

Foreword

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An investigation into “preparedness” and the “lessons”

The think tank Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation established an Independent Investigation Commission on the Fukushima Nuclear Accident (the Independent Investigation Commission; Chairman: Koichi Kitazawa, former President of the Japan Science and Technology Agency, in the wake of the TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident on March 11, 2011, to examine the accident and the lessons to be learned, releasing an investigatory report of its findings on February 28, 2012. This represented six months of unrelenting work by the Committee’s working group set up in the summer of 2011.

Eight years later, in the summer of 2019, we launched the 10-Year Deliberation Commission on the Fukushima Nuclear Accident. This constitutes a second independent investigation committee, so to speak.

Its goal was to unflinchingly revisit the truth of Fukushima by March 11, 2021, a decade after the accident, reviewing the issues and lessons uncovered by the Independent Investigation Commission; how much had Japan absorbed; what had in effect been put into practice; what had not been adequately digested and why not; in short, “what have we learned?”

In that process, the findings of each government, parliamentary and academic investigation were used as references, and we also examined to what extent their respective recommendations had been implemented. I would like to pay my respects and express my appreciation to the people in charge of each accident investigation.

The Independent Investigation Commission focussed, in a nutshell, on “response, preparedness, and prevention”. On the other hand, the aim of this second independent accident investigation is to examine the “lessons”.

The final chapter in the Independent Investigation Report (Lessons Learned from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident—Aiming for Resilience) concludes with the words that the Fukushima tragedy is “not to be forgotten”. To constantly examine and learn from tragic events, accidents, and events in human society must be the most sincere way of “not forgetting”. Re-establishing an independent investigation team ten years later to look into “Fukushima ten years on” is nothing but a part of that exercise.

However, in reality, I am acutely aware that it is a difficult task to keep practicing “not to forget”. Looking at the efforts of the Shinzo Abe Administration countering COVID-19 since the spring of 2020, I am forced to wonder what was learned from the experience of the “management crisis”, and not crisis management, that was exposed by the Fukushima nuclear accident.

The COVID-19 response has highlighted a myriad of issues including a lack of an effective command structure in the Kantei (the Prime Minister’s official residence), a government bureaucracy unable to switch quickly to emergency mode, a patchwork of partial (local) optimizations, a labyrinth of uncoordinated administrative action, a lack of first responders (Japan has no dedicated institution like the US CDC), a conservatism that prevents partnerships between politicians and scientists as well as the ability to use technology quickly and accurately to respond to crises, an aversion to stochastic risk

assessment, poor public relations covering crisis communication and risk communication to Japan's citizens, and a lack of ideas on a "post-war" rebuilding strategy or blueprint all the while engaging in the "war-time" fight.

And these issues cannot simply be accounted for "because it was a Japan Democratic Party administration" or "because it was an LDP administration". Both Fukushima under a JDP administration and COVID-19 under the current LDP administration share the same fundamental issues of risk, governance, and leadership regarding crisis assessment and crisis management, which were exactly the questions raised by the Independent Investigation Report. The Independent Investigation Commission conducted a crisis investigation rather than an accident investigation.

Once again, the main target of this investigation bears closely on the state of national security and statecraft, in other words, the shape of the country, focussing on the attitude and safety/security systems of the government and the operator (the electric power company) in implementing within society the large-scale technology of nuclear power and harnessing it for the economy and people's lives; reliable and effective safety regulations independent of politics and the operators; risk preparedness including the "unexpected" (response, preparedness, prevention); first responders' roles and mutual cooperation; command functions in national crisis response; risk, governance and leadership in government and social crisis response and crisis management, especially the nature of resident evacuation including its cost-effectiveness; and a strategy for rebuilding and investing in the future in the face of large-scale disasters be they natural or man-made.

Truth, Independence, Humanity

The Independent Investigation Commission, which examined the Fukushima nuclear accident, compiled a report, setting its motto as "truth, independence, and humanity" when placing it into the public domain.

First of all, when fact-finding, we always tried to meet with and listen to the parties directly involved, which is the essential premise of all evidence-based investigations.

Next, we placed importance on the implications for the nation and society as a whole.

In Japan, both the government bureaucracy and companies tend to be "captives of their respective villages", which leads easily to an organizational culture of "small-minded governance by osmosis". Both task setting and solutions tend to be labyrinthine "partial optimizations". Rather, it is far more important to pursue an "overall optimal solution" that takes into consideration the interests and perspectives of multi-stakeholders. To do that effectively, you need an independent convening power that is captive to no one.

Furthermore, we aimed to share the insights gained from our investigation with the world, to enter into a dialogue with the world, to absorb that feedback, and use it in formulating global standards and rules.

Japan has long been a passive participant in the formation of global standards and rules. Sharing the experience of Fukushima and the lessons learned there with the world contributes to the improvement of global nuclear safety, and having triggered the largest nuclear accident in history at Level 7 on a par with the former Soviet Union's Chernobyl accident, this is nothing more than Japan's responsibility.

Once again, our investigative efforts this time were based on such an outlook.

It appears that neither the Government nor the Parliamentary Accident Investigations plan a ten-years-after re-examination. Both contributed to the investigation into the cause of the accident by carrying out high-quality examinations and analysis. In particular, given the revolutionary nature of the Parliamentary Accident Investigation as an oversight function of the Diet, it would have been better if they had also incorporated follow-up and re-examination functions at the outset.

However, this only makes the role and responsibility of the Independent Accident Investigation greater. Yotaro Hatamura, former Chairman of the Government Accident Investigation Committee, who responded to an interview, said, “Investigation isn’t about making an end of things by issuing a report, but about how Japanese society accepts it and how they think about it. Re-examining it from the outside means we will make fewer mistakes. That’s why I came today, to make some contribution to the efforts of you all.”

In addition, Professor Shuya Nomura, a member of the Parliamentary Accident Investigation Committee, gave us a boost saying, “We would like to undertake this kind of examination, but we have the difficulty of needing legal authority to come together, so I am very envious of you (in the private sector) and your good work (...) Please keep it up.”

Such warm words were a great encouragement to us.

In creating the 10-Year Deliberation Commission on the Fukushima Nuclear Accident, we asked Professor Kazuto Suzuki of Hokkaido University to act as chair. Professor Suzuki is at the cutting edge of world research in the field of international politics and science and technology, and as one of the members of the working group for the Independent Accident Investigation established in the summer of 2011, wrote a penetrating analysis on historical and structural factors especially the structure of the “safety myth” of nuclear power. Fortunately, Professor Suzuki was willing to take on the task. Another professor from the original working group was Professor Hiroshi Kainuma. Professor Kainuma is a leading figure in Fukushima revival theory, and has been working closely with Fukushima residents after the accident exploring the nature and philosophy of Fukushima's revitalization.

In addition, Koichi Isobe (Senior Fellow, Asia Pacific Initiative), Toshihiro Okuyama (Senior Staff Writer, Asahi Shimbun), Akihide Kugo (Senior Research Advisor, Mitsubishi Research Institute), Yuki Kobayashi (Researcher, Security Research Group, Sasakawa Peace Foundation), Naoya Sekiya (Associate Professor, Research Center for Disaster Prevention Information, Graduate School of Informatics, The University of Tokyo) and Yasuaki Chijiwa (Senior Researcher, Security Policy History Laboratory, War History Research Center, Defense Research Institute, Ministry of Defense) were invited to serve as committee members. All are experts capable of tackling the national issues that Fukushima has posited in their respective fields. We feel extremely fortunate to have been able to form a second independent accident investigation with such a ready force of professionals.

The secretariat consisted of Hiroyuki Tagawa (Staff Director, Junior Researcher, International and Advanced Japanese Studies Program, University of Tsukuba), Takashi Seto (Researcher associate, Asia Pacific Initiative), Narumi Shibata (Asia Pacific Initiative Program Officer), Yukari Utsumi (staff member, Asia Pacific Initiative). Takuma Hirai, an intern at the University of Tokyo, and Shinya Oguma, an intern at the Australian National University, also participated as research assistants.

Last but not least, I would like to reiterate my heartfelt gratitude to Professor Koichi Kitazawa, the original chair of the Independent Accident Investigation Commission. He passed away in September

2014. This was a very sad loss and we especially miss his expertise and guidance.

As a scientist, Professor Kitazawa had a strong sense of mission and responsibility towards society. There would not have been an Independent Investigation Report without him. I feel he has urged us on in pursuing our re-examination of “Fukushima ten years on”.

The Rebuild Japan Initiative Foundation has continued to investigate and research the issues of Japanese governance crisis/crisis management based on ongoing research on the Fukushima nuclear accident and knowledge gained after the publication of its Independent Accident Investigation Report. It has published works such as *Japan in Peril? 9 crisis scenarios* (CLSA, 2014), *Anatomy of the Yoshida Testimony: The Fukushima Nuclear Crisis as seen through the Yoshida Hearings* (Toyo Publishing, 2015), *Examining Japan's Lost Decades* (Routledge, 2015), *Japan's Population Implosion: The 50 Million Shock* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), *Personal Networks and Social Resilience: the evacuation of hospitals in the Fukushima sheltering zone* (Toyo Publishing, 2017).

Of these, in *Japan in Peril? 9 crisis scenarios*, Mitsuyoshi Urashima, then Associate Professor (now professor) at Jikei University School of Medicine, wrote “Pandemic: the day when the doctors disappeared”. His chapter starts with the following.

“With an unknown virus rampant, the medical field faces the danger of collapse due to a lack of doctors, medical staff and medical equipment such as ventilators. The key to solving the problem is whether we can decide the ‘order of death’ or not.”

Professor Urashima concluded by raising the following issues.

“Japanese medical institutions all suffer from a lack of doctors, beds, ventilators, vaccines, etc. and are in danger of medical collapse in normal times. Given this situation, are specific measures being taken based on the New Influenza Special Measures Act?”

I am proud that this final report on the Independent Accident Investigation was able to utilize the results of such ongoing research.

The Rebuild Japan Initiative will be dissolved with the publication of this final report on Fukushima ten years on as we believe it has fulfilled its initial mission. Issues in Japan's social and national risk, governance and leadership will continue to be addressed by the Asia-Pacific Initiative (API), a think tank established in 2017 as an umbrella organization of the Rebuild Japan Initiative.

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