Japan’s Delayed Antinuclear Power Mobilization after 3.11

by

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ABSTRACT

The meltdown of Fukushima Daiichi’s nuclear plant was one of three disasters that rocked Japan on 11 March 2011, a day often referred to as “3.11.” This nuclear accident led to increased attention to and disapproval of nuclear power among the Japanese public. However, despite widespread antinuclear sentiment, the public did not mobilize into sustained mass protests until June 2012. Using historical and contemporary comparisons, this thesis shows that Japan’s 15-month delay in antinuclear mobilization was unusual. Both the 1979 Three Mile Island and the 1986 Chernobyl accidents had been quickly followed by mobilized protests. Moreover, the 3.11 Fukushima meltdown prompted mass protests in Germany almost immediately. Given these patterns, one would expect to have seen the Japanese mobilize earlier. The question that drives this thesis is: What led to Japan’s 15-month delay in antinuclear power mobilization?

Using social movement theory, I test to see whether low levels of grievance, limited availability of resources, or the lack of effective mobilizing structure and strategy help to explain this delay. Of the three explanations, I find the mobilization structure and strategy explanation to be best supported. Due to a history of overlooking antinuclear power issues in Japanese civil society, the early post-3.11 movement lacked longstanding true believers and activists, the two types of participants most effective at mobilizing. Furthermore, the use of social media platforms to organize the early protests may have contributed to why sustained protests were delayed. The empirical findings from this thesis allow us to examine more closely the devastation resulting from 3.11’s nuclear meltdown and assess the strengths and weaknesses in Japanese civil society after the disaster. On a theoretical level, these findings may encourage us to question the relevance of grievance to mobilization, refine how resource availability is measured, and ask if the growing use of social media and other online tools should change the way we study social movement mobilization.

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Section 1

Introduction

1.1 – Research Question

On 11 March 2011, Japan experienced an earthquake that measured 9.0 in magnitude, a tsunami that stood 30 feet high at its peak, and a nuclear meltdown. This triple disaster, often referred to as “3.11,” had devastating effects on the nation. This thesis studies the post-3.11 antinuclear power movement in Japan. Despite widespread antinuclear sentiment reported among the public due to the 3.11 meltdown of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)’s Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, the Japanese people failed to mobilize in sustained mass protests until 15 months later. What led to the delay in mobilization?

1.2 – Background on the 3.11 Nuclear Disaster and Resulting Protests

The meltdown of TEPCO’s Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant had long-lasting consequences, including fear over safety issues, uncertainty about recovery, and anger towards the national government for downplaying the financial and human cost of nuclear energy. Kingston describes the impact the 3.11 nuclear accident had on the public:

The catastrophe at Fukushima, defined by apocalyptic images of reactor buildings blowing up and abandoned communities, has seared a place in the collective memory where nightmares usually reside….The public now understands that for all the failsafe technological safeguards, the sheen is off nuclear power because human error and institutionalized failure to properly assess and manage risk generates vulnerabilities….Perhaps over time concerns will diminish as people get on with their lives, but trust has imploded and a line has been crossed.¹

Antinuclear sentiment began to take root after the disaster. Within half a year after the accident, public opinion surveys showed that the majority of Japanese people switched from supporting

¹ Jeff Kingston, Contemporary Japan: History, Politics, and Social Change since the 1980s
nuclear power to opposing it. In addition to phasing out reliance on nuclear energy, people began to call for the dismantling of the “‘nuclear village,’ [a] shorthand for the policy community in which energy policy [had] been made.” However, despite the surge of antinuclear sentiment, mass protests against nuclear power did not erupt immediately. While the “general public may have turned antinuclear…in political terms it remained relatively immobilized for more than a year after the accident.” In fact, it took fifteen months for the antinuclear movement to mobilize into the sustained mass protests that made headlines around the world during the summer of 2012.

On 16 July 2012, tens of thousands of Japanese stood before the Prime Minister’s office to protest the restart of the second nuclear plant since the disaster. Both local and international news outlets highlighted the fact that this was the country’s largest public demonstration since the early 1960s. I argue that the surprising thing was not the size of these protests but why they took so long to erupt in the first place. What led to the delay in antinuclear power mobilization? Asking this question is important to the study of social movements because it requires establishing a time frame of how long it takes for mobilization to occur in comparable situations. This measurement of mobilization timing does not appear in the existing literature on post-accident antinuclear movements I have surveyed. Additionally, accounting for the delay in mobilization is important to understanding contemporary Japanese politics. It prompts a closer examination of the suffering that arose from the 3.11 nuclear meltdown and an assessment of the

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3 Richard J. Samuels, 3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan (Cornell University Press, 2013), 118.

4 Ibid., 131.
strengths and weaknesses of local antinuclear efforts. Findings from this thesis allow us to understand more clearly the state of Japanese civil society after the 3.11 disaster.

In this thesis, I explain the post-3.11 antinuclear power movement along the lines of social movement theory. Specifically, I generate and test three hypotheses – one from grievance-focused theory and two from internal-capacities focused theory – that could explain the Japan’s delayed mobilization. The evidence I find shows that grievance theory does not offer a suitable explanation for the delay. Likewise, (internal-capacities-focused) resource availability theory also cannot account fully for the late start of mobilized protest. However, I find that (internal-capacities-focused) mobilization structure theory offers a compelling explanation for the delayed emergence of sustained mass protests. Due to the historical lack of successful antinuclear power activism in Japan and the preponderance of amateur protesters present at the early demonstrations, the Japanese antinuclear power movement did not have at their disposal the type of protesters that are more effective at mobilizing. The findings from this thesis suggest that the delay in Japan’s post-3.11 antinuclear mobilization can be understood by looking inside the capacities of the movement and specifically at its mobilization structure and strategy.

1.3 – Theoretical Background of Protest Mobilization

To understand the delayed emergence of sustained mass protests after the Fukushima disaster, I turn to social movement literature that studies the factors influencing mobilization after a “suddenly imposed grievance.” I define “suddenly imposed grievance” the same way Walsh did when he created the term: an unexpected, dramatic, large-scale event that makes
people aware of and opposed to a particular grievance. Three general theories emerge from this literature: first, grievance-focused theory (which emphasizes the level of suffering and deprivation that arise due to the event); second, internal capacities-focused theory (which emphasizes availability and mobilization of resources); and third, external conditions-focused theory (which emphasizes political factors external to the movement such as electoral systems, constitutions, and state capacities to suppress). Each of these theories privilege different factors that encourage or limit the emergence of mobilization, offering different explanations for why a delay like the one after Fukushima could take place.

1.3.1 – Terms and Concepts

Before discussing each theory, first, I define relevant terms and concepts such as social movements and contentious politics. Social movements are “networks of informal interaction between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict on the basis of a shared collective identity.” Social movements that express political discontent and disagreement through protests and demonstrations are one form of contentious politics. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly define contentious politics as “episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a

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claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants.⁷

1.3.2 – Grievance

Grievance-focused theory, which dominated social movement theory until the 1970s, sees protest mobilization as a result of deprivation and accumulated grievances. Grievances can be measured objectively (e.g. income, pollution level, radiation level) or subjectively (e.g. perceived prejudice, negative attitudes about policy, fear of radiation). People protest because they suffer but cannot express their discontent through formal channels or address their problems through institutionalized means.⁸ Grievance theorists such as Gurr, Turner and Kilian, and Smelser hold that shared grievances are a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for the emergence of protests; they predict that the greater the deprivation and grievance, the more likely protest mobilization is to occur.⁹ However, they have often been criticized for not being able to support their claims about the relationship between deprivation and movement mobilization empirically.¹⁰

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⁷ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, Dynamics of Contention (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5.


In spite of these criticisms, grievance-focused theory continued to be utilized for studying ecological and antinuclear movements, which are relevant to my research question. I provide three examples from the literature. First, to explain the rates of participation in the ecology movement in Greece, Inglehart highlighted the fact that "metropolitan Athens probably has the most severe pollution problems of any major city in the European community." Second, to explain the mobilization of the German environmental movement, Wilson provided the following account:

In West Germany, the construction of nuclear energy plants and pollution damage to the Germans' beloved forests served to mobilize public support for the environmental movement. In France, however, there was no such mobilizing issue...The absence of such a central cause retarded the development of all social movements.

Third, to explain the emergence of antinuclear energy protests after the Three Mile Island nuclear accident, Walsh demonstrated that an increase in mobilization took place only after the accident. These examples suggest that grievances can encourage environmental and antinuclear protest mobilization.

However, the antinuclear protests that resulted from the Chernobyl disaster, which is perhaps the closest comparison to the Fukushima case, suggest that “suddenly imposed grievance” from an event like a nuclear accident is, on its own, not the best explanation for mobilization of

13 Walsh, "Resource Mobilization and Citizen Protest in Communities around Three Mile Island."
protests. Koopsman and Duyvendak argue that other situational factors should be considered as well:

The [Chernobyl] accident brought about protest reactions in all Western European countries, and it may be that without Chernobyl the rise of anti-nuclear protest in Germany would have been less spectacular. [Even so], the results show that the effects of a suddenly imposed grievance such as the Chernobyl disaster are conditioned by situational factors such as the state of the anti-nuclear movement at the time of the accident, the political situation in which it occurred, and the outcome of the interpretive struggle between the anti-nuclear movement and pro-nuclear authorities.  

In other words, high levels of grievance alone were not sufficient to prompt protest mobilization after Chernobyl; instead, external conditions and internal capacities that welcomed antinuclear movement mobilization also had to be present.

Can grievance theory explain Japan’s post-3.11 mobilization delay? Based on grievance theory, one possible hypothesis to explain the delay is:

• Hypothesis 1: Immediately following the 3.11 disaster, there was insufficient grievance (objectively and subjectively) to spur mobilization of sustained mass protests.

In Section 2, I examine this hypothesis and ultimately conclude that it is uncompelling. Using comparative cases, I demonstrate how the fifteen-month delay in Japan’s antinuclear mobilization was significant and unexpected given the high level of grievance caused by the Fukushima disaster. European countries such as Germany mobilized into mass protests immediately after 3.11, while Japan – which experienced the bulk of the radiation problem (objective grievance) as well as the negative public attitudes towards nuclear energy (subjective grievance) – did not.

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grievances) – did not mobilize until fifteen months later. These comparisons make clear that
grievance theory is not the best theory to understand the post 3-11 protest mobilization in Japan.

Instead of focusing on the event and resulting grievance, some scholars have turned to
internal capacities or external conditions to explain why mobilization might be promoted or
hampered. As Koopsman and Duyvendak write, “What matters for mobilization is not the
availability of problems but a social movement's internal capacities (resources) and external
opportunities (political process) to do something about them.”

1.3.3 – Internal Capacities (Resources and Mobilization Structure)

Gauging the internal capacities of a movement requires a look at its available resources as
well as its mobilization structure and strategy. According to Edwards and McCarthy, “putting
resources at the center of the analysis of social movement processes” can give insight into a
group’s ability to “mobilize effectively.”16 Theorists focused on the internal capacities of a
movement argue that "there is always enough discontent in any society to supply grass-roots
support for a movement if the movement is effectively organized and has at its disposal the
power and resources of some established group."17 Internal capacities-focused theory places
availability of resources and effective mobilization structure and strategy at the center of its
analysis.

15 Ibid., 236.

16 Bob Edwards and John D. McCarthy, "Resources and Social Movement Mobilization," in *The
Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi

17 John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A
To begin, what resources enable mobilization? Edwards and McCarthy worked to specify and conceptualize “resources” by developing a “fivefold typology of moral, cultural, social-organizational, human, and material resources”\(^\text{18}\):

1. **Moral** – Moral resources include solidarity, celebrity, legitimacy, and support for a movement’s goals.\(^\text{19}\)

2. **Cultural** -- “Cultural resources are artifacts and cultural products such as conceptual tools and specified knowledge that have become widely…known. These include tacit knowledge about how to accomplish specific tasks like enacting a protest event, holding a news conference, running a meeting, forming an organization, initiating a festival, or surfing the web.”\(^\text{20}\) Cultural resources can also include movement-relevant literature, newspapers, magazines, films, and music that help to recruit and socialize movement participants.\(^\text{21}\)

3. **Social-organizational** – Intentionally created or appropriated to further a movement’s goals, social organizational resources come mainly in three forms: “infrastructures, social networks, and organizations.”\(^\text{22}\) The availability of social-organizational resources in a particular setting increases the likelihood that mobilization would take there.\(^\text{23}\)

\(^{18}\) Edwards and McCarthy, "Resources and Social Movement Mobilization," 117.


\(^{20}\) Edwards and McCarthy, "Resources and Social Movement Mobilization," 126.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 127.

\(^{23}\) Ibid.
Social-organizational resources are the most context-dependent and least transferable of the different types of resources.

4. *Human* – Human resources refer to a movement’s volunteers, staff, or leaders and the human capital (labor, skills and expertise, experience) that they bring. “A movement’s capacity to deploy personnel is limited by the cooperation of the individuals involved [and] their participation is in turn shaped by spatial and economic factors as well as by social relationships, competing obligations, life-course constraints, and moral commitments.”

5. *Material* – Material resources refer to money and physical capital (such as property, office space, supplies, and equipment). Edwards and McCarthy write: “Monetary resources have received the most analytic attention and there are good reasons for that. Money is a necessity. No matter how many other resources a movement mobilizes it will incur costs and someone has to pay the bills.” This type of resource is measurable and fungible. For example, money can be used to purchase access to other resources that a movement may lack.

Studies by Minkoff and Soule lend support to the theory that resource availability positively correlates with the rate of protests. Additionally, McLaughlin and Khawaja and Dalton show how resources have played a role in the emergence of environmental organizations in the United States.

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24 Ibid., 128.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., 129.

States and in Western Europe respectively.\textsuperscript{28} All of these findings add strong empirical support to the claims made by mobilization theorists who linked resource availability to mobilization.\textsuperscript{29}

Can resource availability-focused theory explain the delay in Japan’s post-3.11 mobilization? One resource-related hypothesis is:

- \textit{Hypothesis 2a: After the triple disaster, resources available to the antinuclear movement were limited, thus the antinuclear movement was prevented from taking off immediately and effectively.}

Section 3 of this thesis tests whether the fifteen-month mobilization delay in Japan can be linked to scarcity of resources: moral resources in the form of mass media attention, cultural resources in the form of protest know-how, and material resources in the form of money. I find that with the exception of moral resources, the antinuclear movement did not experience a limitation of resources. With these mixed results, this section shows that focusing on resource availability is not the best way to understand the post-3.11 mobilization delay.

Aside from examining resource limitations or availabilities, another way to connect a movement’s internal capacities to mobilization is to see if the structures and strategies needed for effective mobilization are present. As Edwards and McCarthy write, "simple availability of resources is not sufficient; coordination and strategic effort is typically required in order to convert available pools of individually held resources into collective resources and to utilize


those resources in collective action.”

Among the five different resource types, social-organizational and human resources are particularly necessary for organizational efforts. Because social-organizational resources act to “provide access to other resources,” their absence would limit a movement’s “capacity to access crucial resources of other kinds,” resulting in lessened ability to mobilize. Human resources are also important given that it is people who have to do the work of organizing and strategizing. Goodwin and Jasper make clear the importance of movement participants, writing that “social movements emerge when…would-be ‘insurgents have available to them “mobilizing structures” of sufficient strength to get the movement off the ground’ and ‘feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem.”

These mobilizing structures are understood as social networks and organizations.

Central to mobilization structure and strategy are a movement’s participants because they provide the social networks needed for mobilization to occur. Different types of participants in a movement bring varying levels of human resources (e.g. experience, skills), as Edwards and McCarthy describe:

> Clearly, not all adherents offer the same mix of capabilities. A savvy and seasoned activist is not directly interchangeable with an eager undergraduate, no matter how effective the student may become with additional experience.

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31 Ibid., 127.


33 Edwards and McCarthy, "Resources and Social Movement Mobilization," 128.
Scholars have identified four different types of participants in a protest: (1) true believers (long-standing adherents to a cause who experienced full conversion and are committed to proselytizing and ready to sacrifice their lives for a cause); (2) activists (who join pro-democratic, liberal, human rights-type movements); (3) citizens centered around a common good (based on specific ideas, issues, and goals); and (4) spontaneous protesters (who form episodic protest actions in response to various government actions).\textsuperscript{34} True believers and activists are more predisposed to protesting and more effective at mobilizing support.\textsuperscript{35}

An hypothesis explaining the delayed timing of the post-3.11 antinuclear movement can be derived from mobilization structure-focused theory:

- \textit{Hypothesis 2b: The early post-3.11 antinuclear movement was composed of spontaneous protesters and regular citizens organized over one issue rather than true believers or activists, who are generally more effective in mobilizing support, thus explaining why mobilization did not occur immediately following the Fukushima disaster.}

In Section 4, I test this hypothesis to see if there was a lack of antinuclear true believers and activists in Japan, an internal capacities condition that would discourage mobilization. The evidence I find suggests that there was, indeed, a lack of antinuclear true believers and activists due to a longstanding “nuclear blind spot” in Japanese civil society. The preponderance of


amateur protesters offers an explanation for the movement’s lack of sustained mass mobilization.

1.3.4 – External Conditions (Political Opportunity Structure)

External conditions-focused theory examines political opportunities to explain the ease or difficulty of mobilization that protest movements might experience. Tarrow defines political opportunities as “dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure.”

Political opportunity theory privileges long-term structural factors such as electoral systems, administrative structures, constitutions, and states’ capacities for repression. Although “political opportunity” can be measured in a variety of different ways depending on how broadly or narrowly a social movement analyst defines the term, McAdam highlights four political factors he believes to be a “highly consensual list of dimensions of political opportunity”:

1. The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system
2. The stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity
3. The presence or absence of elite allies
4. The state’s capacity and propensity for repression

The degree of openness of a system can either encourage or discourage mobilization. Political opportunity structure theory predicts a “curvilinear relationship between openness and movement

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mobilization, [in which] very closed regimes repress social movements…very open and responsive ones assimilate them, and moderately repressive ones allow for their broad articulation but do not accede readily to their demands.”

In other words, only moderately closed systems prompt protests.\textsuperscript{39}

Political opportunity structure theory offers the following explanation for why Japan did not experience mass demonstrations immediately after 3.11:

- \textit{Hypothesis 3: Either Japan had a very closed system of decision-making that repressed protests or a very open system of decision-making that assimilated opposition, thus explaining why mobilization of the antinuclear power movement did not occur immediately following the 3.11 disaster.}

I do not conduct a detailed test of this hypothesis in this thesis. First, based on previous studies done on Japanese political opportunity structure and social mobilization, we know that Japan has a moderately closed system of decision-making. It cannot be characterized as a very closed system based on the fact that it is not a repressive regime that prohibits protests and the voicing of oppositional views; however, there is evidence to show that it is closed. Reimann describes Japan as a "highly centralized political system [with] limited access to channels of influence for outsiders."\textsuperscript{40} Studying energy policy specifically, Hasegawa (2011) finds that Japan demonstrates “closed” political opportunities through “the centralized and closed nature of


\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 70.

Japanese policy decision-making, monopolized by central ministries, a single ruling party, and concentrated big business.\textsuperscript{41} He argues that nuclear energy policy is bureaucratic-led, with Japan’s Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) “strongly protecting the utility’s interest.”\textsuperscript{42} Furthermore, local government has retained only a “very small legal authority on this [nuclear energy] issue” thus failing to hold the pro-nuclear energy national government accountable.\textsuperscript{43} Japan’s institutional arrangements leave little room for public interests to be expressed in the political system, making it more likely that citizens who oppose the country’s energy policy direction would resort to confrontational tactics such as protests. Given what we know about Japanese political structure generally and more specifically to energy policy, Hypothesis 3 does not appear to be supported. Second, political opportunities would be more useful in explaining the form rather than the speed of mobilization, the latter of which is the focus of my thesis. According to Goodwin and Jasper, political opportunities rarely eliminate the possibility of protests altogether, but instead serve as “institutional avenues that channel protest in certain ways rather than others.”\textsuperscript{44} For example, “political action is invited to go down legal rather than illegal routes, electoral rather than disruptive channels, into hierarchical rather than egalitarian organizational forms.”\textsuperscript{45} Due to these reasons, I limit the scope of my investigation to grievance and internal capacities while knowing that social movements do not


\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{44} Goodwin and Jasper, \textit{Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion}: 12.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
emerge in a vacuum, and that government, political structure, and policy matter.

1.4 – Method

In the following sections, I use historical comparisons to establish that the Japanese fifteen-month delay in protest mobilization was indeed different that in the past. Then, I test each of my three proposed hypotheses – generated from grievance and internal capacity theories – in turn. To gather empirical evidence on protest activities, participants, and public attitudes, I use protest event analysis (PEA) and rely mainly on information from books, journal articles, research reports, newspaper articles, published interviews, and public opinion polls.
Section 2

15-Month Delay and Grievance

In this section, I demonstrate that the fifteen-month delay in Japan’s antinuclear mobilization was unexpected given the speed of protest mobilization in comparative cases and the high level of grievance caused by the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The first half of this section examines mobilizations after Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima, and the second half describes the high level of objective and subjective grievances present in Japan as a result of the 3.11 nuclear meltdown.

2.1 – Significant 15-Month Delay in Protest Mobilization

The Japanese public staged several demonstrations throughout 2011 and early 2012, but the antinuclear movement was not yet mobilized at the time. These gatherings were smaller, isolated, or not organized by a coordinated effort from antinuclear organizations. I define mobilization as the coordinated assembling of a wide range of civilians to demand a particular objective through consistent large public gatherings such as demonstrations or protest rallies. By this definition, it was not until June 2012 that sustained mass antinuclear mobilization finally began to occur. To show that Japan’s 15-month delay in mobilization is a puzzle worth exploring, I establish the typical length of time it takes for people to mobilize in protests after a comparable event. Was Japan’s post-3.11 antinuclear mobilization indeed slow?

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2.1.1 – Mobilization Speed in Comparative Context

First, to put Japan’s mobilization delay in perspective, I compare it historically to the mobilization of the antinuclear movements in the United States after the Three Mile Island disaster and in West Germany after the Chernobyl disaster. These historical comparisons allow me to establish how long a country affected by a sudden, large-scale nuclear disaster typically takes to mobilize. The Three Mile Island accident occurred on 28 March 1979 and led to “rapid and widespread mobilization” of antinuclear protests in the United States.\(^\text{47}\) According to Cable, Walsh, and Warland, “citizens rapidly organized, with significant outside help from the national antinuclear movement…to begin what turned out to be a multi-year struggle against the utility and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).”\(^\text{48}\) In fact, just a few days after the accident at Three Mile Island, several veteran activists organized a rally at the Capitol on April 6\(^{\text{th}}\), which drew “approximately 1,000 people” and marked “an important early event in the area's widespread protest mobilization.”\(^\text{49}\) Their effort saw immediate results: “within weeks, veteran activists from the 1960s had taken over leadership positions in [plant’s watchdog, Three Mile Island Alert (TMIA)], and transformed the Harrisburg [social movement organizations (SMO)] into a coalition representing local groups from numerous area communities.”\(^\text{50}\) One month later on 6 May 1979, these veteran activists organized a national anti-nuclear rally in Washington, D.C.

\(^{47}\) Walsh, "Resource Mobilization and Citizen Protest in Communities around Three Mile Island," 17.


\(^{49}\) Ibid.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
D.C. The rally drew an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 attendees and marked “another important event in [antinuclear] mobilization.”\textsuperscript{51} It seems that mass mobilization of antinuclear protests after the Three Mile Island accident occurred within the first two months of the disaster, a timeframe that is supported by Giugni’s account that "antinuclear protests [increased] rapidly [and reached] the highest level in 1979.”\textsuperscript{52}

Another historical nuclear accident comparable to Fukushima is the Chernobyl disaster that took place on 26 April 1986 in the former USSR. The disaster affected many countries in Western Europe, “Germany witnessed a spectacular rise in the number of antinuclear protest events [and showed] the largest increase in mobilization” while small increases took place in France and Switzerland.\textsuperscript{53} If I limit the selection of my comparative case to just Germany after Chernobyl (which mirrors post-Fukushima Japan in its high frequency of protest events and large numbers of protesters at the peak of its mobilization), Figure 1 and Figure 2 show that the peak of its mobilization took place immediately following Chernobyl, with the greatest numbers of protests and active participants in the year following the disaster. Even if I include the small mobilizations in France and Switzerland, the same timing pattern holds true: Figure 1 and Figure 2 show that the months immediately following the disaster saw the highest frequency of protests and numbers of protest participants.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{53} Koopmans and Duyvendak, "The Political Construction of the Nuclear Energy Issue and Its Impact on the Mobilization of Anti-Nuclear Movements in Western Europe," 238.
Figure 1: Number of Protests of the Antinuclear Movement per Four-Month Period in Germany, France, Netherlands, and Switzerland

Figure 2: Number of Participants in Actions of the Antinuclear Movement per Four-Month Period, per Million Inhabitants in Germany, France, Netherlands, and Switzerland

Given the timing of mass protests seen after the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl disasters, one would expect Japan to have followed the same pattern of rapid mobilization following 3.11, but instead, antinuclear mass mobilization did not begin until fifteen months later in June 2012.

Second, comparing Japan’s mobilization to those happening in other countries – such as Germany – after 3.11. also illuminates the starkness of its 15-month delay in protest mobilization. This contemporary comparison allows me to isolate the effects of the Fukushima disaster. In Germany, antinuclear protests sprung up within days of the Fukushima disaster, attracting
crowds of more than 200,000.\textsuperscript{54} In response, Chancellor Angela Merkel immediately halted the extensions for the country’s existing nuclear power plants and temporarily shut down about half of the reactors that had been operating since 1981. Later on 29 May 2011, the German government announced the closure of all its nuclear power plants by 2022, a drastic change given that nuclear power supplied about 27 percent of the country’s electricity at the time.\textsuperscript{55} Even after gaining ground with these promising government responses, German antinuclear groups continued to mobilize, and on the first anniversary of 3.11, about 50,000 people in six German regions came together to demonstrate against nuclear power.\textsuperscript{56} This sort of antinuclear movement – involving successful mass mobilization – was not found in Japan in the months following the disaster.

2.1.2 – Japanese Mobilization

Not until June 2012 – 15 months after the Fukushima nuclear disaster – did coordinated, consistent, large protests begin in Japan. To show numerically that Japanese society did not experience mass mobilization for a 15-month period, in Table 1, I compile a list of all the post-3.11 protests that were reported online through news sites and other sources. I record the date, location, organizer (if specified), and estimated attendance each demonstration. Using just the date and the estimated attendance, I construct Figure 3, which shows graphically the trajectory of the antinuclear movement.


\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
### Table 1
List of reported demonstrations after 3.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Organizer, if mentioned</th>
<th>Estimated Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-Mar-11</td>
<td>Shibuya</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-Mar-11</td>
<td>Ginza</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Apr-11</td>
<td>Koenji Station</td>
<td>The Amateur’s Riot</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Apr-11</td>
<td>Shiba Park</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-Apr-11</td>
<td>TEPCO Headquarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-Apr-11</td>
<td>TEPCO Headquarters</td>
<td>Farmers from Fukushima</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-May-11</td>
<td>Shibuya</td>
<td>The Amateur’s Riot</td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Jun-11</td>
<td>Shinjuku</td>
<td>Energy Shift</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Jun-11</td>
<td>Shiba Park</td>
<td>Japan Congress Against A- and H-Bombs, Citizens’ Nuclear Information Center, Consumers Union of Japan, Women’s Action Network, No Nukes Plaza.</td>
<td>4,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Sep-11</td>
<td>Osaka</td>
<td></td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Sep-11</td>
<td>TEPCO Headquarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Sep-11</td>
<td>Shibuya</td>
<td></td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Sep-11</td>
<td>Shinjuku</td>
<td>The Amateur’s Riot</td>
<td>20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-Sep-11</td>
<td>Meiji Park</td>
<td>Oe Kenzaburo, Sawachi Hisae, Kamata Satoshi, Ochiai Keiko, and The Japan Congress Against A- and H-Bombs (Gensuikin)</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-Oct-11</td>
<td>Shibuya</td>
<td>Minoru Ide</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-Oct-11</td>
<td>METI</td>
<td></td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Nov-11</td>
<td>Kichijoji</td>
<td></td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Nov-11</td>
<td>METI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14-Jan-12</td>
<td>Yokohama</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Mar-12</td>
<td>Hibiya Park</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>9,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-Mar-12</td>
<td>Hibiya Park</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>30,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>29-Mar-12</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Jun-12</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
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<td>22-Jun-12</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>45,000</td>
</tr>
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<td>29-Jun-12</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-Jul-12</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Jul-12</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-Jul-12</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>170,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-Jul-12</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-Jul-12</td>
<td>Nagatacho</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-Aug-12</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-Aug-12</td>
<td>Shibuya</td>
<td></td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-Oct-12</td>
<td>Hibiya Park</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27-Oct-12</td>
<td>Nagoya</td>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-Oct-12</td>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-Nov-12</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-Dec-12</td>
<td>Hibiya Park</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-Dec-12</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-Feb-13</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-Mar-13</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-Mar-13</td>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td></td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-Mar-13</td>
<td>Hibiya Park</td>
<td></td>
<td>40,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-Mar-13</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-Mar-13</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>29-Mar-13</td>
<td>Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>MCAN</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-May-13</td>
<td>Shinjuku</td>
<td>Fukushima evacuation trial team</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-Jun-13</td>
<td>Diet Building</td>
<td>MCAN and National Conference on Abolishing Nuclear Power Plants (Genpatsu wo Nakusu Zenkoku Renrakukai)</td>
<td>85,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-Jun-13</td>
<td>Diet Building</td>
<td></td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8-Jul-13  Roppongi, outside the Nuclear Regulation Authority  80

There are two points – concerning protest numbers and sources – that are important to consider when examining Table 1. First, the larger demonstrations generated a wide range of attendance estimates. The protest organizers typically estimated higher numbers than the police. One journalist explains that police figures are lower because “[the policy] start counting at the beginning of a rally but neglect to take into account subsequent crowd swell.”

Given the range of numbers, I choose to use organizers’ numbers in constructing Table 1 and Figure 3 to keep the source of the estimates consistent with those of the early demonstrations. Due to the initial lack of police presence at the early events, organizers were the main source of those numbers.

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Second, apart from the mass demonstrations in April and September 2011, major Japanese news outlets did not uniformly or consistently cover the protest rallies. It was not until the large June 2012 protests that nearly all the major news agencies and TV networks showed up to provide coverage; even then, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, one of five national newspapers in Japan, passed on the story. Moreover, after the peak of the mobilization in June and July 2012, if news reports continued to cover the weekly protests, they sometimes referred to the large June and July 2012 numbers without providing numbers for protests in August 2012 onward. This suggests that the subsequent demonstrations did not draw the same number of people.\(^58\) Organizers corroborate this drop in numbers; they estimate that the August 2012 weekly protests drew about 90,000 people but fell to around 20,000-35,000 people by October that same year.\(^59\)

Despite the wide range of numbers and spotty media coverage, one thing is clear: mass protests against nuclear power did not begin until June 2012, fifteen months after 3.11, which is a puzzle given that movements following Three Mile Island and Chernobyl did not see such delays. Although the 26 April 2011 and 19 September 2011 events drew large crowds, they were isolated events, not followed up by consistent action from an organized actor. In fact, one of the organizers of the April 2011 rallies, Hajime Matsumoto, expressed to *Kyodo News* his amazement at the 15,000-person turnout despite the lack of mobilization; he said, “It’s epoch-making that so many people gathered without being mobilized by a large organization. [The

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protest had] become powerful because we joined hands over the Internet.” As Table 1 reflects, smaller rallies continued to be held sporadically in 2011 and early 2012, though there was no central organizer, and they were “individually planned.” The Amateur’s Riot (a recycle shop), E-shift (a new group formed after 3.11), and Minoru Ide (a 31-year old interior decorator and punk band hobbyist) were some of the groups and individuals responsible for these events. The fact that the early protests had a range of uncoordinated organizers indicates that the antinuclear movement had not yet mobilized. It was not until March 2012 that Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes (MCAN), a newly formed umbrella organization for antinuclear groups and individuals, began to organize weekly rallies outside the Prime Minister’s office. As Figure 3 shows, the peak of these protest occurred around June and July of 2012 when MCAN was finally able to draw large crowds to its rallies. This peak came about 15 months later than the peaks of the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl protests. Why was there a delay in the Japanese case? Was the 3.11 disaster perhaps not as terrible as other nuclear accidents?

2.2 – Delay is Unexplained by Grievance

To answer these questions, I investigate if there was insufficient grievance in Japan to spur mobilization of sustained mass protests, thus explaining the 15-month delay. The evidence I find in this section indicates that there were high levels of objective grievance (environmental and economic costs) and subjective grievance (fear of radiation and uncertainty about the future, distrust in government, and disapproval of government policy) resulting from the Fukushima

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nuclear plant meltdown. In addition to being significant in length, Japan’s delay in mobilization was unexpected based on grievance levels. As such, grievance theory is a poor fit for understanding the delayed mobilization of the Japanese antinuclear movement.

2.2.1 – High Objective Grievance

Objective grievance was high after the disaster. Out of the three disasters (earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster), the meltdown of Fukushima Daiichi power plant reactors is "the event with the most long term consequences." The nuclear explosion and resulting radiation leaks had costly environmental and economic consequences for Japan.

First, the severity of the environmental problems resulting from Fukushima is reflected by the rating it achieved on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)’s International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale (INES) as well as reports of radioactive material released. Japan’s Nuclear Industrial and Safety Agency (NISA) originally rated Fukushima as an INES Level 3 (“serious incident”) disaster on March 11, raised it to Level 4 (“accident with local consequences”) on March 12, and then raised it once more to Level 7 (“major accident”) on April 12. These changes were made due to “the impact of the cumulative effects from the continuing leaks of radioactive water and the widespread health and environmental effects.”

According to the IAEA, a Level 7 disaster is the highest, most dangerous level achievable by a nuclear accident; it involves a “major release of radioactive material with widespread health and

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environmental effects requiring implementation of planned and extended countermeasures.”

The fact that only two nuclear accidents in history – Chernobyl and Fukushima – have ever received a Level 7 rating demonstrates that the Fukushima 3.11 nuclear meltdown was indeed an incident of high objective grievance.

To put Fukushima’s radioactive fallout into perspective, the Three Mile Island was a Level 5 incident, and Chernobyl was Level 7. According to Muller, “the meltdown at Fukushima led to a huge release of radioactivity—much greater than had happened in the prior U.S. nuclear reactor accident at Three Mile Island in 1979.” Comparing Fukushima to Chernobyl is “complicated due to the fact that a number of varieties of radiation have been released, and while one or several forms of radiation may be lower than Chernobyl, others may be higher.”

Reports show that iodine 131, cesium 134 and 137, strontium and plutonium were leaked into the water, soil, and atmosphere in Fukushima. In June, NISA estimated that the release of radiation into the atmosphere in the first week may have been double what was previously estimated. As of September 2011, they estimated that 770,000 terabecquerels were released. Two and a half years after the accident, as of 6 August 2013, Fukushima nuclear plant's groundwater contaminated with strontium, cesium, and tritium continues to leak into the

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64 “Ines: The International Nuclear and Radiological Event Scale,” International Atomic Energy Agency.


68 “Fukushima Water Cleanup in Action.”
Pacific Ocean. An official at TEPCO suggested that on the whole, “the [Fukushima] situation could be worse than Chernobyl.”

Second, regarding economic losses, with three reactors failed, "Japan currently holds the unenviable record of the most costly man-made disaster in recorded history." TEPCO estimates that cleanup could cost $125 billion. For comparison, the Three Mile Island accident required “laborious cleanup, in which about 150 tons of contaminated materials were shipped to Idaho National Laboratory for storage, [taking] 14 years and [costing] nearly $1 billion.” As for Chernobyl, “precise costs have been impossible to calculate…because of policies in place at the time of the explosion and the inflation and economic disruptions that followed the break-up of the Soviet Union.” However, the IAEA estimates that Chernobyl’s economic costs have been several hundred billions of dollars:

A variety of estimates from the 1990s placed the costs over two decades at hundreds of billions of dollars. These costs included direct damage, expenditures related to recovery and mitigation, resettlement of people, social protection and health care for the affected population, research on environment, health and the production of clean food, radiation monitoring, as well as indirect losses due to

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70 Carpenter, Japan’s Nuclear Crisis: The Routes to Responsibility: 4.


removing agricultural lands and forests from use and the closing of agriculture and industrial facilities, and such additional costs as cancellation of the nuclear power program in Belarus and the additional costs of energy from the loss of power from Chernobyl. The costs have created a huge drain on the budgets of the three countries involved.75

It may be still too early to know the full cost of Fukushima, but estimates of costs for immediate costs alone indicate that Fukushima’s objective grievance in the form of economic loss will be greater than the Three Mile Island’s and comparable to Chernobyl’s.

Adding further economic costs to Japan, agricultural and fishing businesses were disrupted and suffered losses “estimated to be well over $1 billion” because of the nuclear crisis.76 Although the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare’s (MHLW) tested 120,371 samples of food for radiation levels and found only 1102 (less than 1%) of the samples to be concerning, they exercised caution and banned certain food products from Japanese and foreign markets.77 For example, produce, milk, and fish from Fukushima were found to contain levels of iodine-131 that exceeded government standards, and were thereby removed from the market.78 Prior to 3.11, Fukushima was “the fourth largest producer of vegetables and rice in Japan” (accounting for 2% of the nation’s GDP), and fishing was “a primary industry.”79 In a second example, Aomori Prefecture’s apple growers were not able to export more than one ton of their products after the disaster. Given that they “[produce] 90 percent of apples in Japan [and]

75 Ibid.
76 Carpenter, Japan’s Nuclear Crisis: The Routes to Responsibility: 10.
79 Ibid., 8.
comprise 70 percent of Japan’s total fruit exports,” this was an economically painful
development. In a third example, the cattle farming industry suffered economically from
radiation contamination. In July 2011, Aeon, Japan’s second largest retailer, discovered that the
meat it had sold came from cattle that ate nuclear-contaminated feed. As a result, all beef
shipments from areas near Fukushima were banned.

By June 2011, the MHLW’s list of food products that exceeded their safety limits was
almost 350 items long and included products from eight prefectures, not just Fukushima. Some
scholars wonder if these high economic losses resulted more from government decisions than
from radiation levels. For instance, Brumfiel and Yuyuno argue that the Japanese government’s
decision to set conservative radiation-dose-limits exacerbated the damages to the Fukushima
economy. They find fault with MHLW’s decision “to lower the safe level for caesium in
vegetables, grain and other foods from 500 becquerels per kilogram (Bqkg\(^{-1}\)) to 100
Bqkg\(^{-1}\) [even though] food with radioactivity lower than 500 Bqkg\(^{-1}\) is not harmful to human
health.” Prohibiting crops containing more than 100 Bqkg\(^{-1}\) of caesium imposes what Brumfiel
and Yuyuno describe as “excessively stringent safety measures [that] could hinder not only the

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80 Ibid., 9.


84 Ibid.
recovery of the region's agriculture, but also the collection of scientific data.” Regardless of whether the Japanese government should shoulder the blame for the agricultural losses, one gathers that the losses were indeed high.

2.2.2 – High Subjective Grievance

The meltdown of Fukushima’s nuclear plants caused not only radiation spillage from the plant site, but also a nationwide shattering of the belief that nuclear power was clean, safe, and cheap. After the disaster, fear of radiation and uncertainty about the future were pervasive. Additionally, growing subjective grievances in the form of distrust in the government and disapproval of the government’s nuclear energy policy were reflected in public opinion polls.

First, fear of radiation and uncertainty about the future were serious public health concerns after 3.11. A Pew Research Center report shows that in spring of 2011, a majority (59%) of Japanese surveyed was “worried about radiation risks to their families.” The same report shows that “fully 76% of Japanese believe produce from the Fukushima area is not safe” despite repeated assurances from the government and the scientific community. Satoshi Takahashi, a leading clinical psychologist in Japan predicted that “the mental fallout of the Fukushima meltdown will be worse than the physical impact.” Unlike post-traumatic stress prompted by the earthquake, “radiation [fear] creates a slow, creeping, invisible pressure that can

85 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
lead to prolonged depression.” The Fukushima Health Management Survey assessed the health of the 210,000 evacuees and found that “15% of adults showed signs of extreme stress, five times the normal rate, and one in five showed signs of mental trauma — a rate similar to that in first responders to the attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States. A survey of children, filled out by their parents, showed stress levels about double the Japanese average.” According to Brumfiel, for those living near the disaster site, mental health problems were far more damaging than radiation itself:

In the immediate aftermath of the nuclear accident, public-health experts worried about the possible risk from radiation. Subsequent analyses have shown that the prompt, if frantic, evacuation of areas around the reactors probably limited the public’s exposure to a relatively safe level… But uncertainty, isolation and fears about radioactivity’s invisible threat are jeopardizing the mental health of the 210,000 residents who fled from the nuclear disaster.

In addition to radiation fears, uncertainty about the future was also mentally taxing. The residents who fled Fukushima were uncertain they would ever return. Although they received about $11,800 per household of immediate living expenses, the evacuees expressed that the amount was completely inadequate. Uncertainty also afflicted the people working in the agricultural and fishing industries. Farmers and fishermen “were adamant that their industries and livelihoods had been ruined and that their businesses would never be able to recover because Japanese and foreign consumers would no longer trust their brands.” They were also “very concerned that the ongoing crisis at Fukushima would make a lasting impression on consumers

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89 Ibid.


91 Ibid.


93 Ibid., 10.
and, even if radioactive levels in foods were well below the standard set by government, confidence in Japanese food exports would quickly deteriorate.”

These feelings of fear and uncertainty felt by Fukushima evacuees as well as those working in the agricultural and fishing sector, though subjective, were real consequences of the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Second, a nationwide distrust in government grew after 3.11. Data from the 2012 Edelman Trust Barometer shows that Japan’s “trust in government” fell from 51% to 25%. The level of trust in civil servants fell even more dramatically from 63% to 8% after 3.11. Not surprisingly, the level of trust in the energy industry fell from 75% to 29%, making the once most trusted industry the least trusted. The loss of trust in these institutions can be explained by how the government handled the nuclear disaster in Fukushima. Immediately following the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, TEPCO and government officials assured the Japanese public that the “situation was under control, and that the power plants posed no risk to the public.” However, they very quickly revised the statement “to say that there could be health risks within a 12 mile evacuation zone, but that there was little or no health danger outside this zone.” Over the course of the following months, this statement as well as the INES rating would be corrected time and time again. As a result, instead of reassuring the public, this method of cautious-assessment-then-revision “led to an erosion of public confidence in the

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94 Ibid.
95 “2012 Edelman Trust Barometer Executive Summary,” Edelman.
97 Ibid.
government’s ability to be truthful and honest about nuclear power.” A May 2011 poll showed that more than eighty per cent of the population did not believe the government’s information about the nuclear crisis.” Studying trust levels after 3.11, Hommerich corroborates these findings; she concludes that the government’s management of relevant disaster information – the holding back of worst-case scenario reports, the upgrade to a Level 7 disaster, the three month delay of the release of radiation-spread projections from the System for Prediction of Environmental Emergency Dose Information (SPEEDI) – undermined trust in the Japanese national government.

Third, public opinion polls showed a decline in support for the government’s nuclear energy over time. Figure 4 summarizes poll data gathered by Japanese mass media from April to October 2011.

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Figure 4: Surveying Public Opinion on the Future of Nuclear Power in Japan

It is clear from Figure 4 that in a little over half a year after the 3.11 disaster, the majority of the Japanese public switched from supporting nuclear power to opposing it. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center report corroborates this trend: by the time the last nuclear power station went offline in early 2012, 70% of Japanese said that Japan “should reduce its reliance on
nuclear energy.”101 This lends support to the claim that subjective grievance was high after the
disaster.

Conclusion

In this section, I have argued that the 15-month delay in mobilization the Japanese antinuclear movement experienced was significant given comparable cases and unexpected given the high levels of objective and subjective grievance. First, a historical analysis showed that nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl prompted mass mobilization immediately or otherwise within the first few months of the disasters. Likewise, a comparative analysis after Fukushima’s 3.11 disaster showed that European countries, such as Germany, rallied into mass protests immediately. In contrast, Japan – which experienced the bulk of the environmental and economic costs (objective grievance) as well as the fear, uncertainty, and negative public attitudes towards government and nuclear energy (subjective grievances) – did not mobilize until fifteen months later. These findings suggest that grievance is not the most relevant factor for understanding post-3.11 protest mobilization in Japan.

Section 3

Resources

According to Kitschelt, "if movements can appeal to widely shared norms, collect adequate information about the nature of the grievance against which they protest and raise the money to disseminate their ideas and information, the chances of a broad mobilization increase." This statement sums up the internal capacities-focused theory that resource availability encourages collective action mobilization. It also hones in on three kinds of resources that affect mobilization: 1) cultural resources that make a movement more appealing; 2) moral resources that lend attention and legitimacy to a movement’s cause; and 3) financial resources that enable a movement to produce and disseminate information. In this section, I test whether the early post-3.11 antinuclear movement experienced a limitation of resources, which if it existed, would help to explain why the antinuclear movement took as long as fifteen months to mobilize. I look specifically for evidence concerning moral resources in the form of media attention, cultural resources in the form of activist know-how, and material resources in the form of money. I find that with the exception of moral resources, which was partially lacking, the antinuclear protest movement did not appear to experience resource limitations during the months following the disaster, thereby showing that the resource-dependent hypothesis is not supported.

3.1 – Partial Lack of Media Attention

The antinuclear movement partially lacked moral resources in the form of mass media attention. Media attention is a valuable moral resource because it allows the public to receive

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information about ongoing grievances and provides movements with space to publicize their messages along with recognition that their actions are important and worth covering.\textsuperscript{103} Essentially, media attention provides a movement with legitimacy – the essential moral resource – even if the news station or newspaper does not agree with a movement’s aims. Mazur explains how media attention functions as a moral resource: “Increased reporting [makes] topics salient, placing them on the ‘public agenda,’ so that the audience increasingly thinks and talks about them, even if they do not adopt the attitudes of the journalists on these topics.”\textsuperscript{104} Because gaining media spotlight brings a cause to the center of public consciousness, grassroots movements in particular find it useful for mobilization; without it, “a demonstration…is a nonevent, unlikely to have any positive influence on mobilizing followers or influencing the target.”\textsuperscript{105} Additionally, media attention can raise the status of activists and protest leaders, offering moral resource in the form of validation especially when no material benefits are guaranteed.\textsuperscript{106} Furthermore, not only does mass media bring attention and legitimacy to a movement and its leaders, it also positively correlates with civil participation.\textsuperscript{107} Scholars such as Bennett and Kottasz, Massey, Waters and Tindall demonstrate a positive correlation between

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\textsuperscript{104} Allan Mazur, "Nuclear Power, Chemical Hazards, and the Quantity of Reporting," \textit{Minerva} 28, no. 3 (1990): 294.


\end{flushright}
news coverage of a particular disaster and increased donations to disaster relief funds. Other studies show that coverage of an event such as a nuclear accident positively correlates with public awareness of nuclear issues; “mass media can enhance general public concern about global environmental problems.” In fact, according to Mazur, "the organs of mass communication seem to be especially potent in bringing topics of environmental hazard to the attention of the audience.”

Given the benefits that come with media attention, a lack of media coverage of the nuclear situation, early antinuclear protests, or both, offers one possible explanation of why mobilization of the Japan post-3.11 antinuclear movement was delayed. While analysis of newspapers and TV reports shows that Japanese sources devoted a smaller percentage of disaster-related stories to the nuclear incident and presented less dramatic coverage than international news sources did, there is no evidence to suggest Japanese mass media provided limited coverage of the nuclear situation in absolute terms.

I highlight two studies that discuss differences between Japanese and foreign news coverage on the nuclear situation. First, a study conducted by Tkach-Kawasaki compares three Japanese newspapers (Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri) to two foreign newspapers (CNN

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Table 2 accounts for all the disaster-related news reported on the top page of the *Asahi, Mainichi, Yomiuri, CNN International* and *CNN U.S.* websites during March 2011. The news reports are separated by topic (earthquake/tsunami, nuclear situation, lifeline, and aid/relief), with numbers outside the parentheses tallying the absolute number of reports per topic, and numbers inside the parentheses calculating the percentage each topic received out of the total number of disaster-related reports from a particular news source.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Asahi N (%)</th>
<th>Mainichi N (%)</th>
<th>Yomiuri N (%)</th>
<th>CNN Int'l N (%)</th>
<th>CNN U.S. N (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Earthquake/tsunami</td>
<td>--March 17</td>
<td>31 (37.8)</td>
<td>19 (27.5)</td>
<td>21 (24.7)</td>
<td>8 (33.3)</td>
<td>6 (35.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--March 24</td>
<td>35 (43.2)</td>
<td>13 (22.4)</td>
<td>30 (37.0)</td>
<td>7 (50.0)</td>
<td>6 (33.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--March 31</td>
<td>38 (54.3)</td>
<td>12 (25.0)</td>
<td>37 (46.3)</td>
<td>5 (55.6)</td>
<td>4 (66.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear situation</td>
<td>--March 17</td>
<td>26 (31.7)</td>
<td>21 (30.4)</td>
<td>25 (29.4)</td>
<td>15 (62.5)</td>
<td>9 (52.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--March 24</td>
<td>20 (24.7)</td>
<td>13 (22.4)</td>
<td>21 (25.9)</td>
<td>5 (35.7)</td>
<td>11 (61.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--March 31</td>
<td>7 (10.0)</td>
<td>6 (12.5)</td>
<td>21 (26.3)</td>
<td>4 (44.4)</td>
<td>2 (33.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifeline</td>
<td>--March 17</td>
<td>24 (29.3)</td>
<td>25 (36.2)</td>
<td>34 (40.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--March 24</td>
<td>17 (21.0)</td>
<td>28 (48.3)</td>
<td>26 (32.1)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--March 31</td>
<td>16 (22.9)</td>
<td>26 (54.2)</td>
<td>12 (15.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid/Relief</td>
<td>--March 17</td>
<td>1 (1.2)</td>
<td>4 (5.8)</td>
<td>5 (5.59)</td>
<td>1 (4.2)</td>
<td>2 (11.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--March 24</td>
<td>9 (8.6)</td>
<td>4 (6.9)</td>
<td>4 (4.9)</td>
<td>2 (14.3)</td>
<td>1 (5.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--March 31</td>
<td>9 (12.9)</td>
<td>4 (8.3)</td>
<td>10 (12.5)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
<td>0 (0.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>--March 17</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--March 24</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>--March 31</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Based on this data, Tkach-Kawasaki concludes that in the first month after the disaster, Japanese newspapers devoted a smaller percentage of their disaster-related coverage to the nuclear situation than international news sources did. However, looking only at the two CNN columns, I suspect that this is not necessarily because Japanese sources downplayed the nuclear situation but more because both CNN sources had less to say about the earthquake/tsunami and nothing to say about lifeline information. As a result, their percentages of disaster-related news devoted to the nuclear situation turned out to be high. Additionally, looking at the absolute number of nuclear-related reports for all the newspapers suggests a different trend; the figures show that throughout March 2011, all three Japanese newspapers published more reports on the nuclear situation than CNN International and CNN U.S. did.

Second, a study by Imtihani and Yanai compares NHK’s (Japanese public television) coverage to the BBC World’s. Imtihani and Yanai find that NHK spent a smaller number of hours highlighting the nuclear situation than the BBC did. While “NHK kept focusing on the handling of the earthquake and tsunami…BBC dug more deeply into the information on what was happening with the nuclear plant after the tsunami hit that caused a failure in the reactor cooling system.” Imtihani and Yanai also argue that a look at the content of NHK broadcasts shows a tendency to downplay the nuclear situation. First, its selection of sources and commentators came mostly from official government statements. Second, it used only images (less alarming), not videos (more alarming), to show the first explosion of the Fukushima nuclear

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112 Ibid.
113 Najih Imtihani and Mariko Yanai, "Media Coverage of Fukushima Nuclear Power Station Accident 2011 (a Case Study of Nhk and Bbc World Tv Stations)," Procedia Environmental Sciences 17, no. 0 (2013): 940.
114 Ibid.
Third, it framed its reports in a manner favorable to the government and TEPCO. For example, it framed the flushing of water into the reactors as an “epic story of Japanese defense forces fighting the great impact of a disaster,” while the BBC framed it as a “futile action and an expression of frustration because there was no other action that could be taken at that time.”

While Imtihani and Yanai’s study raises an important point about Japanese and foreign journalists framing the nuclear situation differently, it is difficult to determine if NHK deemphasized the severity of the nuclear disaster or if the BBC overemphasized it. The answer to this question seems to depend on who one asks.

Some claim that the Japanese news sources downplayed the unfolding nuclear situation due to its pro-nuclear ties. For example, Liscutin describes the Japanese media as the “fifth pillar of the atomic village [that] supported the official strategy of downplaying the nuclear disaster thereby showing themselves at the time, as little more than the mouthpiece of the government and TEPCO.”

This is consistent with the finding that countries highly dependent on nuclear energy control media reports in order to mitigate public opposition. In their book Hōdō saigai ‘gempatsu-hen’ (Journalism-Made Disaster: The Nuclear Power Chapter) Uesugi Takashi and Ugaya Hiromichi accuse the Japanese media for suspending investigative journalism near the meltdown and “[promulgating] the government’s line that the risk of radiation escaping from the reactors and thus the risk of irradiation to the population of

115 Ibid., 944.


Fukushima and the Tohoku and Kanto areas were ‘minimal.’”¹¹⁸ They charge the Japanese media with “effectively [deserting] the population they were supposed to inform.”¹¹⁹

In contrast, others believe that Japanese journalists provided careful but fair coverage, while foreign journalists overdramatized the nuclear situation. In an article published by the Japanese-language version of *Newsweek*, Yamada and Yokota criticized foreign journalists for showing a lack of composure after the disaster and sparking unnecessary fears through their reporting.¹²⁰ One example they cite involves CNN’s Anderson Cooper. Throughout Cooper’s on-site broadcast, he showed concern about how far away he was from the Fukushima reactors and asked questions about which way the wind was blowing. Even when he was stationed 100 kilometers away, he asked if he should move to a more distant location. According to Yamada and Yokota, Cooper made little attempt to calmly gather facts about the nuclear situation, and in so doing sparked needless fears.¹²¹ Why might foreign media overdramatize the nuclear situation? Tkach-Kawasaki speculates that while the Japanese media may have felt an “intrinsic sense of responsibility about managing the crisis and not sparking hysteria,” foreign news did not have the same constraint.¹²² In an interview with the *Nikkei Shimbun*, Yuri Okina, the Executive Vice President of the National Institute for Research Advancement, said that the reason for

¹¹⁸ Liscutin, "Indignez-Vous! ‘Fukushima,’ New Media and Anti-Nuclear Activism in Japan."

¹¹⁹ Ibid.


¹²¹ Ibid.

sensationalist foreign reporting could be due to the fact that government and TEPCO officials made little effort to engage with foreign media:

Neither the government nor TEPCO did enough to communicate the facts of the situation in English. As a result, foreign journalists began to get the idea that "Japan is hiding something" or "they aren't telling us the truth" which contributed to coverage that heightened anxieties.... There is an urgent need to improve the ability of Japan's civilian and government agencies to communicate objective facts about the situation to those abroad. The government held daily press conferences led by Chief Cabinet Secretary [Edano] for the domestic audience, but they also need to directly engage the foreign media with press conferences that disseminate proper information in other languages.123

Regardless of which view one subscribes to, the conclusion that one can draw is that Japanese and foreign media covered the nuclear situation differently. All things considered, the evidence suggests that local mass media did cover the nuclear situation, though coverage may have been more careful, optimistic, or a smaller percentage of the overall disaster-related coverage.

While there is a debate about whether or not Japanese mass media provided limited coverage of the nuclear situation in Fukushima, the claim that they provided sporadic and minimal coverage on the early protest demonstrations is less disputed. According to Satoh, “most newspapers provided minimal coverage based only on what each of the newspaper’s reporters just happened to know.”124 Interestingly, in contrast, each of the major Japanese newspapers – Japan Times, Yomiuri, Mainichi, Nikkei, and Asahi – reported on (and for some, featured) the 26 March 2011 demonstrations that took place in Germany.125 Such unevenness of coverage suggests that Japanese newspapers tended to overlook the growing local antinuclear


125 Ibid.
protests. In fact, the 11 June 2011 rally was the first post-Fukushima protest event in Japan that all five newspapers mentioned. However, in the months following June 2011, the coverage of protests continued to be less than expected, and at times, alarmingly absent. For example, on 19 September 2011, 60,000 people demonstrated in Meiji Park in central Tokyo, forming the largest group of protesters found in Japan in at least four decades. This demonstration was not mentioned in the 7:00pm national news that night even though the protest ended its march right across the street from the NHK headquarters. Kingston commented on this omission by saying, “It is this sort of media “unhappening” that raises alarms about the power it has over framing public discourse, because…the domestic mainstream media were more lapdog than watchdog in covering the nuclear crisis.” By providing little coverage on the antinuclear demonstrations, the Japanese press delegitimized concerns about nuclear-related issues and dismissed nuclear opposition as something outside of the mainstream discourse on Fukushima. In this way, the lack of media attention concerning the early protest can be seen as a lack of moral resources made available to the Japanese antinuclear movement.

3.2 – Available Cultural Resources

The antinuclear movement had cultural resources at its disposal to make its activities culturally appealing. Cultural resources are defined as “practical mastery of political activism

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126 Ibid.


depending] on campaign routines, intuition and an acquired 'common sense.'”\textsuperscript{129} This activism “know-how” informs protest culture by providing “sensitivity to the complex meanings of words, symbols, persons, actions, places and times.”\textsuperscript{130} Although few people in the early post-3.11 demonstrations had prior experience with antinuclear activism specifically, they showed aptitude for making the protest movement appealing through historical tie-ins, celebrity spokespersons, friendly styles of protest, and strategically designed mascots.

First, an important image evoked by the antinuclear movement involved connecting the Fukushima nuclear reactor meltdowns to the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings. This linkage was clearly made by Kenzaburo Oe, whose leadership at antinuclear rallies helped to “[connect] the people of Tohoku to the victims of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”\textsuperscript{131} In a March 2011 \textit{New Yorker} article, Oe wrote that he hoped “the accident at the Fukushima facility [would] allow the Japanese to reconnect with the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to recognize the danger of nuclear power, and to put an end to the illusion of the efficacy of deterrence that is advocated by nuclear powers.”\textsuperscript{132} He expressed the same purpose in his rally speeches by announcing that he was “going to fight against those who act as though Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Fukushima never happened.”\textsuperscript{133} Grouping these tragic events and their victims together allowed the antinuclear movement to tap into a victim-focused approach that

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{129} Christian Lahusen, \textit{The Rhetoric of Moral Protest: Public Campaigns, Celebrity Endorsement, and Political Mobilization} (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 120.
  \item \textsuperscript{130} Edwards and McCarthy, "Resources and Social Movement Mobilization," 126.
  \item \textsuperscript{131} Samuels, \textit{3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan}: 132.
  \item \textsuperscript{132} Kenzaburo Oe, "History Repeats," \textit{The New Yorker}, 28 March 2011 (http://www.newyorker.com/talk/2011/03/28/110328ta_talk_oe).
\end{itemize}
had historically been successful for the antipollution movement, but not the pre-3.11 antinuclear movement.\footnote{Simon Avenell, "From Fearsome Pollution to Fukushima: Environmental Activism and the Nuclear Blind Spot in Contemporary Japan," \textit{Environmental History} 17, no. 2 (2012).} By strategically tying in the devastation of Fukushima with Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s, the antinuclear movement demonstrated its ability to use history in a meaningful and compelling way.

Second, a number of Japanese celebrities served as cultural resources for the antinuclear movement. According to scholars such as Lahusen and Street, the availability of famous spokespersons can encourage mobilization of social movements by bringing attention to the movements’ causes.\footnote{Lahusen, \textit{The Rhetoric of Moral Protest: Public Campaigns, Celebrity Endorsement, and Political Mobilization}; John Street, "Bob, Bono and Tony B: The Popular Artist as Politician," \textit{Media, Culture & Society} 24, no. 3 (2002).} A celebrity endorsement is a resource powerful enough to “greatly increase public attention, generate media coverage, and open doors to policymakers and resource providers alike.”\footnote{Edwards and McCarthy, "Resources and Social Movement Mobilization," 129.} In fact, “celebrity endorsements are especially credible in cases…where the celebrity commands the details of the issue, evidences sincere and longstanding commitment, and donates his or her own time.”\footnote{Ibid.} There are several examples of committed celebrities who participated in the post-3.11 movement. Nobel laureate Kenzaburo Oe, whom I previously mentioned, showed a longstanding, unwavering commitment to eliminating nuclear power and donated a significant amount of time to the rallies. Ryuichi Sakamoto, a member of the groundbreaking Japanese technopop group Yellow Magic Orchestra (YMO) and a Grammy
Award-winning composer, frequently worked alongside Oe at the rallies soon after 3.11. Later in July 2012, Sakamoto used his fame and connections within the music industry to organize No Nukes 2012, a rock concert to raise funds for Sayonara Genpatsu 1000 Man Nin Akushon (Citizens’ Committee for the 10 Million People’s Petition to say Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants). This event allowed even more celebrities – “including pioneering electronic groups Kraftwerk and YMO as well as rock bands Asian Kung-Fu Generation, Acidman, and others” – to participate in the antinuclear movement. Taro Yamamoto, a “popular actor, who had appeared in many films and television dramas, made a video for Operation Kodomotachi, a nonprofit organization supporting the evacuation of children from Fukushima; in it, he was bluntly critical of the government's setting of mandatory evacuation zones, which he claimed were too small and made so in order to save money.” Due to the controversy of his views, he left his talent agency in 2011 and eventually took his antinuclear message into politics. These examples of celebrity participation – and in some cases, leadership – is a testament to the strength of the antinuclear movement’s cultural resources.

Third, another example of the antinuclear movement’s protest “know-how” is seen in the non-violent and friendly manner in which protests were held. According to the New York Times, “rally organizers [went] to great lengths to project a friendly image in a generally conformist country where protesters of any kind are seen by many as fringe agitators at best and terrorists at

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140 Ibid.

worst." This negative perception of protesting was formed based on the “mass protests in the 1960s and ’70s against a security treaty with the United States, during which rioters armed with pipes and makeshift gasoline bombs clashed with the police.” In contrast, the post-3.11 demonstrations have been notably orderly with organizers issuing specific instructions “to cooperate with the local police and to go home at 8 p.m. on the dot.” Asahi Shimbun reports that protests have been both orderly and accessible:

Protests throughout Japan have managed to create a peaceful, welcoming atmosphere that has helped to prevent the movement from fading away…Because the (protest) sites are nonviolent, anybody can join. The festival-like atmosphere created by the rhythm of the drums and the like also lowers the hurdles to engaging in a demonstration or protest.

By projecting an orderly and friendly style of protest, organizers had made their activities more appealing to the Japanese people.

Fourth, in keeping with this friendly image and cleverly building on Japanese society’s appreciation for cartoon characters, the antinuclear movement created a mascot named Monjukun to criticize the government’s nuclear energy policy. Monjukun presents an interesting contrast to Pluto-kun, who was a fictional character created by the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Corporation (PNC) years ago to assure the public that nuclear energy was a safe choice.

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143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.


Since early 2012, Monju-kun has made multiple appearances at antinuclear protests and has amassed a large Twitter following (102,786 to date).\(^{147}\) In addition, an anonymous author has written three “light-hearted” books under this cartoon character’s name to discuss the hazards of nuclear power.\(^ {148}\) This use of Monju-kun strategically counters the claims of Pluto-kun and appeals to cartoon-character-loving Japan, demonstrating cultural savvy on the part of the antinuclear movement.

To sum up, Hiroshima and Nagasaki connections, presence of celebrity spokespersons such as Kenzaburo Oe and Ryuichi Sakamoto, friendly protest manners, and creation of Monju-kun show that the antinuclear had access to valuable cultural resources. Such resources, in turn, should have made the movement more culturally acceptable and encouraged mobilization.

3.3 – Available Monetary Resources

Sufficient monetary resources were available to organizations with antinuclear aims. First, because an important part of the early antinuclear movement relied on disseminating information about the 3.11 nuclear situation, independent, alternative news organizations were needed to provide for full coverage of the issue. Two examples of independent, Internet-based media organizations were Web Iwakami and OurPlanet-TV (OPT), both of which made efforts to raise funds for their online broadcasts.

Web Iwakami broadcasted all government and TEPCO news conferences online, asked the tough questions that mainstream journalists avoided, and allowed viewers to participate in


and interact with their videos. They expanded to nine live-streaming channels immediately after 3.11 and then further increased their web presence to “a staggering 93 regional channels to cover events from the 47 prefectures of Japan.”149 In order to fund their work, they “[relied] entirely on donations of users and supporters, or income through workshops…symposia and publications as well as the work of volunteers.”150 According to Iwakami, network viewers have been very supportive in “[organizing] local lecture events, [joining] local protest movements, [travelling] to Tokyo for the September 19 rally [and] also actively [helping] to keep Web Iwakami financially afloat through donations.”151 Web Iwakami has also been able to lower its publicity costs by using Twitter; it has approximately 80,000 Twitter followers, who are able to get news alerts and share video links with their friends.152

As for OPT, by November 2011, it had “[broadcasted] around 90 documentaries, interviews, press conferences as well as lectures on the Fukushima disaster and nuclear energy, of which around 40 videos [were] concerned with the consequences of nuclear disaster on children’s lives and health, and about 15 reports/interviews [concerned] the plight of the workers at Fukushima Daiichi.”153 Along with these videos, they created about 50 written news bulletins. To fund all of these projects, OPT raised money through membership fees and donations, which they collect directly through their website or online campaigns such as Indiegogo.154

149 Liscutin, "Indignez-Vous! ‘Fukushima,’ New Media and Anti-Nuclear Activism in Japan."
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
In addition to these alternative news organizations, MCAN, another group highly important to the antinuclear movement, has managed to successfully raise money for its activities. MCAN released monthly financial reports of its protest events from March 2012 to August 2012, which I summarize in Table 3.

Table 3
Balance of MCAN’s weekly demonstrations in front of the Prime Minister’s Office, March 2012-August 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Revenue (through fundraising)</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 2012</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>¥5,070</td>
<td>(¥5,070)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2012</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>¥15,580</td>
<td>(¥15,580)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2012</td>
<td>¥69,524</td>
<td>¥19,070</td>
<td>¥50,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2012</td>
<td>¥994,180</td>
<td>¥107,609</td>
<td>¥886,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2012</td>
<td>¥598,578</td>
<td>¥327,771</td>
<td>¥270,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2012</td>
<td>¥1,179,043</td>
<td>¥520,698</td>
<td>¥658,345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Also worth noting in Table 4 is the amount of revenue single-handedly brought in by MCAN’s Tokyo Grand March’s held on the first anniversary of 3.11:

Table 4: MCAN Individual Event Balance, 3/11/2012 Tokyo Grand March

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Large Scale Event</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/11/2012 Tokyo Grand March</td>
<td>¥526,528</td>
<td>¥235,163</td>
<td>¥291,365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There are two trends that I would like to highlight from MCAN’s financial reports of its protest events. First, in Table 3, we see that in the months preceding mobilization (March, April, and May), MCAN’s revenue for the time period was greater than its expenses. Although MCAN did not fundraise for its protests until May that year, it managed to cover its protest expenses. Second, we see that protest events did not require large amounts of money to put on. Aside from printing
fliers or creating banners, protest organizers could hold these events on small budgets. An entire month of MCAN’s protest expenses was less than US$200 before mobilization and less than US$5,000 during its peak period.

The successful fundraising efforts of these groups, which were central to the pre-mobilized antinuclear movement, suggest that limited availability of monetary resources was not a significant problem in the months following 3.11.

**Conclusion**

Because this section concentrated on the internal capacities of the antinuclear movement, one point that I did not discuss was competition from other causes for valuable resources. The reality of the triple disaster meant that Japanese civil society was not focused solely on the nuclear situation. News coverage of 3.11 was divided between the nuclear situation and earthquake and tsunami-related reports as well as lifeline, disaster, and aid information. Additionally, the triple disaster meant that the antinuclear groups were not the only ones gathering resources. Disaster organizations made concerted efforts to encourage participation in relief work and raise money for the earthquake and tsunami-related devastation around the same time. According to Yayoi Tanaka, the president of the Japan NPO Research Association, “aggregate number of people who took part in volunteer activities via referrals at volunteer centers in Iwate Prefecture (24 centers), Miyagi Prefecture (12 centers) and Fukushima Prefecture (28 centers) totaled 1.02 million as of May 2012.”

Even members of the Japanese mafia, also known as *yakuza*, saw provided assistance as a culturally fitting endeavor. When asked why they sent “twenty-five four-ton trucks filled with paper diapers, instant ramen,

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155 Yayoi Tanaka, "At Crossroads: Japan's Civil Society and Politics -- Has Japanese Society Changed since Great East Japan Earthquake?," Japan Foreign Policy Forum, February 2013, 2.
batteries, flashlights, drinks, and the essentials of daily life to the Tohoku region, they said, “There are no yakuza or katagi (ordinary citizens) or gaijin (foreigners) in Japan right now. We are all Japanese. We all need to help each other.”¹⁵⁶ In addition to cultural resources, disaster organizations also successfully raised monetary support. There is data to show that people gave generously through direct donations to the victims (geinkin) and through disaster relief NPOs, NOGS, and other groups (shienkin). Aid given to those directly affected by the disaster (geinkin) amounted to 316.8 billion yen by the end of May 2012 while donations made towards groups, organizations, local governments, and engaged NPOs/NGOS (shienkin) amounted to about 209.3 billion yen by the end of February 2012.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, the earthquake and tsunami disaster response after 3.11 was immediate, well-resourced, and a demonstration of the strength of Japanese civil society. A reasonable question to ask is whether the vast amounts of resources devoted to earthquake and tsunami disaster relief diverted important resources away from the antinuclear movement, but I find no direct evidence to suggest that they did.

Instead, I found that the antinuclear movement only partially lacked moral resources in the form of media coverage. Japanese newspapers reported on the nuclear disaster, even if the coverage was a smaller percentage of total-disaster reports and more optimistic than international media. However, they did provide limited coverage of the early protests resulting from 3.11. Furthermore, I found that the antinuclear movement showed it had the cultural and monetary resources needed to accomplish its aims. By connecting Fukushima to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, highlighting participation of celebrity spokespersons, portraying a friendly style of protest, and


¹⁵⁷ Tanaka, "At Crossroads: Japan's Civil Society and Politics -- Has Japanese Society Changed since Great East Japan Earthquake?," Japan Foreign Policy Forum, February 2013, 2.
creating Monju-kun as an identifiable mascot, the nascent antinuclear movement showed that it had the know-how to grow its appeal. Likewise, successful efforts by Web Iwakami, OPT, and MCAN to raise monetary resources allowed for the dissemination of information about the nuclear issue as well as the organization of protest activity.

Therefore, the hypothesis that the antinuclear movement faced limited availability of resources, thus delaying mobilization, is only partially supported by the evidence presented. The partial lack of moral resources offers support for the hypothesis, but the availability of both cultural and monetary resources should have encouraged mobilization.
Section 4

Mobilization Structure and Strategy

In this second section on internal capacities, I examine how the types of early protesters as well as the mobilization strategies adopted by the movement promoted strong antinuclear sentiments and well-attended single protest events, but delayed sustained mobilization. In the first part of this section, I argue that the early protesters were not long-time antinuclear true believers or activists (the type of protesters known to be more effective at mobilizing) but regular citizens gathered out of fear of radiation and still others who joined spontaneously. Notably represented at the early protests were women and *freeters* whose motivations for demonstrating illustrate the preponderance of amateur protesters at the events and offers an explanation for the movement’s lack of sustained mass mobilization. In the second part of this section, I explain how the use of Twitter and other social media platforms allowed movement organizers to speedily amass large numbers of regular citizens for single protest events, but proved to be a poor substitute for more traditional forms of mobilization, which were necessary in order to maintain a network for a centralized and sustained movement.

4.1 – The Protesters

As cited in the introductory section, protesters can be classified into four types:

(1) true believers
(2) activists
(3) regular citizens gathered around a specific issue or goal; and
(4) spontaneous protesters. Based on findings by Passy and Giugni, we know that true believers and activists are more predisposed to protesting and more effective at mobilizing support.  

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I argue that Japan’s delay in sustained mass mobilizations can be explained by the dearth of true believers and activists and the preponderance of the last two types of protesters, regular citizens gathered around a single issue and spontaneous protesters. To build this argument, first, I explain how the first two types of protesters – true believers and activists – were underrepresented after the disaster due to a long-standing “nuclear blind spot” in Japanese civil society. Second, I present evidence to suggest that women and freeters, whose active participation in the early movement were noted by various scholars and reporters, fell under the third and fourth categories (citizens organized around a single issue and spontaneous protesters).

4.1.1 – Lack of Pre-existing Antinuclear True Believers and Activists

Where were Japan’s antinuclear true believers and environmental activists? The answer to this question lies in the fact that sustained activism against nuclear power – and more specifically, nuclear power plants – has historically been missing in Japan. Even before 3.11, Japanese civil society had exhibited what Avenell calls a “nuclear blind spot.” The term “nuclear blind spot” refers to the fact that despite the great democratic upsurge of environmental activism in the 1960s when Japanese citizens “embraced…protest, litigation, public discussion, and political mobilization” concerning pollution issues, nuclear power has been continuously overlooked by the Japanese Pollution Research Committee and unsuccessfully targeted by activists as a single issue. The omission of nuclear safety issues from the Pollution Research Committee’s agenda up until the Fukushima accident is notable given that the committee had

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159 Avenell, "From Fearsome Pollution to Fukushima: Environmental Activism and the Nuclear Blind Spot in Contemporary Japan," 269.

160 Ibid., 267.
uncovered corporate deception concerning nuclear power radiation at Minamata and Yokkaichi and were fully aware of antinuclear movements springing up in the United States and Western Europe.\(^{161}\) Furthermore, “by 2007, the utilities reported that there had been ninety-seven mishaps in nuclear power plants nationwide, including…the 1995 sodium leak at the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Corporation’s (PNC’s) Monju [fast breeder reactor] and the twenty-hour-long criticality accident in 1999.”\(^{162}\) With such developments indicating the potential dangers of nuclear power, one would expect to see a civic-led initiative for closer monitoring of radiation from nuclear plants and opposition towards the Japanese government’s strong push for nuclear energy.

Instead, activism against nuclear power turned out to be ineffective, unfocused, and sporadic. For example, after the 1986 Chernobyl accident, a group of citizens circulated a petition calling for a “nuclear-free law,” which collected about 3.3 million signatures in 1990 and 1991.\(^{163}\) However, the petition never reached the Diet, and the efforts to oppose nuclear power were eventually abandoned. According to Cavasin, “after that experience, the movement [focused] its attention on other issues, such as the environment, education, and social problems, sometimes partnering with nonprofits and NGOs. While it has staged individual antinuclear protests… it has had little long-term effect on government policy.”\(^{164}\) In another example, while a limited number of antinuclear true believers and environmental activists did organize in the form

\(^{161}\) Ibid., 268.

\(^{162}\) Samuels, 3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan: 113.


\(^{164}\) Ibid.
of the Japan Congress against A- and H-Bombs (*Genuikin*) and the National Network against Nuclear Energy, these organizations “were not professional advocacy organizations with strong influence on policy-making, [and] when push came to shove, [they] were more strongly opposed to nuclear weapons than to nuclear power.”¹⁶⁵ This unfocused opposition to nuclear power is reflected in several of the post-3.11 protests, in which protesters carried signs against both nuclear power and nuclear weapons. This intertwining of issues reveals a lack of an existing bloc of true believers or activists that dealt singularly with opposing nuclear power plants.

Several scholars note the dearth of sustained antinuclear activism, corroborating Avenell’s claim about Japan’s “nuclear blind spot.” Hasegawa describes Japan as having had "weak antinuclear groups lacking resources."¹⁶⁶ Comparing German and Japanese civil societies, McKean notes that “the intense opposition in Germany to nuclear power rather than other environmental threats…contrast with Japan.”¹⁶⁷ Kawato, Pekkanen, and Tsujinaka mention that Japanese civil society groups “were not…successful in preventing problems in nuclear policy or the nuclear industry.”¹⁶⁸ Studying activism after the Tokai Village disaster, Cavasin concludes that while interest in antinuclear activism increased slightly after the disaster, movements “still


remain fragmented, their long-term stability has not yet been demonstrated and no nationwide antinuclear group has as yet emerged."169 How did this “nuclear blind spot” arise?

First, strategic and expensive government efforts to present nuclear power as a safe, or at least financially beneficial, option contributed to the lack of activism found in civil society. After the first oil crisis in 1973, the government worked hard to suppress grassroots antinuclear activity by reassuring its citizens about safety of nuclear fuel.170 Their efforts were largely successful, and “the antinuclear movement in Japan was relatively peripheral [because of] the deeply ingrained notion of nuclear power as ‘safe.’”171 The government also invested heavily in paying off local communities hosting the power plants; in fact, “Japan was the first country to offer governmental subsidies for nuclear facilities in the name of promoting local development.”172 As Kawato, Pekkanen, and Tsujinaka describe, “the state and electric power companies tried to preserve their freedom of action [by offering] large compensation packages to local communities that accepted nuclear plants.”173 For example, during the thirty-five years between 1974 and 2009, cities and towns in Fukui Prefecture (the host of 13 nuclear plants) “received more than 150 billion yen in subsidies from the central government, and the prefecture

169 Cavasin, "Citizen Activism and the Nuclear Industry in Japan: After the Tokai Disaster," 72.

170 Samuels, 3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan: 113.


received nearly 175 billion yen.” Moreover, when the electric power companies “searched for sites to construct nuclear plants, they purposefully chose communities in which civil society was weak.” In an interview, Satoshi Kamata, a September 2011 protest organizer, made an interesting analogy to describe the government’s relationship to local communities that host nuclear plants:

The nuclear industry is like the big bad wolf from the fairy tale [Little Red Riding Hood]. Grandma won’t open the door to let him in the house. But when she looks under it, she thinks it is not the wolf but her granddaughter. So she opens the door and the wolf eats her. The house is Japan, and grandma is the local communities.

After opening the door to nuclear power, local communities became highly dependent on nuclear plants for their economy. Although government subsidies covered the costs of plant construction, they did not cover operations costs, thus local communities had to invite more plants to be constructed in order to generate enough income to operate the original plants. The result was a “nuclear power plant addiction” (genpatsu izon-shō). Concerted efforts by the government to promote nuclear energy – by presenting it as safe, offering large financial pay-offs to host communities, targeting communities with already weak civil societies, and sustaining a nuclear plant addiction – hindered the antinuclear power movement from taking off.

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174 Samuels, 3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan: 114.


178 Ibid.
Second, another reason for the “nuclear blind spot” was the inability of antinuclear groups to tap into victim-centered activism, which was popular in Japanese civil society. “Until two workers died in an accident at a uranium reprocessing facility north of Tokyo in 1999, nuclear power generation in Japan was an industry without fatalities, and there have been no documented civilian fatalities to date” from the meltdown at Fukushima Daiichi. This made the antinuclear movement unable to compete for attention against high-profile victims’ movements; because activists in Japan typically focused on victim-centered issues and not on preventative causes concerning radiation or other potential pollutants, nuclear power was left off their agenda.

To summarize, the lack of antinuclear true believers and environmental activists at the time of the Fukushima nuclear disaster can be explained by the “decades of largely passive acceptance of nuclear power” by the Japanese people and the resulting “nuclear blind spot” in Japanese civil society. Because true believers and activists are the types of protesters more likely to be effective mobilizers, their absence helps explain the lack of sustained mass protest mobilization during the first fifteen months after 3.11.

4.1.2 – Amateur Protesters: Women and Freeters

In the absence of long-standing antinuclear activists, amateur protesters were well represented in the early post-3.11 antinuclear movement. Akihiro Ogawa, who was at the March,

179 Avenell, "From Fearsome Pollution to Fukushima: Environmental Activism and the Nuclear Blind Spot in Contemporary Japan."; Kawato, Pekkanen, and Tsujinaka, "Civil Society and the Triple Disasters: Revealed Strengths and Weaknesses."

180 Avenell, "From Fearsome Pollution to Fukushima: Environmental Activism and the Nuclear Blind Spot in Contemporary Japan."

181 Ibid., 271.
April, September, and October 2011 protests to conduct an ethnographic study, supports this claim:

There were many “rally beginners,” who had never before participated in a political demonstration rally in order to express their will; several people with whom I spoke said that they were coming to this kind of rally for the first time. In fact, the organizers distributed an advice leaflet instructing activists to drink water properly since they would be walking for an hour (the weather was hot), wear comfortable shoes, wear hats, and follow the instructions of the staff.\(^\text{182}\)

I argue that the early protesters, comprised of many women and freeters, fall under the latter two categories of protesters: regular citizens who came together around the specific issue and spontaneous protesters, both of which are less effective in mobilization.

Women

After the Fukushima disaster, one group highly involved in the early antinuclear movement was women, particularly women with children. The following reports highlight their participation:

- A *Japan Times* article, published in July 2011, highlighted how “Japanese mothers, many with no history of political activism, have started taking to the streets to urge the government to protect their children from radiation leaking from the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant.”\(^\text{183}\)

- On 27 October 2011, about two hundred women sat outside the METI office for a three-day sit-in to demand the “evacuation of children from areas with high radiation levels and


the permanent shut down of nuclear reactors in Japan currently switched off.”

Greenpeace provides the following description of the event:

[The women’s] peaceful protest is a powerful – almost radical – act in a country where standing up for something can often mean ostracism from one’s community. These are not women who regularly participate in civil protest. These are mothers who fear for their children’s safety and future. These are grandmothers separated from their families.

- On 11 November 2011, Women of Fukushima Against Nukes organized a “sit-in in Tokyo calling for the permanent evacuation of at-risk children in areas of high radiation – and also the permanent shut down of nuclear reactors that are currently shut off in Japan.”

- In December 2011, “more than 100 antinuclear demonstrators, most of them women, met with officials of the Nuclear Safety Commission… and handed over a statement calling for a transparent investigation into the accident and a permanent shutdown of all nuclear power plants.” According to Aileen Miyoko Smith, leader of Green Action (an NGO

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185 Kenyon, "Women from Fukushima Gather to ‘Find Hope in the Despair’ of Nuclear Disaster."


promoting renewable energy), mothers made up the grassroots movements that worked to terminate the operation of all 50 nuclear plants by 2012.  

- Up to two years after the disaster in 2013, mothers continued to participate in and organize antinuclear activities. On 7 July 2013, *NHK News* reported that “hundreds of mothers staged an anti-nuclear rally in Tokyo…one day before power firms apply to restart 5 nuclear plants under new safety standards. The organizer said about 500 women gathered in front of the prime minister's office.” For this particular event, in order allow more voices to be heard, the women collected “about 20,000 anti-nuclear messages…from across the country for the rally.”  

- The active role Japanese women played in opposing nuclear power has inspired other women around the world to do the same. The *Taipei Times* reported that “female leaders of the anti-nuclear power movement in Taiwan…became involved in the issue and the development of the movement because they were confident that women could play a “pivotal” role in the [antinuclear] campaign.” Irene Chen, a Taiwanese celebrity and a leader of the antinuclear power movement, credits reading about the women in Japan as “her inspiration” for taking action.  

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188 Ibid.  
concluded that “whether it’s in India or Japan, [people] need to stop romanticizing nuclear power as a symbol of national pride and strength.”

Why did these Japanese women choose to participate in the antinuclear protest events? From the examples provided above, we gather that mothers in particular, out of a high level of concern that radiation would adversely affect their children and their family lives, were active in voicing their opposition to nuclear power. Women were compelled to get involved with the grassroots antinuclear movement for the following five reasons: First, we know from the broader literature that “one consistent result from poll data is that women are more likely to oppose nuclear than men.” Second, as the parent more likely to be involved with raising children, mothers experience a greater sense of burden when having to make decisions while faced with the possibility of radiation poisoning. We see this dynamic play out with couples directly affected by the disaster: while men were more likely accept the government’s evaluation that radiation levels were safe and therefore remain in the Fukushima area, women were more likely to want to leave the region with their children in order to ensure their safety. In fact, after the disaster, high levels of family stress have been reported, and “marital discord has become so widespread that the phenomenon of couples breaking up has a name: genpatsu rikon


or ‘atomic divorce.’” Furthermore, questions about whether or not women can safely become pregnant or how children can be best shielded from radiation effects have fallen predominantly on women’s shoulders. Third, women from Fukushima are reported to have experienced a greater degree of social stigma than men from the nuclear plant meltdowns. Much like the stigma that was attached to the victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s atomic bombings where women could not find husbands due to fears that they had been tainted by radiation, prejudice against women from Fukushima has also been pervasive:

Many negative comments in the media and on websites insinuate that Fukushima women are “damaged goods.” Even some people who are supposedly on the side of radiation victims are prepared to throw them on the reproductive scrap heap. Last year, prominent antinuclear activist Hobun Ikeya, the head of the Ecosystem Conservation Society of Japan, said at a public meeting: “People from Fukushima should not marry because the deformity rate of their babies will skyrocket.”

Fourth, the Fukushima nuclear meltdown and the resulting dispersion of radiation gave the antinuclear movement the opportunity to use a victim-centered strategy to pitch the antinuclear position to women. Women – especially those from Fukushima – could view themselves as victims of social stigma or their children as vulnerable victims of radiation, supplying reasons to engage in contentious politics. Fifth, much like the postwar disarmament movement, which used women’s positions as mothers to rally them, the post-Fukushima antinuclear power movement appealed to women in a similar way. As Slater writes, “From the perspective of the ‘natural’


197 Haworth, "After Fukushima: Families on the Edge of Meltdown."

198 Sasaki-Uemura, Organizing the Spontaneous: Citizens Protest in Postwar Japan: 30.
obligation of reproduction and nurturing another generation [mothers] cannot suffer in silence; they cannot accept some collateral damage as inevitable; to do so would be irresponsible to their children’s and to Japan’s future.”

Given that most of these women were normal citizens who became concerned about nuclear power and radiation stemming from concerns about family stress, protection of children, food safety, stigmatization, and reproductive health – as opposed to being activists – I conclude that women fit into the third category of protesters (citizens gathered around a single issue). Other clues involving past protest participation rates, time constraints, and loose political ties support this characterization of women as non-activists, providing an explanation of why sustained mobilization was deterred. First, although their antinuclear opinions are not surprising, the fact that Japanese women would participate in demonstrations to express those views is both new and notable. The 2005 World Values Survey shows that only 7% of Japanese women have experienced participating in lawful/peaceful demonstrations, compared to almost double that percentage for men (13.8%). Not only did women report low participation rates, they also expressed a low inclination to protest. The same survey reports that 65.2% of women in Japan felt that attending a lawful/peaceful demonstration was something they “would never do” (compared to 50.1% of men who expressed that view). When broken down by employment status, housewives were even less likely to demonstrate: only 6.4% of Japanese housewives had


201 Ibid.

202 Ibid.
demonstrated before, whereas 70.9% of them said it was something they “would never do.”

Given these survey results, we can conclude that women in Japan are less likely to be involved in demonstrations and that their active participation in the post-3.11 early demonstrations was a special effort to oppose a single issue, nuclear power. Second, in order to participate in events like the July 2011 sit-in, women had to “put their own lives and families on hold for these three days.” Launching a sustained protest movement would have demanded even bigger sacrifices than a single sit-in. Third, women in Japan have looser ties to political parties and therefore lack the top-down push that would be useful for sustained mobilization. On one hand, they have been active in NGOs and other grassroots organizations, and since the 1970s when women won the right to vote, they have been turning out to national and local elections in high numbers. On the other hand, despite willingness to participate in political events, women have experienced a significant lack of political leadership and ties to political parties. In the long run, these ties are important to growing and sustaining a movement, given that being vocal about one’s views is not enough to gain political traction or effect change.

203 Ibid.

204 Kenyon, "Women from Fukushima Gather to ‘Find Hope in the Despair’ of Nuclear Disaster."


206 Ibid.
Freeters

Freeter comes from the combination of the words “freelance” and “arbeiter” (arbeit means work in German) and refers to part-time or temporary young workers in Japan.  

Several decades ago, Japanese society was thought to be largely middle-class and sometimes even described as “90 percent middle-class.” However, due to a recession that started in the 1990s and continued to the mid-2000s as well as neoliberal policies, many youths were forced out of regular employment into the flexible workforce. These freeters receive little employment protection and low wages, placing them in a precarious economic and social position in Japanese society. Essentially, freeters are the functional equivalent of young precariats, “a neologism that combines the adjective-precarious and the noun proletariat.” In his book about precariats, Standing describes them as disaffected and dispirited people who see little hope for improvement. Recent statistics from the MHLW show that 38.7% of workers in Japan are in the flexible, non-regular workforce.

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209 Yuki Honda, "'Freeters': Young Atypical Workers in Japan," Japan Labor Review 2, no. 3 (2005): 5.


212 Yutaka Asao, "Non-Regular Employment - Issues and Challenges Common to the Major Developed Countries," The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training.
Anecdotal evidence suggests that in addition to women, freeters were some of the first protesters of nuclear power immediately after the 3.11 disaster:

- About one week after the 3.11 disaster, a freeter named Ryota Sona, stood before TEPCO headquarters shouting for the elimination of nuclear plants. According to Ogawa, “Sono’s direct action consequently ignited a series of rallies against the nuclear energy policy, in which participants asked for the abolition of all nuclear plants and the development of such alternative energy sources as solar, wind, and liquid natural gas.”213

- Around the same time, The Amateur’s Riot (Shiroto no ran), a freeter group, organized several protests. The Amateur’s Riot is an urban network, formed in 2005 and based near Kōenji Station in Tokyo where they manage recycle shops, a cafe, and some free space.214 This group was responsible for gathering together thousands of people in Tokyo on 10 April, 7 May, and 11 June 2011 for protests.215

- The well-attended 10 April 2011 protest, in particular, is credited to the leadership of The Amateur’s Riot organizers and the wide participation of freeters. The organizers had applied for a permit to demonstrate, telling police that they expected 500 participants. Instead, 15,000 demonstrators turned up at the event. According to Kindstrand, the original low estimate was “not…an indicator of pessimism, but exactly as the sort of tongue-in-cheek humor that has put the Koenji-based The Amateur’s Riot (Shiroto no

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ran) on the map of resistance culture in Japan. Within just a few years, they have become an important node of a new wave of autonomous political activism, popularly referred to as the ‘precariat movement.’” Other scholars also observed significant participation by freeters in April 2011. According to Tanaka, “those who started protests in Tokyo’s Koenji area were mainly people in their 30s who have been involved in campaigns demanding better treatment for non-permanent employees. In the beginning, it was this stratum of people who took the leading role in the demonstrations calling for an end to nuclear power in Japan.” These freeters were motivated not only out of fear of radiation, but also anger towards the government for its poor management of the situation and its limited disclosure of information. Likewise, Asia One reported that the crowd was composed of “people mainly in their 20s and 30s.”

- Kindstrand sums up the first four months following the disaster by noting, “Most remarkable is the demographics central to the mobilization of this emerging political subjectivity, for it is the freeter – those young ‘irregular’ workers of the post-bubble ‘lost decade’ who with their labor continued to sustain the service economy of Japan, Inc. even as it abandoned them – who have taken to the streets in collective disapproval.”

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217 Tanaka, "At Crossroads: Japan's Civil Society and Politics -- Has Japanese Society Changed since Great East Japan Earthquake?," Japan Foreign Policy Forum, February 2013, 3.


219 Kindstrand, "The Politicization of Precarity-Anti-Nuke Protests in Japan since the Great Tohoku Earthquake."
• Later in September 2011, when a group of tents were set up outside the METI as “a makeshift gathering place…about 1,000 people, many in their 20s and 30s, gathered daily from around the country to express their objections to METI’s efforts to restart nuclear plants without thorough investigations into why Fukushima No. 1 occurred.”

• Ogawa documented the “Goodbye Nuclear Power Plants” (Sayonara Genpatsu) rally that mobilized in central Tokyo on September 19, 2011, as well as the Occupy Tokyo action on October 15, 2011, and found that “the most distinctive phenomenon [of these early antinuclear protests] was the participation of young people.”

• Freeters and first-time demonstrators continued to be highlighted in subsequent reports of the mid-2012 antinuclear rallies. For example, the New York Times reported in June 2012 that young protesters “described their outrage over the restart decision as a moment of political awakening, saying they were taking to the streets for the first time.”

In addition to these reports, there is evidence to indirectly link freeters to the early protest movement from studies that have been done to describe freeter-style protests. According to Yoshitaka, recent freeter protests “are different from traditional Marxist political ones and even from the new social movements in the 1960s and 1970s in the sense that they incorporate more

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cultural practices such as art, music, dance and performance into their political activities.”

The Amateur’s Riot, in particular, is known for their “playful forms of public protest.” The founder of the first Amateur’s Riot recycle shop, Matsumoto Hajime, believes that protest activities should create a “post-revolutionary world in advance” and demonstrate to others how fun contentious activities can be.

Those who attended the antinuclear protests in 2011 sometimes described them as “festivals,” suggesting the possibility of freeter influence. For example, the 10 April 2011 protest was dubbed the “Great Anti-Nuclear Rock Festival Demo in Kōenji.” Asia One reported that “although placards and banners held by protesters expressed anger and frustration—‘Stop polluting the air and water,’ ‘Don't trust the government’—the atmosphere was festive, with many people in costumes, bands giving live performances at the park before the march, and groups of musicians playing drums, rock and traditional Japanese festival music while people walked.” Referring to the protests before June 2011, Ogawa wrote that “the antinuclear protests have so far resembled bohemian carnivals rather than what many in the West would describe as genuine protests, with an eclectic melange of clowns, musicians, and street performers.”

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224 Cassegård, "The Role of Alternative Space in Social Movements."


226 Cassegård, "The Role of Alternative Space in Social Movements."

227 Smitson, "Thousands Protest N-Power Amid Fukushima Plant Crisis."
performers interspersed amongst pedestrians.” The 9 October 2011 march held in Tokyo’s Shibuya district was described similarly as “a particularly noisy affair as participants banged drums, even frying pans, and blew trumpets to attract attention.” A curious employee of a nearby restaurant wanted to know what the commotion was all about; when interviewed, he said, "I thought it was some kind of festival, but then I realized it was only a demonstration.” The early protest participants themselves noted the festival atmosphere: “one individual who has participated in a number of antinuclear protests since April does so because they are so enjoyable and quite unlike professional organized protests of the past where people were forced to take part.”

These reports suggest that freeters joined in protest against nuclear power stemming from their desire to voice their anger and frustration with government, to experience being part of a movement, and to have fun – all signs suggesting that they are not long-time antinuclear true believers or activists, but instead fall into the third or fourth category of protesters. Several other things we know about freeters, such as their protest participation history, spontaneous demonstration style, lack of resources, and concern with other issues support this argument and suggest reasons why mobilization was difficult. First, just as women and housewives in Japan thought that participating in demonstrations would be something they “would never do” prior to 3.11, young people and part-time workers likewise had little experience or interest in

228 Hiroki Ogawa, "Japan’s ‘Artsy’ Protest Culture," The Diplomat (http://thediplomat.com/a-new-japan/2011/06/13/japans-artsy-protest-culture/).


230 Ibid.

231 Ibid.
demonstrating. The 2005 World Values Survey showed that only 2.2% of people aged 15-29 and 3.4% of people 30-49 had reported participating in lawful/peaceful demonstrations compared to 17.2% of people aged 50 and above.\(^2\) Although this pattern is not unexpected given that older individuals may have been presented with more opportunities to demonstrate over their lifetimes, the increase from the 30-49 age group to the 50 and above age group is substantial. Additionally, results from the same survey show that young people are also less inclined to participate in protest: 72.1% and 65.3% of people aged 15-29 and 30-49, respectively, saw participating in demonstration as something they “would never do.”\(^3\) Moreover, when broken down by employment, 61.3% of part-time workers viewed demonstrating as something they “would never do.”\(^4\) This is telling, given that one would expect part-time workers not face the same sort of constraints that salaried workers face. These findings reinforce the point that people from the freeter generation were largely amateurs, not activists.

Second, the freeter style of protest that welcomed spontaneity was not conducive to sustaining a movement. Freeters would gather “by word-of-mouth on social media, [attend] the protests as if joining a festival, and [disperse] to return home when they saw fit” indicating that sustaining a mass mobilization against nuclear power was not their on their agenda.\(^5\) The following report suggests that demonstrating was spontaneous:

Since April 2011, Tokyoites have often, mostly on a monthly basis, come to see the anti-nuclear rallies in the central Tokyo districts, such as Shibuya and

\(^2\) "World Values Survey 2005 Official Data File."

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Ibid.

\(^5\) Tanaka, "At Crossroads: Japan's Civil Society and Politics -- Has Japanese Society Changed since Great East Japan Earthquake?," Japan Foreign Policy Forum, February 2013, 3.
Shinjuku, ignited by Sono’s action on March 20….The series of demonstrations against nuclear plants has attracted thousands of young people. Apparently, however, they are not a mobilized force. Instead, they spontaneously came to the rally sites after watching Ustream, which was broadcast live from the site. They were also receiving messages from such social networking media as Twitter. “I came to know through Twitter that something interesting seems to be happening. That’s why I came here. I just want to change present-day Japan,” said one young woman who was walking next to me.236

Third, freeters are extremely disillusioned with and distrustful of government and they lack “sufficient financial resources [and] political voices.”237 Fourth, their opposition to nuclear power was intertwined with anger against socioeconomic discrepancies in the nuclear power industry. For example, Sono, the precariat who sparked the early demonstrations, was arrested on September 23 for demonstrating against discrimination and exclusion. When asked for his reason for participating in a rally that was unrelated to nuclear issues, his reply is telling:

Actually, everything is connected. Think about that: nuclear plants are always built in rural, marginal, coastal countryside. Nuclear plants are never built in Tokyo. The contamination does not happen equally to everybody. People who do not have work in the rural areas and then will [have no choice but to] work at nuclear power plants [if they want a job at all] will be the first target of radiation exposure. …Thus, I believe nuclear plants are based on discrimination. My actions are connected in a straight line.238

Like Sono, some freeters participated in the post 3.11 demonstrations not because they were long-time antinuclear true believers or environmental activists, but because they identified with the plight of rural, marginal prefectures that host nuclear plants. They see that “the economic affluence that Japanese people enjoy is based on the sacrifice of people living in rural, marginal

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237 Honda, "Freeters': Young Atypical Workers in Japan," 23.

areas” and feel that Japan’s “current economic prosperity is based on the sacrifice…of their right to have decent work.” The antinuclear protests served as an opportunity for them to express their anger about the state of society in Japan. Therefore, given all of these facts about freeters, it would be consistent with their political identity to spontaneously join in protests and voice their displeasure, but not concern themselves with starting a sustained movement, or even seeing their causes gain political traction and showing up at the polls later in 2012.

The preponderance of amateur protesters present during the early months after the disaster helps explain the absence of immediate sustained mass mobilization. Using two lines of argument, I showed that the two types of protesters that are typically more effective in mobilization were missing: first, antinuclear true believers and activists were largely absent when the disaster struck due to a long-standing “nuclear blind spot” in Japanese civil society; and second, the women and freeters who were demonstrably active during the early protests were ordinary citizens opposing nuclear power out of concerns about their families’ health and spontaneous protesters. Given that Japan had not experienced large-scale demonstrations for around 40 years, many of the post-Fukushima protesters – including the women and freeters already highlighted – were amateur and first-time protesters.

4.2 – The Use of Social Media and Other Strategies

The Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes (MCAN) was formed at the end of 2011 to centralize and grow the antinuclear movement after the disaster. MCAN brought together numerous antinuclear groups and became the main organizer of many of the subsequent

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239 Ibid.
demonstrations. The first protest organized by MCAN was held on 14 January 2012 with a small group of 300 people; then, as we see from the numbers in the previous section, thousands of demonstrators were mobilized in just a few months. The use of social media platforms for mobilization can explain how so many participants could be gathered so quickly, but it can also explain why sustained mass mobilization was inhibited.

McAdam, Gould, and Diani and McAdam, have found networks to be a necessary element of protest mobilization structure. Networks are critical because they connect individuals to a cause and allow them to circulate information amongst themselves about their strategic situation (e.g. available means of action, opportunities, etc.). More recent research has shown that increasing use of digital networks allowing for speedier and more sizable protests. I argue that social media platforms such as Twitter and blogs played key roles in quickly gathering ordinary people for single events; however, such methods were, on the whole, limiting for the post-3.11 antinuclear movement because they encouraged speed, but lacked the traditional person-to-person networks that traditional forms of mobilization would have created to sustain a protest movement.

In Japan, social media have grown and evolved as a means of communication and personal expression that are outside the realm of established institutions and traditional networks

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involving family, work, and school. After 3.11 these existing online social networks were put to use to generate and distribute information about the disaster. The Internet became an important medium through which people articulated and mobilized antinuclear sentiment. According to Slater, Nishimura and Kindstrand, online efforts “[led] directly to the organization of protest [and served] as productive platforms for the politics of protest.”

For example, the 11 June 2011 demonstration was organized through Twitter and Facebook:

This movement consists of innumerable voices and actions….Like the web, it has no “head,” no center. In this sense, the political rally held at Aruta-mae-hiroba (plaza), Shinjuku, Tokyo, on June 11 was a symbolic event. In this place, at least 10,000 people were said to have gathered, brought together from information distributed on Twitter or Facebook alone.

Next, in July 2011, mothers “organized antinuclear energy rallies nationwide attended by thousands of protesters” using social media. In another example, the Amateur’s Riot was able to successfully promote their protest events despite the lack of coverage from mass media. They set up Twitter accounts and used hashtags strategically to disseminate information and gather large numbers of demonstrators. Later on 13 October 2011, The Asahi Shimbun reported that the protests seemed “not to have any solid leaders. People who came to know each other virtually through social media then got together physically through their common belief that something is wrong in this society.” At a protest the following week, “one of the rally organizers, Keiko Ochiai, commented later that she herself was impressed with the rally

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245 Horiuchi, "Moms Rally around Antiuke Cause."
participants who came to the site after they had collected information for themselves and had
decided on their own whether to participate or not….The members of the younger generation
who are familiar with such social networking devices were able to find out what was actually
going on in grassroots Japan, although the major Japanese media, including the state-run
broadcaster NHK, have totally ignored the demonstrations.”\textsuperscript{248} In yet another example, an
antinuclear group, The Citizen’s Vote to Decide Together on Nuclear Power, started a petition
that called for nuclear power referenda. This petition drive was carried out entirely through
social networking without support from trade unions, businesses, or other organizations.\textsuperscript{249}

The main organizer of antinuclear demonstrations, MCAN, used the Internet and social
media forms, like Twitter, to maintain “a loosely woven network.”\textsuperscript{250} A look at protest numbers
leading up to the start of the sustained mobilization period shows just how successfully MCAN
was able gather people quickly using these methods: While they started with 300 people on 14
January 2012, by the first-year anniversary of the 3.11 disaster, 14,000 demonstrators were
mobilized.\textsuperscript{251} Then, during its peak in June 2012, the number of people who showed up to
protest spiked: event organizers estimated that 150,000-200,000 people participated in the rallies,
while the police put the number at 17,000.\textsuperscript{252}

In Japan’s case, I argue that online social media-based mobilization has been both
beneficial and limiting for the antinuclear protest movement. On one hand, the central role of

\textsuperscript{248} Ibid., 319.

\textsuperscript{249} Samuels, \textit{3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan}: 132.

\textsuperscript{250} Williamson, “Largest Demonstrations in Half a Century Protest the Restart of Japanese
Nuclear Power Plants.”

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{252} Ibid.
social media seemed to contribute to the large and diverse crowds of demonstrators. First, online mobilization “enabled collaboration between a wide range of different groups,” providing an arena in which diverse groups of people could unite under the antinuclear position. Second, “the ability to ‘cross-post’ by tagging and retagging information allowed groups with little previous connection to work together in ways that did not require intensive…institutional and face-to-face contact” – a development which may have eased the demonstration planning process. Third, platforms like Twitter made it easy for interested individuals to search through the tags in order to find images, videos, and up-to-date information about protests events, eliminating the need to be already involved in an activist group or personally know another protest participant. Fourth, social media platforms can reduce the costs of collective action by allowing people to communicate, gather, and organize free of charge.

On the other hand, while web-based mobilization brought together a large number of diverse individuals for single protest events, it also limited the ability of the antinuclear movement to grow a centralized, sustained group of regular demonstrators. First, studying protest recruitment and mass mobilization patterns in the Twitter network, González-Bailón et al. found that “a small core of central users is still critical to trigger chains of messages of high orders of magnitude, [and that] centrality in the network of followers is still a meaningful measure of influence in online networks at least in the context of mass mobilizations.” Second, because Internet-based mobilization does not require a centralized or formalized leadership base


254 Ibid.

to strategize for mobilization, movements dependent on flexible online networks may suffer from lowered coherence in the articulation of their goals and ideology and more difficulty in decision-making.\textsuperscript{256} Third, and perhaps most important of all, web-based mobilization networks typically lack the interpersonal ties that allow for consistent collective identities to be formed and new members to be mobilized.\textsuperscript{257}

Interpersonal ties are critical. Snow et al. find that “the probability of being recruited into a particular movement is largely a function of two conditions [one of them being] links to one or more movement members through a pre-existing or emergent interpersonal tie.”\textsuperscript{258} Similarly, McAdam and Paulsen found that commitment to a shared identity, reinforced by strong ties to participants, contributes to mobilization.\textsuperscript{259} In these three ways, social media-driven mobilization can inhibit the prospects for sustained protest mobilization, offering one possible explanation for the post-Fukushima fifteen-month delay. These limiting effects are true not only of the post-Fukushima antinuclear moment but common in other web-based mobilizations around the world. For example, Iran’s 2009 protests against the re-election of Ahmadinejad was nicknamed the “Twitter Revolution” for its widespread use of social media to rally

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{256} Winston Bennett, "Communicating Global Activism," \textit{Information, Communication & Society} 6, no. 2 (2003): 145.
\item \textsuperscript{257} Robert Kraut et al., "Internet Paradox: A Social Technology That Reduces Social Involvement and Psychological Well-Being?,” \textit{American psychologist} 53, no. 9 (1998); Jenny Pickerill, \textit{Cyberprotest: Environmental Activism Online} (Manchester University Press, 2010); Robert D. Putnam, \textit{Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community} (Simon and Schuster, 2001).
\item \textsuperscript{259} Doug McAdam and Ronnelle Paulsen, "Specifying the Relationship between Social Ties and Activism," \textit{American journal of sociology} (1993).
\end{itemize}
demonstrators, and it too experienced the same limiting effects of social-networking based mobilization.\footnote{Victoria Carty, *Wired and Mobilizing: Social Movements, New Technology, and Electoral Politics* (Taylor & Francis, 2010), 3, 18.}

Protest organizers in Germany and France also used social media to recruit demonstrators, but the difference between those countries and Japan is that Japan lacked the strong antinuclear base that these countries had. While social media eliminated the sometimes troublesome face-to-face contact that non-web mobilizations require, those traditional forms of contact are still necessary to establish a consistent and sustained social movement. In the Japanese case, perhaps the use of online platforms such as Twitter encouraged the casual participation of massive groups of antinuclear individuals, but made it more difficult for civil society to rise to the more demanding challenge of mobilizing into sustained protests.

**Conclusion**

To show how the mobilization structure of the post-Fukushima antinuclear movement contributed to delayed sustained mass mobilization, I looked specifically at who the protesters were and what mobilization strategies were employed in the fifteen months after the disaster. First, the Fukushima disaster not only revealed the lack of a strong nuclear force in the country, but also shook many Japanese citizens out of their passive acceptance of nuclear power. Stemming from concerns about family or general frustration with the government, women and *freeters* spoke up in opposition against nuclear power. These developments have been significant steps forward for the Japanese antinuclear movement, given the little attention it received from environmental movements before. When comparing the German and Japanese environmental movements years ago, McKean found that “the intense opposition in Germany to
nuclear power rather than other environmental threats, the reliance of marches and
demonstrations as tactics, and the conspicuous presence of young people all contrast with
Japan.”

Much of this has changed since Fukushima. Second, the use of online social media to
recruit participants allowed organizers to maintain a loose network of interested individuals,
enabled collaboration across different groups of people, and encouraged quick dissemination of
information about protests events; however, Internet-based mobilization strategies could not
replace the more traditional strategies that would have required a stable, centralized core and
face-to-face contacts – both of which might have allowed sustained mass mobilization to occur
earlier. This evidence provides support for internal-capacities focused Hypothesis 2b that
limitations in mobilization structure were a major factor in the post-3.11 mobilization delay.

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Section 5

Conclusion

5.1 – Summary of Findings

After the March 2011 meltdown of Fukushima Daiichi’s nuclear plant, the Japanese public went from being passively accepting of nuclear power to being strongly opposed to it. Although the public expressed its antinuclear sentiment in survey data and occasional rallies, it did not mobilize into sustained mass protests until June 2012. The peculiarity of this 15-month delay in mobilization becomes clear when compared to the speed of other mobilizations following large nuclear accidents. For example, protesters mobilized almost immediately in the United States after the Three Mile Island accident and in West Germany after the Chernobyl disaster. Furthermore, after the Fukushima accident, mobilized protests erupted in Germany almost immediately, but not in Japan, the country hosting the nuclear plant and bearing the bulk of the radiation. Why did Japan’s 15-month mobilization delay occur? In this thesis, I tested whether low levels of grievance, limited availability of resources, or types of mobilizing structure and strategies help to explain this delay.

Hypothesis 1, which states that there was insufficient grievance after the disaster to prompt mobilization, was not supported. In fact, both objective grievance (measured by environmental and economic devastation) and subjective grievance (measured by fear of radiation and uncertainty about the future, distrust of government, and disapproval of government policy) were very high. Because grievance theory would have predicted a different outcome (the eruption of protests) based on the levels of grievance observed, I found that grievance theory does not successfully account for Japan’s post-3.11 mobilization delay. From a
theoretical perspective, the null result suggests that grievance is not a sufficient condition for mobilization and is, at most, a necessary one.

Instead of looking at the nuclear accident itself, Hypotheses 2a and 2b consider the internal capacities of the antinuclear movement that may have discouraged mass mobilization. Hypothesis 2a, which states that there was limited availability of resources available to the early antinuclear movement, thus delaying mobilization, was only partially supported. On one hand, moral resources in the form of media attention appeared to be partially lacking; local mass media covered the Fukushima nuclear situation, but only sporadically covered the early antinuclear protests. On the other hand, cultural and monetary resources were available. These mixed findings suggest that internal-capacities theory focused on resource availability cannot account fully for the delayed mobilization after 3.11. Perhaps resource availability theory would have generated a more suitable explanation had I considered the following questions: Are there certain resources that are important than others? How might independent, Internet-based TV networks affect the necessity of traditional mass media? Should monetary resources be deemphasized given that protests are inexpensive to organize and made even cheaper by the prevalent use of online social networks? These are the questions I would take into consideration if I were to revisit resource availability theory in the future.

Hypothesis 2b, which attributes the delayed mobilization to early antinuclear protests being composed of spontaneous protesters and regular citizens organized over one issue rather than true believers and activists – who are generally more effective in mobilizing support – did appear to be supported by evidence. Due to a “nuclear blind spot” in Japanese civil society, there was a lack of established antinuclear true believers and activists (the two types of protesters known to be more effective at mobilizing). Instead, many of the early protesters were regular
citizens gathered out of fear of radiation or others who joined spontaneously. Notably represented among them were women and freeters, whose motivations for demonstrating support their categorization as amateur protesters and offer an explanation for the movement’s lack of sustained mass mobilization. Additionally, the antinuclear movement’s heavy reliance on Internet-based mobilization through Twitter and other social media platforms allowed protest organizers to speedily amass large numbers of attendees for single events, but proved to be a poor substitute for more traditional forms of mobilization, which were necessary in order to maintain a network for a centralized and sustained movement. Lack of longstanding antinuclear activists at the early rallies and the heavy reliance on Internet-mobilization contributed to delays in sustained mass mobilization. Out of the three hypotheses tested in this thesis, Hypothesis 2b was best supported.

While I found that mobilizing structure and strategy help to provide a well-supported explanation for why the Japanese antinuclear movement experienced delays, the Fukushima case alone cannot rule out or confirm the different theories. Moreover, after studying post-Chernobyl antinuclear movements, Koopsman and Kuyvendak noted that there may be no single factor determining the movement’s trajectory. This may also be true for the post-Fukushima movement, in which mobilization structure and strategy as well as other factors were at work.

5.2 – Implications and Future Prospects

Given these findings, what implications might one draw about the state of Japanese civil society and the future prospects of the antinuclear movement? First, with regard to civil society, the 3.11 nuclear meltdown and the resulting delay in antinuclear mobilization revealed a

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262 Koopmans and Duyvendak, "The Political Construction of the Nuclear Energy Issue and Its Impact on the Mobilization of Anti-Nuclear Movements in Western Europe."
weakness in Japanese civil society’s ability to effectively monitor the nuclear industry. Prior to the crisis, this weakness allowed the “nuclear village” to push its agenda without pressure to consider safety standards. After the crisis, this weakness meant that early antinuclear protests lacked the effective leadership of longstanding antinuclear true believers and activists. Overall, 3.11 highlights the weak advocacy role Japanese civil society played in keeping checks on a powerful nuclear industry that was effective in forestalling opposition.

Second, with regard to future prospects, the fifteen-month delay marked only the beginning of the antinuclear movement’s uphill battle. In spite of its ability to draw crowds of up to 200,000 demonstrators, the mobilized antinuclear movement has not been able to gain political traction. A major setback to the movement came in the December 2012 lower house elections, when the largely antinuclear public elected the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) – an unabashedly pro-nuclear energy party – to power. This was the people’s choice, despite the fact that there were other options: Yokiko Kada’s Japan Future Party, which is strongly antinuclear, and the incumbent DPJ, which drafted an energy proposal to phase out nuclear power by 2030. Although the contest was based on a multi-issue platform so people may have voted based on other core issues, this sidelining of the energy issue was a surprising turn of events given the saliency of the nuclear energy debate. Japanese activists had certainly not expected this electoral outcome. Before the election, Kazue Suzuki, a Greenpeace campaigner, stated, “This is the first election since the Fukushima nuclear disaster and if it does not result in an antinuclear government, that will be one of the wonders of the world….Since Fukushima, Germany rejected
nuclear power and Italy rejected nuclear power. If Japan can’t, the world will be amazed.”

The LDP “captured 294 seats in the 480-member lower house of parliament,” winning in a landslide victory.

Over the past year, it has become clear that apart from the vilification and downfall of TEPCO and the legitimization of antinuclear attitudes, the mobilized antinuclear movement in Japan has not yet achieved its overall aim to rid the country of its nuclear power dependence. According to Samuels, “3.11 had virtually no effect on the larger national strategy [of nuclear power].”

There were times when the antinuclear movement seemed to make progress toward its goals, but their gains would soon be reversed. For example, Prime Minister Kan Naoto shut down all nuclear reactors after the disaster, but two were turned back on the following year. In another instance, Kan called for a “reset” of national energy policy, only to have his chief cabinet secretary insist that Japan’s “fundamental nuclear policy is not changing.”

Similarly, the DPJ’s policy platform included plans to eventually phase out nuclear power by the 2030s, but the pro-nuclear LDP was elected to replace them. One could say that Japanese antinuclear activism began slowly, and that its future prospects for creating change continue to be grim.

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265 Samuels, 3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan: 150.

266 Ibid., 135.
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