

Discourse Analysis of Japanese Newspapers' Stance on Nuclear Power Plant Reactivation Post-Fukushima 3.11

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the viewpoints presented by three newspapers—Asahi, Mainichi and Yomiuri Shinbun—regarding the debate surrounding the reactivation of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant after the Fukushima nuclear accident, in 2011. By applying Faircloughs critical discourse analysis method to analyze 24 articles from these newspapers it becomes apparent that each media outlet holds a position. Asahi and Mainichi Shinbun express opposition to the reactivation of the Sendai nuclear power plant whereas Yomiuri Shinbun supports it. While expressing their stances Asahi employs firm, courageous, critical and confrontational language to convey their attitude or identity. In contrast Mainichi adopts a approach using implicit language, with occasional ambiguity. Despite endorsing nuclear power plant reactivation Yomiuri also includes some criticism. Primarily relies on information to support its position and identity.

Keywords: Sendai NPP, stance of newspapers, CDA Fairclough, nuclear energy, Asahi-Mainichi-Yomiuri shinbun

1. INTRODUCTION

The re-operation of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) owned by the Private Electric Company Kyushu Electric Power (九州電力会社) / Kyushu Denryoku Kaisha or abbreviated (九電) / Kyuuden on August 11, 2015 has become a milestone for Japan's re-use of nuclear power plants for the first time since all reactors were decommissioned for safety level tests in April 2012 [1], [2]. Even further, 原子力規制委員会 (Japan Nuclear Regulation Authority (NRA)) is exploring the reactivation of 24 nuclear reactors out of the 54 reactors owned by Japan [3]. The re-operation of this nuclear power plant, which is supported by the Japanese government, naturally caused controversy because between 2011 and 2014 was a period of high Japanese public sentiment against the use of nuclear energy [4]. Trauma from the disastrous melting of nuclear fuel that occurred at Nuclear Reactor No. 1 in Fukushima in 2011, which triggered the release of radiation at a dangerous level, is still difficult to remove from the minds of the Japanese public.

The condition without electricity supply from nuclear power plants has put pressure on the Japanese economy [5]. The cessation of the operation of all nuclear power plants in 2012 resulted in a 30% deficit in electricity supply that could not be immediately covered. The country's foreign exchange was drained because the Japanese government had to increase the budget for imports of fossil fuels, namely oil, gas, and coal, as 85% of the fuel for Japan's power plants comes from imports. Regardless of your personal preferences, the Tokyo Electric Company (TEPCO) has to take an unpopular policy, namely increasing electricity rates by up to 17.3% [6], [7]. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's administration views this as a learning experience for reactivating other decommissioned plants if the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant is successful [8]. However, despite these developments, the majority of Japanese public opinion remains opposed to nuclear power.

The mass media plays diverse roles, serving as both an information provider and a potent influencer in shaping public opinion. Regarding the reactivation of nuclear power plants post-Fukushima 3.11 in Japan, the media presents varied discourses, offering different perspectives. These diverse media narratives reflect the complexity of the issue, echoing public concerns, political debates, and the views of interest groups, scientists, and environmental activists. The role of the media in framing discussions about the reactivation of nuclear power plants in Japan is crucial, as it

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showcases various viewpoints and attitudes. The way the media presents this information significantly impacts public understanding, debates, and decision-making on this crucial matter.

This research endeavors to analyze the Japanese mass media's position on the reactivation of nuclear power plants post-Fukushima. It seeks to understand whether the media is opposed, neutral, or supportive. Exploring their arguments, reasons, and justifications provides critical insights, as the media's stance influences public opinion formation and indirectly affects the policymaking process of the Japanese government. Quality public opinion is fundamental in shaping effective state policies.

2. OBJECTIVES

The reactivation of Japan's Sendai Nuclear Power Plant in 2015 signified the nation's re-embrace of nuclear energy after the Fukushima safety tests, sparking public controversy. Despite government support, public sentiment opposes the reactivation of nuclear power. Media coverage presents diverse viewpoints on the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear power, reflecting public concerns and stimulating discussions.

This article aims to analyze the stance and perspectives of the Japanese mass media concerning post-Fukushima nuclear power plant reactivation—a significant influence on public opinion and government decisions. Understanding these media perspectives is crucial in gauging public opinion on this matter.

3. TEORITICAL REVIEW

Mass media responses to the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident have been extensively studied. Abe's research [9] analyzed media responses to the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident. This research identified two primary arguments: newspapers supporting denuclearization emphasized democratic values by encouraging public participation in energy policy. Meanwhile, those advocating for nuclear power adoption portrayed a stance of technological nationalism, claiming that denuclearization would weaken Japan's nuclear technological superiority. Similarly, Shineha and Tanaka's research [10] compared reporting between Asahi Shinbun (a national newspaper) and Kahoku Shinpo (a local newspaper) regarding the East Japan disaster in 2011. Their findings revealed a shift in Asahi Shinbun's reporting after the Fukushima incident, focusing more on leaks from nuclear power plants. In contrast, Kahoku Shinpo consistently covered the earthquake and tsunami until the following week when they shifted their focus to the nuclear power plant leak. Another study by Hartwig [11] highlights the discourse generated by various media and technological injustices in Japan, where public and scientific interests are often disregarded in technocratic energy policies.

What differentiates this research from the previous one is that this research focuses the analysis on the attitude of the Japanese mass media towards the reactivation of nuclear power plants after the Fukushima nuclear accident. Are they completely opposed, neutral, or supportive? If against or in favor, what arguments, reasons and justifications are put forward?

4. METHOD

The dataset for analysis in this study consists of deliberately selected Japanese printed newspaper articles from national newspapers. Specifically, three national newspapers with significant circulation and influence in Japan—Yomiuri, Asahi, and Mainichi—are chosen [12]. These articles are of the editorial type, representing the collective opinions of the newspapers' stakeholders and their role in shaping politics and public opinion [13]. The retrieval of articles is limited to the period between July - December 2014, coinciding with the controversy surrounding the reoperation of a nuclear power plant after a moratorium since 2012. Keyword searches for 川内/Sendai and 原発 (genpatsu/nuclear power plant) yield a total of 24 editorial articles.

Subsequently, the articles will be carefully read to, analyzed, interpreted, and described. Critical discourse analysis, employing the Fairclough model, will be utilized to uncover the attitudes of each newspaper towards the issue, as well as the underlying reasons, justifications, and context [14]. Fairclough stated that to reveal attitudes or identities towards certain issues requires analysis of the expressive values represented in the text. Expressive value includes the author's assessment of a topic or reality, related to his social identity and the way he conveys his views. This value can be identified through the choice of vocabulary (wording) and the use of metaphors in the text. Therefore, text analysis in this research will mainly focus on examining expressions in the text, understanding the values conveyed such as positive or negative, agree or disagree [14].

5. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

5.1. Overview of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant, Kagoshima, Kyushu, Japan

The Sendai nuclear power plant located in Satsumasendai, Kagoshima, Kyushu, Japan, is operated by the Kyushu Electric Power Company or Kyushu Denryoku. The Sendai reactor was one of 54 nuclear power plants in Japan that were taken offline after the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011 for safety tests [15]. In March 2014, the NRA declared that the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant met safety standards. [16], [17]. Despite numerous protests, the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant's first reactor was officially reactivated on August 11, 2015, and the second reactor began operating on November 1, 2015. These dates mark the return to use of nuclear energy by Japan following the 2011 Fukushima nuclear accident [18].

5.2. Analysis of Asahi, Mainichi and Yomiuri Newspaper Titles on the Reactivation of the Sendai Nuclear Reactor

Regarding the stance of the Japanese national newspapers towards the "pros and cons of re-operating the Sendai NPP," the current stage involves discourse analysis at the title level, followed by an analysis of the article content or discourse. The analysis of article titles aims to identify statements, sentences, and vocabulary that express the newspaper's attitude, inclinations, or preferences. By sorting the article titles chronologically for each of the three newspapers, the following results are obtained, as shown in the subsequent table:

Table 1. Titles of Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri Shinbun on the 2015 Sendai Nuclear Reactivation.

Newspaper	no	Article Title	Meaning
Asahi Shinbun	1.	原発再稼働を問う―無謀な回帰に反対す る (July 17, 2014)	Questioning Nuclear Reactivation – Against Reckless Reactivations
	2.	原発事故原因—究明求める声を聴け (August 1, 2014)	Listen to Voices Demanding Clarity on Causes of Nuclear Power Plant Accidents
	3.	川内再稼働—山積する課題忘れるな (14 September 2014)	Sendai NPP Re-Operation - Don't forget there is a mountain of "homework".
	4.	火山と原発—噴火リスクの再検討を (October 9, 2014)	Volcanoes and Nuclear Power Plants – Reconsider the Risks of Eruption
	5.	原発なき夏冬—節電実績を変革の糧に (October 13, 2014)	Nuclear Free Summer and Winter – Requires Revolutionary Amounts of Savings
	6.	再稼働の地元—立地自治体に限るな (29 October 2014)	Local Areas for Re-Operation – Don't Restrict Only Local Governments
	7.	川内原発—再稼働同意は早すぎる (November 5, 2014)	Sendai Nuclear Power Plant – Reactivation Agreement too soon
	8.	川内原発の再稼働—「ひな型」にはなり 得ない (November 8, 2014)	Re-Operation of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant – Impossible to be a Pilot/Model
	9.	高浜原発—集中立地を直視せよ (December 19, 2014)	Takahama Nuclear Power Plant – Witness the Crowded Area Live
Mainichi Shinbun	10.	川内原発再稼働へ 教訓学ばぬ見切り発車 (July 17, 2014)	Sendai Nuclear Re-Operation Was Done Hastily Without Ever Taking Lesson
	11.	核のゴミ処分 再稼働の前に考えたい (July 22, 2014)	It is necessary to think about Nuclear Waste Destruction before Re-Operation

	12.	原発と火山災害 巨大噴火を侮るなかれ (September 8, 2014)	Don't underestimate the Volcano Eruption and Nuclear Power Plant Disaster
	13.	川内原発再稼働 なし崩し的に進めるな (11 September 2014)	The operation of the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant should not be carried out piecemeal
	14.	川内再稼働同意 住民の安全守れるのか (November 8, 2014)	Has Safety for the Local Residents Who Agree to Re-Operate the Sendai Nuclear Power Plant Guaranteed?
	15.	安倍政治を問う…原発再稼働 脱依存の道 が見えない (November 23, 2014)	Questioning Abe's Politics – The nuclear power plant will be revived and there is no visible way to reduce its dependency.
	16.	高浜原発合格証 京都、滋賀の声 尊重を (December 18, 2014)	Shiga Nuclear Power Plant Gets Pass Certificate, But Respect Shiga and Kyoto's Aspirations
Yomiuri Shinbun	17.	川内原発「合格」 再稼働への課題をこな そう (July 17, 2014)	(Sendai Nuclear Power Plant Passes Test – Let's Face the Challenge to Reactivation (NPP))
	18.	エネルギー高騰 価格交渉力の強化も急ぎ たい (July 21, 2014)	Energy Prices Rising Sharply – Want to Immediately Have Strong Price Bargaining Power
	19.	原発事故調書 危機管理強化へ重い教訓だ (13 September 2014)	Minutes of Nuclear Power Plant Accident – is a Valuable Lesson for Strengthening Risk Management
	20.	北海道電値上げ 原発再稼働で火力頼み脱 却を (August 4, 2014)	Electricity Rates Rise – Reactivationing NPP will avoid the demand for Fossil Energy
	21.	川内原発「合格」 再稼働へ課題の解決を 急げ (September 11, 2014)	Sendai Nuclear Power Plant Passes – Accelerate Completion of Work Towards Re-Operation
	22.	川内再稼働へ 地元同意得るモデルにしたい (November 8, 2014)	He obtained an agreement from the place of origin of the operation of the Sendai NPP. He wanted to be used as a model
	23.	エネルギー政策 安易な「原発ゼロ」は無 責任だ (December 8, 2014)	Energy policy - Easy to (Zero NPP) is an Irresponsibility
	24.	高浜原発「合格」 再稼働に政府支援が不可欠だ (December 19, 2014)	Takaham Nuclear Power Plant (graduated) – The government's support for re-operation cannot be eliminated

Source: [Japanese national daily newspapers Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri print editions published from July - December 2014]

By just looking at the title of the article, we can easily understand the viewpoints, attitudes, preferences and positions of each newspaper regarding the issue of "reactivation of the Sendai nuclear power plant. The Asahi and Mainichi appear to oppose the "reactivation of the Sendai NPP", while the Yomiuri takes a position that strongly supports the reactivation of the Sendai NPP. The stance against the Asahi Shimbun is firmly stated in at least two titles, namely title 1 and title 7:

1. 原発再稼働を問う―無謀な回帰に反対する (Questioning Nuclear Reactivation – Against Reckless Reactivation)

7. 川内原発—再稼働同意は早すぎる

(Sendai Nuclear Power Plant – Reactivation Agreement too soon)

In Title 1, Asahi employs the vocabulary or diction "反対する" (hantai suru) meaning "against" to clearly express their opposition to the reopening of the Sendai NPP. Asahi demonstrates a bold and resolute position: opposing the reactivation of NPP. Meanwhile, title No. 7 does not explicitly express opposition like the first title; instead, it conveys a sense of disapproval or a nuanced response by stating that the reactivation of the nuclear power plant is "too fast." This implies that Asahi prefers the NPP to be postponed rather than immediately resumed. Similarly, The Mainichi Shinbun also takes a stance against the reactivation of the Sendai NPP. This position is most evident in two editorial article titles: No. 10 and No. 15.

10. 川内原発再稼働へ教訓学ばぬ見切り発車

(The Sendai Nuclear Power Plant Reactivated Recklessly Without Learning from Lesson)

15. 安倍政治を問う…原発再稼働 脱依存の道が見えない

(Questioning Abe's Politics - There Is No Way to Get Out of the Nuclear Reactivation Program)

Although not as direct and explicit as Asahi, Mainichi constructs more moderate titles in all of its editorials, while still containing undertones against the "reactivation of the Sendai NPP." Title No. 10, conveys the idea that the reactivation of the NPP is seen as a reckless action, akin to a train departing prematurely without proper readiness or timing. In Title No. 15, the statement "安倍政治を問う" (questioning Abe's politics) indicates dissatisfaction with the policies implemented by the Abe's government.

In contrast to the stances of Asahi and Mainichi, Yomiuri takes an opposing stance by constructing titles that fully support the reactivation of the NPP, including titles No. 17, 20, 21, and 23. Only two will be cited here:

No. 17. 川内原発「合格」 再稼働への課題をこなそう

(Sendai Nuclear Power Plant Passes Test – Let's Face the Challenge to Reactivation (NPP))

No. 23. エネルギー政策 安易な「原発ゼロ」は無責任だ

(Energy policy – "zero NPP" without careful consideration is irresponsible)

In Title No. 17, (let's face the challenge of reactivationing nuclear power plants), Yomiuri does not explicitly state "support" or "refusal" but expresses it through the choice of words " = \$\frac{1}{2} \frac{7}{7}\$" (konasou), which means "let's face" in the context of "reactivationing NPP". This perspective is further reinforced in Title No. 23, (Energy policy - zero NPP without careful consideration is an irresponsibility). This title conveys the same attitude of supporting the reactivation of the NPP implicitely. Yomiuri does not explicitly state support through specific words but expresses disapproval by stating "zero nuclear energy without careful consideration" is something irresponsible.

5.3. Results of Analysis of Attitude Expressions of Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri Newspapers on the Reactivation of the Sendai Nuclear Reactor

Through an in-depth analysis of the contents of the 24 articles, it was found that the Asahi Shinbun had 9 statements expressing an attitude against the reactivation of the NPP, while the Mainichi Shinbun had 17 statements, and the Yomiuri Shinbun had 16 statements supporting the operation of the NPP. The following discussion will examine how each newspaper wording its stance, whether it is against or not opposed, through selected statements, and only two statements from each newspaper will be quoted for analysis. The Asahi Shinbun expresses its position on the reactivation of the Sendai NPP after the Fukushima incident in 2011 through the following words:

このままで原発を再び動かそうというのは暴挙である。いまだに収束できない事故から何も学ぼうとしない無責任な態度というほかない。(Asahi, 17 Juli 2014).

Reactivation a nuclear power plant in conditions like these is a brutal act. This shows an attitude of not wanting to learn from an accident that has yet to be resolved, and that is nothing but irresponsible

The statement above serves as an example of a sentence expressing criticism, satire, and cynicism, conveying the rejection of the reactivation of the Sendai NPP as expressed by Asahi. Asahi strongly condemns the "reactivationing of the nuclear power plant" as a 暴挙 (boukyo) or brutal and reckless action. This bold statement was made by a Japanese national newspaper, as evidenced by the previous sub-chapter's discussion of the title. Furthermore, Asahi cynically criticizes the action as an "irresponsible attitude" or "無責任な態度".

The second newspaper, Mainichi Shinbun shares expresses its rejection in a slightly different manner. They use sentences, phrases, and vocabulary that convey a more moderate, implicit, and non-assertive nuance, while still conveying the same core message. Similar to Asahi, Mainichi includes sentences that criticize, dramatize, and selectively present facts and data that align with their preferences.

私たちはこれまで、原発に頼らない社会をできる限り早く実現すべきだと主張してきた。一方で、そこに至る過程で、必要最小限の原発再稼働を否定するものではない。ただし、条件がある。福島の教訓を徹底的に学び取り、過酷事故を防ぐと同時に、再び事故が起きても住民の被害を食い止める手は、政府が脱原発依存の道筋を描い Home 状で川内原発の再稼働は合格とは言えない。このままでは、原発の安全神話の復活につながる懸念が大きい。(Mainichi, July 17, 2014)

We have stated that we must quickly realize a society that does not depend on nuclear energy. However, in the process of achieving this goal, we do not reject the reactivation of nuclear power plants in a minimal number. However, there are conditions. We must fully learn from the lessons learned from the incident in Fukushima, prevent serious accidents from happening, and also provide measures to protect residents if accidents happen again. In addition, the government should outline a path towards nuclear energy independence and place the reactivation of nuclear power plants within the overall energy policy framework. However, at this point in time, the Sendai nuclear power plant's reactivation cannot be called "passed" in all respects. If it continues like this,

In contrast to Asahi, Mainichi expresses its opposition in a more moderate, implicit, and non-assertive manner. Mainichi states that "society without nuclear power should be realized immediately," but on the other hand, they also mention that they do not reject the reactivation of nuclear power plants in the minimum required number. These statements are ambiguous, as they both oppose and agree, albeit with certain conditions. Statements expressed in a moderate and ambiguous manner like this align with the norms of Japanese culture.

Thirdly, Yomiuri shinbun takes a different stance compared to Asahi and Mainichi Shinbun. The text presents Yomiuri as a newspaper that fully supports the reopening of the Sendai NPP is as follows:

原発停止前に比べ、電気料金は家庭用が2割、産業用は3割上昇し、このままではさらなる値 Home 安全審査に「合格」した九州電力川内原発の再稼働を急ぐとともに、他原発も円滑に審査を 進め、着実に再稼働させるべきだ。

(Yomiuri, July 21, 2014)

Compared to the nuclear era when it was not discontinued, currently the basic electricity rate has increased by 20%, for industry it has increased by 30%, and if conditions like this are allowed to continue, the increase will be difficult to avoid. It is also a concern when there is a reduction in production because the industrial world is relocating production centers abroad. Simultaneously with the accelerated reactivation of Kyushu Electric Power's Sendai Nuclear Power Plant which has passed the safety test, other nuclear power plants should also be pushed regularly for inspection, and ready to be operated again.

Words or phrases expressing support for the reactivation of nuclear power plants can be found in the following examples: - "さらなる値上げも避けられない", meaning "there is no way to avoid further price increases" - "心配だ", meaning "worried" - "再稼働を急ぐ", which means "hasten to resume operations" - "着実に再稼働させるべきだ", which means "must resume operations gradually and stably". The Yomiuri is concerned that if nuclear power plants are not operated again, the prices of goods will continue to rise. They also express worry about the relocation of Japanese industries abroad due to cheaper fuel prices in other countries. Therefore, they advocate for the accelerated operation of nuclear power plants, not just the Sendai nuclear power plant, but all nuclear power plants. Based on this fact, it can be predicted that Japanese individuals who consume Asahi and Mainichi newspapers will tend to hold a

preference or attitude that does not support or is against the reactivation of the Sendai NPP. On the other hand, readers of Yomiuri will likely have the opposite attitude.

6. CONCLUSION

The plan to reactivation the Sendai nuclear power plant in 2015 has sparked controversy in Japan. It signifies that eliminating nuclear energy in a country that has constructed a significant number of nuclear power plants. Japanese society remains divided on this issue, including the country's national mass media, specifically the newspapers. Based on an analysis of the titles and attitudes of Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri Shinbun, it is evident that these three media outlets hold different positions. Asahi and Mainichi Shinbun are opposed to the reactivation of the Sendai nuclear power plant, while Yomiuri Shinbun supports it.

In expressing their respective stances, Asahi express his attitude or identity by constructing words that are firm, straightforward, brave, critical and confrontational. The Mainichi, on the other hand, expressed his attitude in more moderate, implicit, and sometimes ambiguous words. Yomiuri, although supporting the reactivation of nuclear power plants, also expressed some criticism but mostly relied on facts on the ground to produce words that supported his stance and identity.

7. COMPETING INTEREST STATEMENT

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

8. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

First author: Set the idea, collected data.

Second author: corrected the writing, sharpened the analysis.

Third author: corrected the writing, sharpened the analysis, and checked the English.

9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sumitomo Foundation and Universitas Gadjah Mada has supported this research.

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