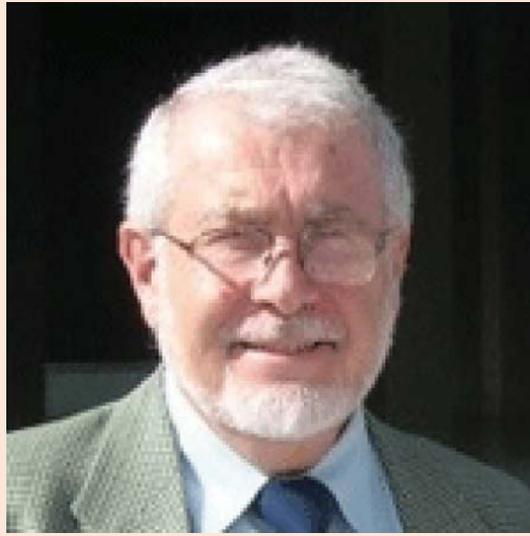


# Rational Energy Choices in the Wake of Fukushima



Japan's situation since March 11, 2011, following the world's fifth largest earthquake since 1900 and resulting tsunami, has been tragic. Many thousands of people drowned, swept away with coastal infrastructure. Hundreds of thousands were displaced and lost livelihoods.

Situated on the coastline, nuclear reactors at Fukushima were damaged and went into meltdown: the nuclear debate was reactivated. Media emphasis became nuclear safety, despite the far greater impact of the earthquake and tsunami. According to the Washington Post, "Countries... best equipped to deal with nuclear mishaps are turning away from atomic energy... Europeans, most notably in Germany, and Americans are abandoning or delaying plans to replace or upgrade their electricity-producing nuclear plants - and extending

the operational life of existing, less-safe reactors well beyond their original 40-year licensing period... But developing countries with little nuclear experience and spotty industrial safety records are moving ahead with ambitious plans to expand generating capacity. China and India... are adding about 80 new reactors over the next two decades." [1]

Even before Fukushima, many nations were reconsidering the role of nuclear power in their energy mix, as a means to alleviate concerns over climate change, security of supply and price volatility of fossil fuels. Scientific evidence on safety was being actively scrutinized. An OECD report was released: *Comparing Nuclear Accident Risks with Those from Other Energy Sources*. [2] This presented data on accidents causing five or more prompt deaths in the energy industry from 1969 to 2000, during which 1870 such severe accidents occurred globally, resulting in 81,258 deaths. The only severe nuclear accident (Chernobyl) killed 31 plant and emergency workers. Regarding long range health impacts in areas affected by Chernobyl, one set of OECD estimates projected up

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