

CRITICAL REVIEW

Akyüz, Emrah (2021). *Nuclear Power and Human Rights in Japan: The Fallout of Fukushima*. London: Lexington Books. ISBN: 9781793637819, 270 pp¹

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Since the first half of the 20th century, technological innovations have transformed war methods and created proliferations of nuclear powers worldwide. The two world wars and the subsequent Cold War period cause a peak in this race. These developments, however, caused many tragedies; among those was the nuclear power plant accident in Fukushima in 2011. 'Nuclear Power and Human Rights in Japan: The Fallout of Fukushima', by Dr Emrah Akyüz from Lexington Books, attempted to examine the event from the axis of human rights. This book consists of seven main sections with each chapter's introduction and conclusion, which helps the reader to formulate a general assessment.

The first part of the book maps the nuclear accidents experienced worldwide and offers information about the effects of nuclear accidents, with a specific focus on Ontario, Chernobyl and Fukushima, trying to understand this process with a seven-stage pyramid (pp. 2-5). In the continuation of this section, the details of Fukushima, which is the book's focal point, are presented (pp. 5-7). In the continuation of Fukushima, he details the Environmental Human Rights Approach to The Fukushima Nuclear Accident and brings up that Fukushima has substantial risks in terms of environment and human health, and states the following: "Undoubtedly, the environment and public health are the two core areas to which Fukushima will continue to pose a risk, and is a likely explanation for why the literature focuses on these two aspects when discussing the

¹ Texto traduzido por Cláudia Tavares.



accident" (p. 8). In this chapter, the author also emphasizes human rights in terms of environment and health.

In the second part of the book, the conceptual framework: environmental human rights is discussed. The interrelation between human rights and ecological rights is presented (p. 20). When referring to environmental rights, pointing out the meetings held in Stockholm and Rio also helps us to build a detailed conceptual analysis —emphasizing that human rights are divided into three inclusive internationally accepted categories; socio-economic, civil-political and solidarity human rights (pp. 21-28).

The third part analyzes Japan's Nuclear Energy and Human Rights Policy related to environmental human rights. Considering Japan's energy policies before and after Fukushima, discussing how effective/ineffective the country's human rights policies are in this direction (pp. 71-74). Emphasizing that the Fukushima disaster brought along major reforms in Japan's energy policy, the work informs us about these reforms (pp. 80-90). While explaining the reforms, the author draws attention to Safety as a Key Principle, The Decrease in Dependency on Nuclear Energy, Renewable Energy, and Transparency.

Through thematic analysis of interviews with Fukushima inhabitants, Chapter 4 examines the impacts and hazards connected with the FNA on/to human rights, particularly the right to life, health, and property. In this direction, official reports and past work on the hazards and impact of the accident on the rights to life, health, and property are discussed in this chapter (pp. 98-104). Then, thematic analysis of human rights issues relating to radioactive pollution in Fukushima has been talked about. In this section, people's experiences are given in line with the data obtained from the fieldwork. Basic results such as Living with Fear, Violation of the Right to Health, Mental Health Problems, Physical Health Problems, Social Isolation, Loneliness, Risks to Health Associated with Water Contamination, Risks to Health Associated with Food Supply Contamination, Violation of Right to Property set forth and discussed here (pp. 107-121). This information provides imperative contributions to the literature about the difficulties experienced by the region's people during this process and the processes they need to overcome in dealing with these difficulties.

The study 'Fukushima Residents' Experiences of Procedural Rights' concerning Japan's Energy Policy looked at how and to what extent Fukushima residents used procedural rights in response to the Fukushima nuclear disaster and Japan's nuclear energy policy (pp. 136-174). As the author indicates "there is no comprehensive study to date that has investigated the Fukushima residents' experiences of PHRs (including the right to information, the right to participation, and the right to access to justice) in the Fukushima matter" (p. 134). This study is one of the few studies examining strengthens this argument by giving more detailed information. The author also put some sub-themes to provide better insight on this issue: No Attempt to Access to the Information Before the Accident; Passive access to the information related to nuclear energy after the 2011 accident; Access to the Information; Reliability of Information; Timely sharing of Information related to the accident; Active access to the information related to nuclear energy after the 2011 accident; Complexity of Information; Public Participation in Decision Making Process; A Lack of Interest in Nuclear Energy and no Invitation before



the Accident; Public Participation in Decision Making Process Tokenism; Referendum Demand; People's Interest in Public Participation after the Fukushima Accident; Access to the Court; Judicial Redress with Respect to the Impact of Environmental Decisions; Judicial Review with Respect to Environmental Decision Making; Barriers to Access to the Court and Socially Fair Results.

Chapter six provides a detailed discussion to interpret the book's principal findings regarding past research on the FNA and EHRs. It is divided into three sections: first, it discusses the extent to which the FNA represents a human rights problem in terms of its environmental impact, which is the central research question addressed in the empirical chapters; second, it examines the relationship between substantive and procedural rights in Fukushima, and critically evaluates the challenges and opportunities of an energy policy that recognizes public participation in decision-making, which is propagate in the empirical chapters; and third, it examines the relationship between substantive and procedural rights in Fukushima. Finally, some of the study's limitations are discussed and suggested future research fields. The main findings of the study were discussed here, and a detailed analysis was obtained. In this direction, the following topics are emphasized: The Relationship Between Human Rights, the Environment, and Nuclear Energy in Japan; Cross-Cutting Issues between Japan's Human Rights and Nuclear Energy Policy; Human Rights Violations Raised by the Fukushima Nuclear Accident; Reinterpretation of Human Rights Versus Right to the Environment; The Linkage Between Substantive and Procedural Rights; The Linkages Between Violation of the Right to Information and the Enjoyment of the Right to Health; The Lack of the Right to Public Participation and the Enjoyment of the Right to Health (pp. 174-205).

This work, which I had the opportunity to evaluate in detail above, appears as a candidate to make significant contributions in its field. In particular, it is observed that this highly accessible guide is up-to-date and makes a noteworthy contribution to the literature in terms of bringing environmental issues and human rights issues together. Dr Akyüz reveals that there is a positive interaction between ecological problems and human rights, especially from a Japanese perspective. While demonstrating this, he not only remained under the monopoly of Japan but also added a broad perspective by addressing similar problems that had been experienced before. The academic world, which constantly points to ancient events and accidents in the analysis of environmental issues, will now have the opportunity to understand better the issues of the region's people in the face of much more recent negativities with such accidents. Of course, this work, which was revealed only with the example of Fukushima, will not be enough on its own. However, this work would definitely encourage especially young academics to examine more current events regarding environmental issues.

The method in which the study was presented, the language used, and the detailed presentation of the findings can be seen as one of the most important advantages. It is also noteworthy that an empirical method was used in the study, and those policy recommendations were given as a result of the findings. The results obtained in work bring a different perspective to the current understanding of the relationship between human rights and the environment. In addition, a discussion of Japan's contribution to nuclear energy policy and management and the theoretical, methodological and empirical study of nuclear accidents will also be valuable to scientists working in this field. Overall,



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the book is well-written, and most readers will find it both interesting and educational, in which Dr Akyüz examines and clarifies a case about a nuclear disaster. He also analyses the topic of challenges and challengers excellently. Therefore, I strongly recommend that this book, which offers a different perspective on Fukushima's environmental risk analysis, ought to be read by people from all platforms.

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