



Passing Down The Significance of President Obama's Visit to The Future

Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and then U.S. President Barack Obama at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, 27 May 2016

Yuzaki Hidehiko, Governor, Hiroshima Prefecture

I thought that it would be the last chance.

In May 2016, then U.S. President Barack Obama visited Hiroshima. Because I was convinced that a visit to Hiroshima from the president of the United States would be a historic event and the chance for such a visit would be strong while President Obama was in office, we continued to work for several years to realize the presidential visit. When it was decided that the Summit would be held in Japan in the year that President Obama leaves office, I thought that it would be the last chance for him to visit Hiroshima.

Looking back, the first step was taken when former U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos, who took office in 2009, participated in the Peace Memorial Ceremony on August 6, 2010. We had also been advised that it would be better if a high-level government official or another person in an equivalent position visited before the presidential visit, instead of the president himself taking the very first step. Accordingly, we took gradual steps, including a request to former United States Secretary of Defense William Perry to deliver a message at the United

Nations Disarmament Conference. On this point, I believe that it was fortunate that Hiroshima hosted the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in April 2016 and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry visited Hiroshima in the natural course of events and offered flowers at the Cenotaph for A-bomb Victims.

When preparing for the Presidential visit, we had hoped for five things. There was a set of four desires: offering flowers at the Cenotaph, visiting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, meeting with atomic bomb survivors, and providing a message. There was one more desire for the president to visit the A-bomb Dome, if possible. Needless to say, expressing these desires was a matter of diplomacy, so we were not involved in the actual negotiations. However, we certainly gave our opinions and desires to the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After going through various phases, I am very pleased that all the five desires were realized in the end. In fact, the moment when President Obama actually met the atomic bomb survivors was indeed dramatic.

I actually had a conversation with the president when I received him at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. Because I thought that moment would possibly be the only time when I would be able to speak to the president, I thought about what I should say to him. First, I thought that it would be all right if I said, "Please carefully think about atomic bombs," or "Please make up your mind with this visit." However, I thought that meeting the leader of a nation and instantly expressing my opinions would be far too impolite. I had also delivered a number of such messages beforehand. As a result, I chose simple welcoming words to receive the president. In return, President Obama said that he was very grateful for the hospitality that he experienced in Hiroshima. Because I was not expecting such words, I was very pleased.

Through this experience, I believe that this type of visit should not be concluded with one visit, but should be followed by another visit. If this visit had failed to gain a positive appraisal, it would be impossible for the next president or secretary of State to visit. Even if a president who is not as keen as President Obama about the issue of nuclear weapons takes office, we still have to work to encourage him to continue to visit Hiroshima in the future. I believe that President Obama's visit was significant to pave the way for the future.

There are several points of criticism about President Obama's visit. For example, the duration of his stay in Hiroshima was too short. Although the president met atomic bomb survivors, he did not listen to their experiences about the explosion of the atomic bomb. However, I think that the most important thing is that we achieved a change from nothing to something. I believe that it would be good if we valued this and we will continue to make changes in the future.

As the site of the first atomic bombing, Hiroshima Prefecture has responsibilities to firmly deal with the issues of atomic bombs and nuclear weapons. Moreover, deriving from such responsibilities, it is important for Hiroshima Prefecture to play a role in delivering messages for restoration and peace.

The level of awareness about Hiroshima is very high overseas. In a certain aspect, the awareness might be even higher than that for Kyoto. Taking the advantage of this strong recognition, I think Hiroshima will be able to contribute to the realization of a peaceful international society without nuclear weapons. Moreover, the strong awareness of Hiroshima can be used for the enhancement of local industries, including tourism, and for other opportunities.

Hoping to increase the visibility of Hiroshima as a tourist destination

Looking at the number of foreign visitors to Hiroshima by country at present, the largest number comes from the United States, followed by Taiwan, which was ranked second for the first time last year, and Australia in third place, after ranking second for a long time. To put it another way, the number of visitors from South Korea and China is not that large. The popular voting on TripAdvisor, a site used by a relatively a large number of Europeans and Americans, also showed that the most popular destination is Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine in Kyoto, followed by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum (the A-bomb Dome) and Itsukushima-jinja Shrine (Miyajima) in second place and third place respectively.

We have been making an effort to encourage inbound visitors through targeted countries. Our most recent successful example is Taiwan. Because Taiwanese people love cycling, Hiroshima Prefecture has been promoting the Shimanami Kaido cycling road jointly with Ehime Prefecture. Giant Manufacturing Co., Ltd. in Taiwan, the world's largest bicycle manufacturer, has been operating its shops in Imabari and Onomichi to provide rental road bicycles. Partly due to the results of this promotion, a number of visitors from Taiwan have been visiting the eastern part of the prefecture in particular.

We have been running campaigns for domestic visitors with Eguchi Kan since 2012, when we had the chance to meet. Mr. Eguchi is an image director and produced a promotional movie for Tokyo's bid for the Olympics, among other products. He lives in Fukuoka, but loves Hiroshima very much.

In this campaign, the first catch phrase that we used was "Delicious Hiroshima." The second was "Hiroshima makes you cry." The present phrase is "Cheers, Hiroshima." "Delicious foods" meant that there were many delicious foods in Hiroshima that people did not even know about. "Hiroshima makes you cry" meant that there are many foods in Hiroshima that make people cry because they are so delicious. "Cheers, Hiroshima" is the phrase for this year and it is our desire that visitors actually come and taste the many savory foods in Hiroshima and almost feel intoxicated with various wonderful experiences.

Unfortunately, Hiroshima is not really registered as a tourist destination. The A-bomb Dome is quite well known, but I think it is more famous as a destination for school trips. When it comes to Miyajima, people often say, "I know of Miyajima, but is it in Hiroshima?" In Hiroshima

there are many other tourist spots, such as Shimanami Kaido, Tobishima Kaido, and Taishakukyo Gorge in the northern part of Hiroshima. There are also many other flavorful foods besides *okonomiyaki*. However, they have not yet become well-known.

Even before the campaign started, news of Hiroshima Prefecture was reported by the mass media as part of their programs. However, it was only worth approximately 2.5 billion yen in annual advertising expenses. Since the campaign started, the exposure value rose to 15 billion yen in a very short period, and has now reached approximately 42 billion yen. The coverage is not limited to news about the campaign and the frequency of the transmission of news about Hiroshima has jumped almost four times.

Thanks to this development, I think that the awareness of Hiroshima as a tourist destination has increased.

Increasing value added jobs

The declining population is a serious issue. Hiroshima City is experiencing a social demographic increase. It also has a natural demographic increase. However, the overall population in Hiroshima Prefecture has been declining over a prolonged period. The population peaked in 1998. Since then, the prefecture recorded a social demographic decrease and natural demographic decrease for the first time in 2005. Although we saw a social demographic increase last year, this was due to an increase in the number of foreigners, such as trainees. In other words, Hiroshima is facing a situation in which jobs are available, but workers are moving out of the prefecture.

I agree that job opportunities are required expand, but the point is the quality of the jobs. In this regard, I believe that the number of value added jobs need to be increased for the creative class, as advocated by Richard Florida, an American scholar. People in the creative class create innovations and produce a number of new business models and products.

From the perspective of organizations, we need companies and divisions that create innovations. The existing business model of competition through a large workforce at low costs in large plants must be transformed to one that generates strong earnings and high productivity with a limited number of workers. As a result, maintaining competent human resources has become very important. For this reason, we established the Graduate School of Business Administration in the Prefectural University of Hiroshima.

As for attracting companies, the majority of approaches in the past were to invite plants or logistics centers to an industrial park. However, now we have started taking the initiative to attract the functions of headquarters and research and development (R&D). As part of this initiative, we have designed new incentives. There are already examples of specific preparations for attracting the relocation of the headquarters of an IT company from Tokyo and the research and development division of a manufacturer.

Of course, I think that the relocation of headquarters cannot be achieved easily, and for the relocation of R&D functions we need to offer clear answers to the question, why move to Hiroshima?

I believe that one of the merits of Hiroshima is the rich human resources. Centered in Hiroshima University, are a number of graduates of science studies, including engineering and science faculties.

The rate of the graduates from Hiroshima University getting jobs in Hiroshima Prefecture is less than 30%. However, if there were more jobs, we would be able to keep these graduates in the prefecture. Because there are also a large number of students leaving the prefecture to enter universities, we are focusing on the U, I and J turns, including such students.

To be honest, at the time of entering university, about as many as 7,000 students leave the prefecture every year. Of course, there are inflows of students from outside the prefecture into universities in Hiroshima Prefecture. However, the net effect is an outflow of approximately 1,600 students from the prefecture. This is one of the reasons for the social demographic decrease.

In the past, thanks to the branch economy, there were economic benefits from the existence of a large number of branches. Even if young people left the prefecture, the population of people in their thirties, forties, and fifties showed a net inflow. However, even this population now shows a net outflow. As a result, looking at population outflow and inflow in the last fiscal year, the net flow of the Japanese population was an outflow of approximately 2,300 people. To bring so many people back to the prefecture through the U, I and J turns is a mind-boggling task. This is an issue that both the government and the prefecture are required to seriously tackle.

If nothing is done, only Tokyo will continue to grow larger while certain regions will cease to exist. The country as a whole will not function effectively in such a situation.

Looking at regional problems, I think that one of the things we can do is to change our own sense of values. I believe that all Japanese people know of a song called, "*Furusato* (hometown)." I think that we should change part of lyrics of the song. What I mean is a line in the third verse: "I will go home when I fulfill my aspirations." Where do people fulfill their aspirations? Aspirations are to be fulfilled in Tokyo. This is the precondition of the song. It might have worked in that way until the high growth period. In those days the entire practice was based on the motivation to gather competent human resources in Tokyo and catch up with Western countries. All they had to do was to provide uniform education and draw competent human resources to Tokyo.

However, I think it is different now. The problems that Japan is facing are some of the most advanced problems worldwide. Nobody yet knows how to resolve them. For this reason, it is important to exert creativity, not efficiency. If everybody ends up in Tokyo, everybody will have the same way of thinking, making Japan structurally amiss. Thoughts in Hokkaido and Kyushu must be totally different, so we should further expand such differences. Resilience and

innovation, current hot terms, are based on diversity. Theoretically this has already been proven.

I believe that now is the time when we can develop the national economy by encouraging such diversity. We do not need to take the approach of rejuvenating regions because it is sad to watch their demise. I believe that the revival should be regarded as a new way forward for Japan.

Unlikely feature of Hiroshima Prefecture as No. 1

The largest producer of lemons in Japan

Hiroshima Prefecture has a 60% share in the production of lemons in Japan. Governor Yuzaki Hidehiko said, “The sliced heart-shape lemon looks pretty in tea. A limited number of heart-shaped lemons are produced with the improved frames that were developed by the prefectural research center.”

Moreover, the Hiroshima Toyo Carp, a professional baseball team, is playing well this season. If they carry on at this rate, it would be a dream come true for them to win the title of Japan’s best professional baseball team this year. Governor Yuzaki said, “I think that there is no other prefecture where people are so involved in baseball in their daily lives as in Hiroshima Prefecture.” The people’s love of the professional baseball team, Hiroshima Toyo Carp is no doubt the reason for its No. 1 rank in Japan.



Heart-shaped lemon produced by the JA Mihara Citrus Fruit Business Division (Photo: Hiroshima Prefectural Government)

Translated from “Chiji no rire toku: Chiho ga kaeru. Chiho ga kawaru. (6) Hiroshima-ken — Obama daitoryo homon no igi wo kongoni tunageteikitai (Governors’ Relay Talk: Japan will change. Regions will change it. [No. 6] Hiroshima Prefecture —Passing Down The Significance of President Obama’s Visit to The Future),” Chuokoron, October 2016, pp. 216-221. (Courtesy of Chuo Koron Shinsha) [October 2016]

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Born in Hiroshima Prefecture in 1965. He graduated from the University of Tokyo, Faculty of Law in 1990, and joined the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (now the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry). He studied at Stanford University and was assigned to the Deputy Director of the Americas Division, the Trade Policy Bureau, and other positions before he resigned in 2000 and established ACCA Networks Co., Ltd. He became the Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture in 2009 and is serving his second term.
