



Not this time, Mr. President by Kim Jin-Hyun

Kim Jin-Hyun is chairman of the World Peace Forum, a member of the Pacific Forum CSIS Board of Governors, and a former Republic of Korea minister of science and technology. This article was originally published in the [Korea JoongAng Daily](#). The Pacific Forum CSIS takes no position on the advisability of a presidential visit to Hiroshima and welcomes opposing views.

Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida Fumio and US Secretary of State John Kerry co-orchestrated the Group of Seven (G-7) foreign ministerial talks in Hiroshima, Kishida's hometown. Kerry stressed the importance of the international cooperation pushed by the Obama administration in a press conference. "Everyone should visit Hiroshima, and 'everyone' means everyone," he added. "So I hope one day, the president of the United States will be among the everyone who is able to come here." It was overt encouragement to Obama, who will visit Ise Shima on May 26 for the G-7 summit.

"We emphasize the importance of our meeting in Hiroshima 71 years after World War II, which unleashed unprecedented horror upon the world. The people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki experienced immense devastation and human suffering as a consequence of the atomic bombings and have rebuilt their cities so impressively," the Hiroshima Declaration adopted at the G-7 Foreign Ministerial talks said.

About 210,000 people were killed by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and 400,000 suffered from radiation exposure. Of the victims, about 30,000 of the dead were Koreans and another 40,000 were estimated to have suffered from radiation exposure. Sixty-six years later, the Fukushima nuclear plant meltdown in March 2011 produced yet another calamity.

Japan is in a unique position for having become the true test bed of the modern power of nuclear energy.

As members of the human community and global society, we must be endlessly humble before the fact that the tragedies of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Fukushima must never be repeated and that they are challenges to be overcome. We must see the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the disaster of Fukushima with a comprehensive social, political, and apocalyptic perspective.

We can cherish peace and build peace from the three nuclear disasters of Japan when we treat peace not as just a concept opposite to war, but as a historical and judicial concept, as well. Japan, in this regard, has a very contradictory record.

Although it started the devastating Pacific War, it has no official war memorial. Yushukan, the museum at the Yasukuni Shrine, where Japan only records the end of the war, without

mentioning and accepting its defeat, is a classic example. The peace in Hiroshima Peace Park is also very contradictory.

Former US Defense Secretary William Perry visited Hiroshima twice. Writing in the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* on Dec. 31, 2010, he recalled that he felt a sense of incompatibility when he saw the displays of atomic bombs in Hiroshima because there were many documents and photos conveying the devastation, but there was not a single mention of why the tragedy took place. He wrote that he found no reflection in Hiroshima on why Japan experienced the tragedy of the atomic bombings, and this gave him great concern. Despite its nuclear calamity, rightists of the country, from Nakasone Yasuhiro to Abe Shinzo, consistently promoted a nuclear-armed Japan since the 1950s.

The father of Japan's nuclear power is Nakasone, and he is not a scientist, but a politician. When he was director general of the Defense Agency in 1970, he argued that the Japanese Constitution does not prevent the country from developing nuclear arms for self-defense purposes. In April 2006, he argued that the country needs to think about a nuclear arms policy in case of a grand change such as the breakup of the US-Japan security treaty.

At the time, Abe supported the argument by saying it is impossible to stop discussions on nuclear arms. Aso Taro, then foreign minister and the current vice prime minister, also supported the argument. They have never recanted their remarks on a nuclear-armed Japan. And they are still the living power of Japan.

The goodwill of a "world without nuclear weapons," started from Obama's 2009 Prague declaration and his efforts to push toward a peace without nuclear arms, is extremely impressive. As a Nobel Prize winner, he has a personal motive to promote the message of peace without nuclear arms by visiting the Hiroshima Peace Park.

But Obama is the president of the United States and the commander-in-chief of the US military. Taking into account the geopolitical reality of Asia, Kerry is high-ranking enough to visit Hiroshima.

Obama must consider visiting Hiroshima after Japanese leaders, including Nakasone and the current prime minister and vice prime minister, withdraw their remarks, and after questioning Japan about its true intentions regarding its contradictory nuclear weapons policy. Only when a Japanese prime minister visits the Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall of China and the Independence Hall of Korea and promotes "peace of justice," and only when a US president visits the War Memorial in Hanoi, can the commander-in-chief of the US military visit Hiroshima. Now is not the time.

Obama's visit to Hiroshima in 2016, if realized, would reflect realpolitik toward China and the two Koreas, but it

won't reflect the desire for universal peace by a Nobel Peace Prize winner, not as long as Japan's contradictory nuclear policy continues. If Obama visits Hiroshima after his term and explains the challenges of our civilization to his two daughters, then it will be a compelling move to promote denuclearization and peace.

PacNet commentaries and responses represent the views of the respective authors. Alternative viewpoints are always welcomed and encouraged.