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The Tokyo Shimbun's Five Challenges for Tokyo 2020 東京五輪開催５つの課題

Asia-Pacific Journal Feature

Between 2012 and 2014 we posted a number of articles on contemporary affairs without giving them volume and issue numbers or dates. Often the date can be determined from internal evidence in the article, but sometimes not. We have decided retrospectively to list all of them as Volume 10, Issue 54 with a date of 2012 with the understanding that all were published between 2012 and 2014.

Asia-Pacific Journal Feature

On September 10, 2013, the *Tokyo Shimbun*, a Japanese newspaper that has raised its profile considerably through its detailed, critical reporting of the Fukushima nuclear crisis and issues related to nuclear power post-3.11, ran an article which offered a concise and powerful summary of the major issues facing Tokyo and Japan looking forward to 2020 and the hosting of the Tokyo Summer Olympics.

The following is a summary of the original article (located here).

Tsunami Reconstruction: Some argue that the Tokyo Olympics will speed up recovery in the northeastern Japan areas devastated by the 2011 tsunami. Others fear that the infrastructure spending demanded by the games will divert money and manpower from afflicted areas still suffering from acute housing shortages and other difficulties. Hundreds of thousands are still living in temporary housing. Will Olympic building mean they will have to wait even longer for permanent homes? Crucially, while Prime Minister Abe has declared that the continuing release of radiation and contaminated water is "not a problem", what of the over 140,000 who have been evacuated from areas around Fukushima Daiichi? While the government prepares to stoke Olympic fever, there is no word on when the displaced will be able to return home.

Foreign Relations: Whether or not Japan will be able to improve relations with China and South Korea by 2020 is an important issue. Since coming to office last December, Abe has not been able to sit down with the leader of either China or Korea. The standoff over territory and historical awareness has only grown deeper. Abe may have avoided going to Yasukuni Shrine on August 15, but he made an offering to the shrine by proxy. There is reason to believe that he will make a visit while in office, possibly even a significant festival in October of this year. In addition, Abe's desire to change the constitution, which includes plans to expand Japan's potential military role to include "collective self-defense" (alongside the United States), is casting a shadow over the region.

The Economy: Does "Abenomics" include a long-term vision that goes past 2020? The Olympics will no doubt bring about a momentary economy boost in the form of sales of official goods, tourism, and so on. Most countries that have hosted the Summer Olympics, however, have seen minus growth in the year after the games. For already heavily-indebted Japan, many are asking if there could have been other ways to spend the predicted massive Olympic outlays in a more efficient way to promote sustainable growth.

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Radioactive Water: As long as water is being used to cool the cores of the Fukushima Daiichi reactors that melted down, the problem of radioactive water leakage is not going away. The pollution of the ocean with radioactive waste could become a major sticking point in Japan's international relationships.

Energy: Abe has promised to reduce reliance on nuclear energy and promote renewables, but the Liberal Democrats have yet to present a clear plan for how this will be achieved. As of yet, there has been no mention of what will be done with ageing nuclear plants or whether plans for new construction will be approved. Plans to buy energy generated by renewable sources such as solar at set rates are proceeding apace, but combined, renewables make up only 1.6% of Japan energy production and plans for how to increase this amount are lacking.

Asia-Pacific Journal articles on similar themes include:

Andrew DeWit, Bloom Energy Japan Versus Abe's Road: What Energy Future for Japan?

Andrew DeWit and Christopher Hobson, Abe at Ground Zero: the consequences of inaction at Fukushima Daiichi

Sachie Mizohata and the Association of University Faculties, The Trans-Pacific Partnership and Its Critics: An introduction and a petition

Gavan McCormack, Japan's Client State (Zokkoku) Problem

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