

devolving into the nitty gritty of the trade disputes between the United States and Japan, and one that will interest a wide array of readers.

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**3.11: Disaster and Change in Japan.** *By Richard J. Samuels. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013. xv, 274 pp. (Maps, B&W illus.) US\$29.95, cloth. ISBN 978-0-8014-5200-0.*

The massive 9.0 magnitude earthquake that struck off Japan's northeast shore on 11 March 2011 set off a 20-plus-metre tsunami which not only devastated coastal villages in the Tohoku region but also resulted in the fuel meltdowns of three of the reactors at the Fukushima Dai-ichi power plant. More than 18,500 people perished in the tsunami and 300,000 residents fled their homes. Some two years later, in the fall of 2013, reports of radioactive contamination in the food chain and the environment continue to proliferate in the media even as experts reassure the public that the health risks are minimal. With some estimates predicting that the total damage will reach more than \$300 billion, the disaster is among the most costly in history: four times more costly than the Gulf Coast's Hurricane Katrina and twice as expensive as the 1995 Kobe earthquake. Samuels' slim new book provides one of the first wide-ranging English-language scholarly accounts focused not on the disaster itself, but instead on the political and rhetorical responses to it.

The book uses interviews with 70 or so Japanese and US government officials and hundreds of Japanese and English books, newspaper articles, and government publications to map out three main discourses about the catastrophe. Samuels classifies these as "put it in gear," "stay the course," and "back to the future." The "put it in gear" camp hoped to use the disaster as motivation to try out innovative policy approaches, while the "stay the course" camp envisioned the event as a one-in-a-million, black swan-type anomaly which did not require a change in direction. The third camp believed that "Japan must return to an idealized past ... by returning to the country's basic values" (x).

The strength of the "stay the course" camp is remarkable. Across the areas of security, energy and local governance Samuels shows how, time and again, rather than opening windows for new opportunities, the 3.11 disaster magnified normal political processes and reinforced status quo responses. Despite the hype about the unprecedented scale of destruction leading to system-level change, few new perspectives emerged in the post-disaster discourse. While some observers predicted that 3.11 would result in a paradigm shift in areas such as nuclear power promotion, local autonomy, and independent foreign and military policy, few of the players in these

areas moved dramatically from their pre-disaster positions. For example, while US military planners hoped the disaster would provide impetus to revise and adjust the Bilateral Coordination Mechanism that synchronizes mobilization of US and Japanese forces, “the government was unwilling to risk sowing panic among the public” (105). Antinuclear activists hoped the Fukushima disaster would cause a sea change in the approaches to nuclear energy from both private industry and the government but “3.11 had virtually no effect on the larger national strategy” (150). Some mayors and governors hoped to “supersize” local governments by amalgamating political units into wider jurisdictions while others believed that Tokyo had already centralized too much power. In the end, government committees suggested only “incremental recommendations for improving disaster response” (178).

Samuels does find some evidence of change in these sectors. Japan’s Self-Defense Forces—an institution often distrusted by many Japanese—gained new legitimacy by demonstrating effectiveness under crisis conditions. Conversely, Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) lost its legitimacy, share price, and independence (with the government stepping in to bail it out and ending up owning over half of the firm). Local governments saw that the innovative tactic of counterpart support, where localities unaffected by the crisis sent in personnel and logistical assistance to those at ground zero, worked particularly well. Despite such shifts in public opinion and policies, 3.11 “did not cause structural change to the Japanese body politic” (200).

As with any good book geared to generating theories rather than explicitly testing them, this one raises some questions that require further consideration. First, much scholarship has tackled the question of why some governments stick to standard operating procedures while others set new agendas following major crises such as the Challenger shuttle explosion, the 3/11 Madrid bombing, and 9/11 (Boin, McConnell, and Hart, *Governing after Crisis: The Politics of Investigation, Accountability, and Learning*, Cambridge University Press, 2008). The book references these studies along with various well-known works on political and institutional change (such as Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis*, Princeton University Press, 2004 and Mahoney and Thelen, *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*, Cambridge University Press, 2009). Future scholarship could use Samuels’ work to test the politics of post-disaster management with a focus on themes he raises, namely institutional inertia, policy entrepreneurs and political leadership.

Next, while the book considers a number of post-disaster cases from other nations, it opens a tremendous opportunity to look closely at paired case comparisons that might shed more light on why politics-as-usual prevailed in Japan. For example, in stark contrast to the current Japanese government’s ongoing attempt to restart its nuclear power program in the face of widespread public opposition, the German government under the leadership of Chancellor Angela Merkel used 3.11 to halt Germany’s

nuclear power program and put in place plans to shut down the 17 nuclear power stations there by 2022. Some potential starting points for investigation include the role of Germany's Green Party (no such analogue exists in Japan's party system), the independence of the German media (in contrast to the club-system used in Japan, which generates less scrutiny and criticism), the tighter ties between industry and government in Japan (through institutions such as *amakudari*), and a more active German civil society (although there are signs of more activism recently in Japan).

Samuels has moved quickly to plot out how an advanced democratic nation has handled a massive, compounded disaster. This book—written and published with astonishing speed compared to the typical glacial pace of academic publishing—properly warns us to look for continuity, and not change, following major catastrophe.

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**INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY IN JAPAN IN AN AGE OF GLOBALISATION AND RISK.** *By Robert W. Aspinall. Leiden: Global Oriental (imprint of Brill) 2012. xiv, 207 pp. (Tables.) US\$120.00, cloth. ISBN 978-90-04-23528-1.*

This book has come out of Robert Aspinall's long-standing research on policy for, and the practices of, English-language education in Japan. His critical views on this theme remain in this book: Japan's dealing with language education as part of its educational internationalization project is a failure. As stated in the foreword by Roger Goodman, the book tries to offer a "full examination" of the mysteries of Japan, i.e., "how, in a country which is so embedded in the global economy and networks of communication, the level of spoken English is so low" (ix-x). By exploring the theme of education in Japan from a variety of perspectives, Aspinall maintains that "Japan's international education policy at all levels has failed" (5).

Empirical examination starts with Japan's coping with foreigners and their languages from the middle of the nineteenth century until the 1960s. In chapter 2, the author suggests that the origin of the malfunction of English education in Japan is traceable in, along with its cultural isolationism, old-fashioned educational methodologies, which he indicates as one of the core problems of English education in Japan in the latter chapters as well. Chapter 3 analyzes internationalization policy at the national level—including English teaching methodology, textbooks, the entrance examination systems, school curricular and the day-to-day use of foreigners in the classroom—as a basis of the failure. Although chapter 4 focuses on problems in the teaching side, many of those problems stem from the Japanese education system as such, which is, as Aspinall rightly argues, a reflection of the national policy.