

Was Fukushima Accident an Organizational Failure for TEPCO or an Unavoidable Natural Disaster?

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Abstract

Public sentiment in Japan has turned against nuclear energy following the March 2011 accident at Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station that was run by Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO). The accident caused contamination of large quantity of radioactive material in the nearby environment making large stretches of land uninhabitable. Although along with serious involvement by the Japanese government TEPCO is now continuing the cleanup operations but it will cost hundreds of billions of dollars. So, naturally the question arises, was it just an unpreventable accident or it was preventable. In this study, taking institution studies and organization theories, in particular, into our considerations, we examined the organizational behavior before and during accident by using numerous official reports and data publicly available including latest findings about the possible course of accident with recorded conversation between TEPCO headquarter and Fukushima Daiichi plant. We analyzed whether it was just an unpreventable accident provoked by huge tsunami or an organizational failure on the part of TEPCO. From our analysis, we found that the Fukushima accident was, in fact, preventable, had TEPCO followed international best practices and standards required to operate nuclear plant. Some part of the accident was caused and later mismanaged after the accident had taken place due to the organizational failure of TEPCO.