

Concerns Regarding the Recent Korea-Japan World Cup

As any other games, the recent Korea-Japan World Cup soccer game has winners as well as losers. It is well known that the biggest winner is one of the host countries (South Korea). It is less known that the biggest loser is another host country (Japan), economically as well as politically.

1. How could these cities hosting games pay off their budgets building the facilities for the game?

When I worked for Dentsu group several years ago and participated in World Cup projects pursuing almost every Japanese prefecture and city to host J-League soccer clubs and the World Cup games. I especially remember the case for Hamakita, a small city north of Hamamatsu in Shizuoka prefecture. My work was to create a simulation program to display in how short a period (how many years) the budget for the facility will break even by changing the condition setting. I later read from newspaper that the mayor was arrested. This is a typical scandal of a Japanese construction firm (zenekon), it basically follows this way: first, Dentsu presents a "21 Century Vision of Hamakita" to the city (there are tens of prefectures and thousands of cities for Dentsu's business), in which Hamakita's future is presented with a core sports facility connected to the World Cup; second, the city (with the agreement from its assembly) contracts with a construction firm to build "Hamakita Stadium"; third, the city declares bankruptcy because of this kind of project; and finally, the arrest of the mayor becomes a public scandal, causing damages not only of the corrupted officials but also the city and the companies. As complained from Hamakita's residents: it is very difficult to make a good reputation of Hamakita's name but it is so easy to spoiled its name nation-wide.

As Dr. Wolfram Manzenreiter replied to this inquiry: "Of course they could not and by large had to rely on general obligation bonds issued by prefecture or city authorities. Total investment costs of roughly 340 billion Yen (according to NKS, April 14, 2002) easily translate into an average burden of 12,000 Yen per capita in the host regions. Additional construction projects into communication, transport, infrastructure probably required another (weak) trillion yen which usually relied on public-private partnerships." "Much more of concern seem to be long term effects. Running the facilities is estimated at ranging from 300 million yen (Oita's Big Eye) to 2 billion yen per year (Sapporo Dome). Lacking sound management concepts and professional usage plans, most are far away from breaking even." [1] Unfortunately, there exist no "sound management concepts and professional usage plans" at all for these World Cup facilities. They should not be built from the beginning.

Simply, the World Cup saved some "zenekon" firms and postponed the Japanese economy further away from recovery. [2]

2. How similar is this game to the 1936 Munich Olympics utilized by Hitler to mobilize militaristic nationalism?

As cited from the militaristic politicians Ishihara Shintaro (Sankei Daily, June 17), Nakasone Yasuhiro (Mainichi Daily, June 19) and others, this game is the first time since the war to mobilize the Japanese youth nation-wide under Hinomaru (the so-called

National Flag) and Kimigayo (the so-called National Anthem). As pointed out by a Germany observer, even Hitler applauded the victories of black runners. [3]

At the meantime, in the city hosting the final game (Yokohama), two assembly members were expelled from the assembly by majority members because of the treatment of the Hinomaru flag. It is not hard to imagine that, in the future, minority Diet members would be expelled from the Japanese Diet for such issues as textbooks, Emperor system, war budgets, nuclear policy, and constitution reversion.[4]

This game is just another example indicating how deteriorated the Japanese politics has become since the post Cold-war.

Notes

[1]. Wolfram Manzenreiter wolfram.manzenreiter@univie.ac.at, Institute of East Asian Studies / Japanese Studies Division, University of Vienna, responded my inquiries in H-JAPAN, July 10, 2002.

[2]. Earl Kinmonth ehk@gol.com in H-Japan, July 27, 2002 replied: "A few weeks ago, an extended segment in the NHK morning television news made essentially the same point although not so directly. With one possible exception, all of the purpose-built stadiums are expected to lose enormous amounts of money on a year in and year out basis, even using the overly optimistic official projections." "The amount required just to maintain the physical plant, to say nothing of paying off construction costs, generally vastly exceeds even the most wildly optimistic revenue projections." "Aside from all of the excess expenditure that characterizes virtually all public construction projects in Japan, many of these stadiums are cited such that only an absolutely mega event with no other available venue would induce anyone to attend. The Saitama Stadium is an example of this. According to the conspicuous posters displayed in Keihin Tohoku commuter trains during the World Cup, this stadium is 15 minutes by bus from the nearest train station, one so minor and inconvenient that most Kanto residents do not know of its existence, and 40 minutes by bus from the nearest major train station."

[3]. Furthermore, he observes: "Other than that, every tournament pitting against each other 'nations' inherently mobilizes nationalism, of course, much more so in the case of a team sport such as soccer than at Olympic Games where individual athletes stand in the center of attention."

[4]. Japan Echo's Alan Clark clark@japanecho.co.jp gives the detail as below: "They were expelled for trying to forcibly remove it. The steering committee of the municipal assembly had decided to put up the flag in the chamber, but the two assembly members in question tried to pull it down when it was first hoisted. They were ordered to leave. About a week later the two occupied the seats of the chairman and the head of the secretariat for six hours in protest until they were removed by security guards on the chairman's orders. They were later expelled by a vote of 69 to 21 for disrupting the business of the assembly."

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