypt's main industry, with the decrease in visitors from overseas due to the deterioration of security. Soon after its formation in 2014, for instance, the al-Sisi government started a construction project for expansion of the Suez Canal, which was completed in August 2015. This expansion has increased the number of vessels that can pass through the canal, which is expected to boost Egypt's toll revenues from the canal.[56] In March 2015, the government announced plans to build a new capital to the east of Cairo through a project that would cost a massive 45 billion dollars and take five to seven years to complete. Egypt has a severe unemployment problem and this project is expected to create employment for more than one million people.[57] Egypt also has a serious budget deficit. However, since the launch of its preceding interim government the al-Sisi government has secured considerable economic assistance through its good diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member countries, which pledged 12.5 billion dollars in financial aid and investments in March 2015.[58]

When dealing with radical Islamist organizations like ISIL, the economy and security are always related. For example, kidnapping incidents by groups under ISIL's umbrella have also occurred in Egypt. It is said that in some cases the kidnappers were not ISIL members but sold hostages to ISIL for a profit. In a deteriorating economy there are likely to be more people who are willing to kidnap and sell hostages for money, and when security deteriorates it is difficult to prevent such crimes. The policies of the al-Sisi government, which emphasize both the security and economic aspects, can therefore be considered appropriate. However, the security situation in Egypt has not improved. In September 2015, Egyptian security forces mistakenly shelled and killed twelve people including Mexican tourists while pursuing militant radical Islamists in the Western Desert, which is a well-known tourist site.[59] This incident could lead to a further decrease in tourists from overseas. Thus in some cases security measures have a negative impact on tourism and therefore the economy in general.

The ISIL forces that the al-Sisi government is fighting against are not limited to ISIL-Sinai Province. ISIL is also present in neighboring Libya and there are fears that it will penetrate to western Egypt due to the country's weak border controls. Furthermore, large numbers of Egyptians work in other Arab countries. In February 2015, ISIL in Libya posted a video online showing the execution of twenty-one Egyptian Coptic Christian migrant workers, and the next day the Egyptian military conducted air strikes against ISIL positions in Libya in retaliation.[60]

(2) Libya—Expansion of ISIL in the Absence of a Central Government

From October 2014 to June 2015, ISIL's branch in Libya had control of parts of the city of Derna on the East Mediterranean coast. Since mid-2015, ISIL has also controlled most of Sirte, the hometown of Col. Muammar al-Qaddafi.[61] Ever since the Arab Spring of 2011, ISIL has taken advantage of the unstable situation in Libya to expand its influence, as outlined below.

With the spread of the Arab Spring in 2011, demonstrations calling for the overthrow of the Muammar al-Qaddafi regime occurred in Libya, but the regime suppressed them by force and a civil war broke out between government and rebel forces. In October 2011, al-Qaddafi was killed and his regime fell. During that year, the rebel forces established an interim government. However, the militias that had fought on the rebels' side in the civil war remained throughout the country without being disarmed, which undermined the power of the interim government.

In June 2014, amid continuing fighting among militias, an election of the House of Representatives was held to replace the General National Congress. In this election, secularist lawmakers increased their number of seats, decreasing the number of seats held by Islamists. However, the Islamists refused to recognize the result of the election. This made it impossible for the House of Representatives, which consisted mainly of secularists, to operate in the capital city of Tripoli, and the House of Representatives and the government were forced to move to Tobruk in eastern Libya in August.[62] In response to this, the Islamists and others who rejected the results of the election formed a coalition named Libya Dawn and set up their own parliament and government in Tripoli.[63] As a result, while fighting among various militias continued throughout Libya, the country was ruled by two weak governments at the same time. While the international community recognizes the government in Tobruk as legitimate, in November 2014, the Libyan Supreme

Constitutional Court ruled that the parliament in Tobruk was unconstitutional and denied the legitimacy of the government there.[64] There are also divisions within the two governments and parliaments, as shown by the dismissal of the prime minister of the government in Tripoli, Umar al-Hassi, by the parliament there at the end of March 2015.

In May 2014, the Libyan National Army led by Gen. Khalifah Haftar attacked Islamist militias as the beginning of a large-scale military operation codenamed Operation Dignity. Having lived in exile during the reign of al-Qaddafi, Haftar returned to Libya at the time of the Arab Spring in 2011 and took part in the civil war against the al-Qaddafi regime. It seems that Haftar's military operations initially had no direct connection with the government in Tobruk. However, he is hostile toward Islamists. Besides, he is clearly viewed as an enemy by the government in Tripoli, because a court under control of the Tripoli government issued a warrant for his arrest when his forces conducted air strikes on Mitiga Airport in Tripoli in November 2014. Against this background, in March 2015 the Tobruk government appointed Haftar as the supreme commander of the Libyan armed forces and he officially joined their side.

Since September 2014, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has mediated negotiations for a ceasefire in the civil war and reconciliation between the two governments.[65] In December 2015, under UNSMIL's mediation, representatives of the Tobruk-based government and the Tripoli-based government signed an agreement to form a unified government. However, because some factions in the respective governments still oppose the agreement, it is not clear whether Libya can establish a unified government smoothly.[66]

In this unstable situation, ISIL has succeeded in expanding its control. Although many aspects of the origins of ISIL in Libya remain unclear, it is said that several hundred Libyans who had fought as ISIL fighters in the Syrian civil war since 2011 returned to Libya and set up a Libyan branch of ISIL. After recruiting new members and increasing its forces, the Libyan branch took control of parts of Derna in eastern Libya from October 2014 to June 2015. In addition, al-Baghdadi announced the creation of three ISIL "provinces" in Libya in November 2015, although it seems that this announcement did not reflect the reality on the ground.[67] In 2015 ISIL also took control of most of Sirte and has extended its influence to the outskirts of the city. It is pointed out that Sirte, the birthplace of al-Qaddafi, fell under the control of ISIL because the residents of the city

cooperated with ISIL in response to the bad treatment they received after the fall of the al-Qaddafi regime.

Two factors enabled ISIL rise in Libya. Firstly, Libya continued to suffer from virtual non-existence of central government after the Arab Spring in 2011. Secondly, arms and weapons were not controlled by the government and easily passed into the hands of militia groups including radical Islamists.

(3) The Global Rivalry between ISIL and al-Qaeda

When ISIL was al-Qaeda's branch in Iraq, the core leadership of al-Qaeda was its parent organization and expanded the presence of al-Qaeda by setting up branches (franchises) in various countries. However, after ISIL split off from al-Qaeda in 2014, especially after its declaration of a "caliphate," they became rival organizations. Since then, ISIL and al-Qaeda have competed on a global scale to gain a presence in various countries. On the one hand, ISIL has called upon al-Qaeda's branches and other Islamist groups to come under its umbrella. On the other hand, al-Qaeda has taken countermeasures such as the establishment of new branches.

In Algeria, al-Qaeda's Algerian branch AQIM has operated since 2007. Originally, when the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat came under al-Qaeda's umbrella, it became AQIM. However, some members of AQIM defected from the group, formed a new group called Soldiers of the Caliphate in Algeria, and went under the umbrella of ISIL in September 2014.[68] The same month, this group kidnapped a French citizen in Algeria, posted his video on the Internet, calling on the French government to stop its bombing in Iraq. They later killed the hostage.[69] In December, the leader of Soldiers of the Caliphate in Algeria, Abd al-Malik Gouri, was killed in a military operation by the Algerian armed forces, but the group is still believed to exist.[70] Thus in Algeria an existing radical Islamist group became a branch of al-Qaeda and then split into two factions, one faction remaining under the umbrella of al-Qaeda and the other joining ISIL.

In October 2014, several commanders of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) defected from TTP and pledged allegiance to ISIL.[71] In January 2015, ISIL appointed a former TTP commander Hafez Saeed Khan as the governor of Khorasan Province and a former commander of Taliban in Afghanistan as his deputy.[72] This was in effect an announcement of the establishment of "ISIL-Khorasan Province," with a self-proclaimed territory covering the whole of

Afghanistan and Pakistan and parts of their neighboring countries.[73] As mentioned above, some commanders of the Taliban defected and joined ISIL, but the Taliban itself retains its cooperative relationship with al-Qaeda and rejects ISIL. As a result, several battles occurred in 2015 in Afghanistan between the Taliban and ISIL-Khorasan Province.[74]

In Nigeria, Boko Haram, which is said to have cooperated with al-Qaeda, became affiliated with ISIL in March 2015 and changed its name to ISIL-West Africa Province in April.[75] In the Caucasus region of Russia, certain members of a group calling itself the Caucasus Emirate, which had cooperated with al-Qaeda, defected from the group and became affiliated with ISIL in June 2015, unilaterally announcing the establishment of ISIL-Caucasus Province.[76]

As shown above, in areas where al-Qaeda branches or groups cooperating with al-Qaeda already operated, several of these branches and groups or certain members of them have severed their ties with al-Qaeda and shifted their allegiance to ISIL from 2014 onwards. On the other hand al-Qaeda, which has to take countermeasures against ISIL, announced the establishment of its new Indian branch in September 2014. However, nothing is known about the activities of this branch.[77]

Since the development of this rivalry, it seems that both ISIL and al-Qaeda have committed sensational terrorist acts whose aim is not only to deal a blow to the targets but also to demonstrate their power and thereby encourage Islamist groups around the world to join their respective camps. In short, the two rival organizations are fighting a terrorist propaganda war on the global stage. For instance, in the January 7, 2015 terrorist attack on the headquarters of the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, which had published satirical cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, the editor-in-chief and eleven others, mostly staff members, were killed, and this attack on freedom of expression sent shock waves throughout the world. Al-Qaeda's branch in Yemen, AQAP, claimed responsibility for it.[78] Less than two weeks later, on January 20, ISIL posted a video of two Japanese hostages online, demanded 200 million dollars in ransom, and later killed both of them. The *Charlie Hebdo* attack demonstrated that al-Qaeda, which was often viewed as inferior in power to ISIL, was still capable of implementing a large-scale terrorist attack outside the Middle East. However, in terms of the number of casualties, ISIL's simultaneous terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 were much larger than the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, which suggests that ISIL holds the upper hand.

3.   The International Community and ISIL

(1)   The International Community's Response to ISIL and Its Difficulties

Since the threat posed by ISIL became obvious in 2014, the international community has not succeeded in weakening it. It can be pointed out that one reason why ISIL has succeeded in surviving is that the efforts of the international community to overthrow it have not always gone smoothly.

Although ISIL has expanded its presence outside Iraq and Syria, these two countries constitute its core. In order to eliminate ISIL, therefore, it is necessary to defeat it in both countries. In order to defeat ISIL, it is essential to eradicate the political and social factors behind its rise, to defeat it militarily where it has controlled areas and fighters, and to take countermeasures against ISIL's PR strategy utilizing the Internet and social media. However, none of these efforts has proceeded smoothly.

The two biggest political and social factors that enabled the rise of ISIL are the participation of considerable numbers of Iraqi Sunnis in ISIL triggered by being snubbed by the Iraqi government and ISIL's utilization of the chaos and sectarian conflicts caused by the Syrian civil war. Therefore, if sectarian reconciliation is achieved in Iraq and the civil war in Syria comes to an end, ISIL will be greatly weakened. But, even if ISIL is temporarily weakened by military strikes, it may recover its power as long as these two factors remain.

However, it is still difficult to see any sign of reconciliation of sectarian conflict in Iraq. Prime Minister Maliki, who had aggravated the conflict between Shiites and Sunnis, resigned in August 2014 partly due to pressure from the United States.[79] It was hoped Maliki's successor as prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, would ease the sectarian conflict, but so far he has been unable to do so. Due to the weakness of the Iraqi armed forces, the al-Abadi government has relied on Shiite militias in the fight against ISIL. Since these militias looted the property of Sunni residents, the enmity between Shiites and Sunnis remains in Iraq.[80] In Syria, the civil war shows no sign of ending and is even becoming more complex. While there are many armed groups, probably the two largest forces are the Assad regime and ISIL. One of the third-largest groups is the al-Nusra Front, al-Qaeda's branch in Syria. However, the international community does not have the option of giving its approval to terrorist organizations like ISIL and al-Qaeda. In 2012,

nations such as Syria's former suzerain France, the United States, the United Kingdom, GCC members, and Turkey approved the National Coalition for Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, rejecting the legitimacy of the Assad regime.[81] Although it was expected that the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces would not only extend its influence on the international politics but also in the struggle on the ground, it failed to grow into a powerful force in the civil war. As a result, since there is no group or organization in Syria that can be recognized by the international community and has the capacity to end the civil war and become the future government of Syria, the international community is unable to draw up a blueprint for the conclusion of the civil war. In short, the two factors that enabled ISIL's rise still remain in place.

From the military viewpoint too, the situation that has enabled ISIL's survival still remains. In response to ISIL's rise in 2014, the United States launched air strikes against ISIL targets in Iraq in August and in Syria in September.[82] The nations participating in the US-led coalition, such as European nations and GCC members, also conducted air strikes against ISIL.[83] Apart from the Iraqi security forces, Kurdish Peshmerga forces, and special forces from the United States and elsewhere, no ground troops were sent in, but in view of ISIL's control of territory, it is not realistic to overthrow ISIL by bombing alone without any coordination with troops on the ground.[84] In addition to air strikes, the United States has provided training, but the number of trainees has been very small, particularly in Syria.[85] Although Saudi Arabia and other GCC nations have joined the US-led coalition, because they fear the growth of Iran's power, they do not want a scenario where ISIL is destroyed but the Assad regime recovers with support from Iran. Furthermore, it is said that on an individual basis, some rich Saudis have supplied ISIL with funds and more than 2,000 Saudis have joined ISIL as fighters.[86]

On the other hand, Iran has participated actively in the fight against ISIL from its standpoint of supporting the Iraqi government and the Assad regime which, like Iran, are not dominated by Sunnis, and this stance might make GCC member nations take a more negative attitude towards the fight against ISIL. In January 2016, Saudi Arabia's execution of a well-known Shiite cleric sparked protests by Iranians who stormed the Saudi Embassy in Tehran. This caused Saudi Arabia to cut diplomatic ties with Iran and other GCC nations followed suit, Bahrain severing ties and the United Arab Emirates downgrading its diplomatic relations

with Iran.[87] There is a possibility that this worsening of relations between GCC nations and Iran may hinder cooperation in the international community in the fight against ISIL. Iran's diplomatic relations with the West have been improving following its agreement in July 2015 on its nuclear program with the United States and other Western powers, but its standpoint regarding the civil war in Syria remains very different from that of Western nations.

In August 2015, Turkey also changed its stance and commenced air strikes against ISIL. Until then Turkey, whose highest priority is to bring down the Assad regime, was not able to take effective measures against the flow of foreign fighters across the Turkish border to join ISIL and other groups in Syria.[88] If ISIL is weakened in the civil war in Syria, this might strengthen the Kurds in Syria, which might in turn encourage Kurds in neighboring countries including Turkey to campaign more actively for independence or greater rights. For Turkey, this is not a desirable scenario.

At the end of September 2015, Russia started air strikes in Syria. Although it claims it is targeting ISIL, Russia, which supports the Assad regime, is thought to target all the forces opposing the Assad regime, including ISIL. In other words, Russia's position regarding the civil war in Syria is close to that of Iran. Although it cannot be said that the Assad regime's situation was critical when Russia started bombing, its military intervention is certainly helping the regime. The position of the Western powers, GCC nations, and Turkey, which want the Assad regime to go, and that of Iran and Russia, which want it to stay, are clearly different. Due to these differences in viewpoint among nations, no military consensus has been reached in the fight against ISIL, and this situation has enabled ISIL to survive.[89] It was expected that the bringing down of the Russian passenger aircraft by ISIL-Sinai Province at the end of October and the simultaneous terrorists attacks by ISIL in Paris in mid-November would lead to cooperation between Russia and Western European countries in the fight against ISIL. However, this opportunity for cooperation was spoiled in late November when NATO member Turkey shot down a Russian fighter aircraft that had violated its airspace. Nevertheless, Russia has maintained its cooperation with France.

On the other hand, ISIL has enhanced its fighting capacity by attracting new foreign fighters. It is estimated that the number of foreign fighters who had joined ISIL and other radical Islamist groups had exceeded 20,000 by January 2105 and increased to about 30,000 by December 2015.[90] It seems that this inflow of

foreign fighters is still continuing. On the Internet, ISIL appeals to people to move to its territories and become ISIL fighters as well as calling for whole families to migrate and become residents there. In these ways, ISIL not only aims to secure the fighters it needs in the short term but also the residents required for the long-term operation and maintenance of its organization. If ISIL succeeds in securing large numbers of fighters and residents, it will be even harder to overthrow it.

While this inflow to ISIL of people from various countries is occurring, the outflow of refugees from Syria, where ISIL operates, is much larger than the inflow. As of September 2015, more than four million Syrian refugees have left Syria, most of them staying in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt.[91] In addition, because the number of refugees heading for Europe has increased dramatically, particularly from 2015 onwards, the refugee problem has become a major political issue in Europe.[92] Since it is unlikely that the civil war in Syria will end in the near future, these refugees have to assume that they will live overseas for a long time. Compared to living in Syria's neighboring countries in the Middle East, life in Europe offers refugees the prospect of higher wages and social security standards. The flow of refugees into Europe is thus a rational choice and is therefore unlikely to come to an end naturally. It is often pointed out that, if the refugees heading for Europe include ISIL supporters, this may lead to the expansion of terrorism in Europe. However, even if these refugees do not include ISIL supporters, it is possible that they or their descendants might become dissatisfied with life in Europe and later become ISIL supporters. In fact, many of the foreign fighters from Europe who have joined ISIL are descendants of migrants to Europe from the Middle East and Muslim countries. For instance, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, a Belgian national of Moroccan origin who fought in Syria as an ISIL foreign fighter before masterminding the simultaneous terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015, was a second-generation immigrant.

(2)　Implications for Security in East Asia

ISIL and its predecessor organizations have viewed the United States' ally Japan as an enemy. In October 2004, its predecessor AQI kidnapped a Japanese citizen, demanded the withdrawal of the Self-Defense Forces from Iraq as a condition for his release, and later killed him. Considering that Osama bin Laden had promised a reward of 500 grams of gold for the murder of a Japanese citizen in May of that year,[93] it can be said that AQI followed the policies of core al-Qaeda. After its

split from al-Qaeda in 2014, ISIL has continued to be hostile towards Japan. In January 2015, ISIL announced that it had kidnapped two Japanese nationals and demanded a 200-million-dollar ransom, and later killed both of them. ISIL was also one of the groups that claimed responsibility for the attack on a museum in Tunisia in March 2015, in which twenty-one foreigners died, including three Japanese nationals, although there are doubts about the credibility of its claim. ISIL also claimed responsibility for the shooting of a Japanese national in Bangladesh in October of the same year, although this has also not been confirmed.[94] In September 2015, in its online magazine *Dabiq*, ISIL called for attacks on Japan's diplomatic missions in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. These countries are remote from the Middle East, but because they have large Muslim populations, a certain number of whom might be sympathetic towards ISIL, the possibility of future terrorist attacks on Japan's diplomatic missions by some ISIL sympathizers cannot be excluded.

Japan is not the only East Asian country that has been a target of ISIL attacks. In April 2015, gunmen attacked the Republic of Korea's embassy in Libya, causing casualties, and ISIL claimed responsibility.[95] In February 2014, South Korean tourists were killed and injured when a tourist bus was bombed in the Sinai Peninsula, and ABM, the predecessor of ISIL-Sinai Province, claimed responsibility.[96] In September 2015, the eleventh issue of *Dabiq* announced the kidnapping of a Chinese national and made a demand for ransom. In the twelfth issue posted on the Internet in November 2015, ISIL announced that the hostage had been executed.[97]

While East Asian countries, including Japan, have suffered damage through terrorist attacks by ISIL and other radical Islamist groups, people from East Asia have joined ISIL in response to its worldwide appeals. In 2014, it was revealed that a Japanese university student planned to join ISIL. In the Republic of Korea too, it was reported that several Koreans had joined ISIL.[98] However, the biggest provider of ISIL members among East Asian countries is China. It is estimated that about 300 Chinese fighters have already joined ISIL,[99] many of whom are members of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) which demands the independence of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.[100]

A map posted online in 2014, which is believed to indicate ISIL's future territory, apparently includes part of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in China. While these ambitions of ISIL may become a threat for China in the future,

for the time being it seems to be China's policy not to intervene directly in the fight against ISIL. However, China is deeply involved in the oil industry in Iraq, and when ISIL expanded its controlled areas in northern Iraq in June 2014, China evacuated 1,300 Chinese workers with the assistance of Iraqi security forces. In July 2014, ISIL's leader al-Baghdadi accused China of violating the rights of Muslims in Xinjiang.[101] Therefore, it is possible that China may be forced to make a deeper commitment to the problem of ISIL in the future. Up to now China has, together with Russia, vetoed the UN Security Council resolutions concerning the civil war in Syria. However, it is unlikely that China will engage in full-scale military intervention in Iraq or Syria as Russia has done in Syria since September 2015. From China's viewpoint, the more realistic threat from ISIL is a scenario where Chinese ISIL fighters return to China and escalate the Xinjiang separatist movement and ISIL promotes that movement through propaganda on the Web. If that scenario becomes reality and ISIL becomes a real threat within its territory, China will no doubt take positive action to eradicate that threat.

To sum up, ISIL threatens the security of East Asia including Japan by carrying out terrorist acts targeting nationals of East Asian countries residing in the Middle East, by conducting or calling for attacks on the diplomatic missions of East Asian countries in the Middle East and Muslim countries, by its ambitions for territorial expansion, and by recruiting foreign fighters.

The Yemeni Civil War

In Yemen, even before the antigovernment demonstrations occurred in the Arab Spring of 2011, the government was weak and civil war and conflicts often occurred. For example, after the unification of North and South Yemen through a North Yemeni initiative in 1990, because the separatists in the south attempted separation again, civil war between the North and South reoccurred for a brief period in 1994. In 2004, the Houthis, a Shiite group, rebelled against the government. After the fighting spread to the Saudi Arabian border, Saudi Arabia intervened militarily, attacking the Houthis in 2009.[102] In 2009, members of al-Qaeda who operated in Saudi Arabia moved to Yemen and established al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Yemen has thus faced problems such as the separatists in the south, the Houthi group in the north, and radical Islamist groups.

In the antigovernment demonstrations in 2011, armed clashes occurred between government and antigovernment forces, resulting in many deaths and injuries. In view of this, Saudi Arabia and other GCC member nations attempted

to mediate for a peaceful change of regime.[103] The president of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, refused to resign and opposed acceptance of the GCC mediation plan, but after being seriously wounded when his palace in Sanaa was bombed in an assassination attempt in June 2011, he was transported to Saudi Arabia for treatment. At this time, Saudi Arabia, which had already demanded Saleh's resignation through the GCC mediation plan, had the option of refusing to permit his return to Yemen and force a change of regime. But in September Saudi Arabia allowed President Saleh to return to Yemen,[104] demonstrating that it believed there was a possibility of persuading him to accept the mediation plan. In November, President Saleh finally agreed to accept the GCC plan and resign, and in February 2012 his vice president, Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi, was appointed president and the regime change was achieved.[105] However, former president Saleh remained head of the ruling party, thereby retaining political influence, and launched his bid to regain power in 2014. This was the cause of the Yemeni Civil War in 2014.

The events leading to the Yemeni Civil War, which began in 2014 and is still continuing at the end of 2015, were as follows. In September 2014, the Houthi group from the north took control of Sanaa in protest against the government's fuel subsidy cuts. At that time, it was reported that the Houthis cooperated with the former president Saleh in his bid to regain power.[106] At this stage, the Hadi government and the Houthi group still expressed their willingness to negotiate,[107] but Houthis put pressure on the government, placing President Hadi under house arrest, and the president declared his resignation in January 2015. In February, however, President Hadi, who comes from South Yemen, escaped from house arrest in Sanaa, moved to the former capital of South Yemen, Aden, and announced the cancellation of his resignation.[108] In response to this, Saudi Arabia and other GCC nations supporting President Hadi moved their embassies to Aden to show that the Hadi government there was the legitimate government of Yemen.[109] However, the Houthi group immediately advanced on Aden, and in March President Hadi escaped from Aden and fled to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia and other GCC nations that backed President Hadi then intervened militarily, launching air strikes against the Houthi group.[110] In addition, Saudi Arabia sent ground troops to Yemen, and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Sudan also dispatched their own ground forces.[111]

Since the Houthi group receives support from Iran, the Yemeni Civil War has the character of a sectarian conflict between Sunnis—the Hadi government and GCC nations—on one side and Shiites—President Saleh, the Houthi group, and Iran—on the other. For this reason it could be viewed as a proxy war between Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran. However, the character of the ongoing civil war is different from that of former conflicts in Yemen. For example, in the civil war between the republican and royalist factions in North Yemen from 1962 to 1970, the two warring factions chose their sides depending on whether they supported the monarchists or the republicans. The Sunni monarchy Saudi Arabia supported the Shiite royalist faction, fighting a proxy war with republican Egypt, which supported the republican faction.[112] As another example, when the Shiite Houthi group rebelled against the Shiite President Saleh's regime in the 2000s, Sunni Saudi Arabia gave its support to Shiite President Saleh. While past conflicts

in Yemen had little connection with sectarian rivalry, the current civil war is strongly colored by sectarian conflict.

Since the military intervention by the GCC nations in March 2015, the military situation of the Hadi government has gradually improved. In September President Hadi returned to Aden, but fled again to Saudi Arabia in October after the Houthis intensified their attacks. After regaining the military advantage, he once again returned to Aden in November,[113] but Sanaa remains in the hands of the Houthi group.

While the civil war is going on, Sunni radical Islamist groups such as AQAP and ISIL have expanded their presence in Yemen. In April 2015, AQAP seized Mukalla on the south coast of Yemen.[114] In March 2015, ISIL bomb attacks on two mosques in Sanaa killed 140 people and injured 350.[115] Because these attacks occurred in Sanaa governed by Shiites, in these cases ISIL is thought to have targeted Shiites. However, since ISIL also carried out a suicide bomb attack on Sunnis fighting on the side of the Hadi government, it appears to be hostile towards both the Shiite and Sunni camps fighting in the civil war.[116] Since ISIL has become increasingly hostile to al-Qaeda, it seems that it intends to carry out terrorist attacks against any non-ISIL forces in Yemen. Meanwhile, separatists in South Yemen continue their separatist movement. In October 2015, following the withdrawal of the Houthis, they held a demonstration in Aden demanding separation.[117]

Even if the civil war ends in a victory for President Hadi, the problem of ISIL will remain in Yemen, together with those of the Houthi group in the north, separatists in the south, and AQAP. Since politics in Yemen has been led by North Yemen for many years, it is unclear whether President Hadi, who comes from the south, can stay in power for long. Although the factions of the north are by no means unified, if they feel they are treated unfairly by the south-led government, it could trigger a new civil war. In view of this, it seems unlikely that the situation in Yemen will became stable in the near future.

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