

Call for Papers and expressions of interest: Exploring the Nuclear-Climate Nexus / Planetary Technologies in the Context of Increasing International Instability

[School of Politics and International Studies](#), University of Leeds, 1-2 July 2024.

This two-day event comprises two interlinked workshops:

1st July, Planetary Technologies in the Context of Increasing International Instability. A closing event for a UKRI-funded project on the role and influence of the nuclear analogy in emerging solar geoengineering politics and governance debates.

2nd July, Exploring the Nuclear-Climate Nexus, a workshop co-organised and co-funded by the POLIS [Centre for Global Security Challenges](#) and Climate Politics Research Group.

Participants may attend one or both days. **If you are interested in participating either as a presenter or attendee, please send a 150-word abstract or expressions of interest and a 50-word bio to Climate.politics@leeds.ac.uk by 1 May 2024.** Please indicate which events you are interested in attending and to which workshop(s) your abstract(s) apply.

Lunch and refreshments will be provided for each day, and there is funding available to reimburse travel expenses (prioritizing ECRs, PGRs, and staff on precarious contracts). Please indicate if you would like to be considered for travel funding in your email.

Workshop details

1st July “Planetary technologies in the context of increasing international instability: emerging solar geoengineering technologies and parallels in nuclear politics and governance”

An increasingly urgent aspect of the international politics of climate change is the governance of potential large-scale climate interventions such as solar geoengineering, or solar radiation modification (SRM). This includes proposals for extensive Stratospheric Aerosol Injection (SAI), in which reflective aerosols are injected into the lower stratosphere to reduce solar radiation and cool global temperatures. SAI is gaining momentum as a potential response to the growing environmental consequences of climate change, but it has become clear over the course of research done throughout this fellowship that the potential political ramifications of SRM technologies, particularly SAI, have been underexamined. These technologies are almost always assessed in terms of their potential environmental benefits and harms, rather than as potential political tools. However, it is essential to also centre the potential political implications of SAI. This is because while optimal *environmental* use of SAI would require coordinated, global, and carefully calibrated deployment it has the potential to become an arena for competition over control between powerful political actors in the context of increasing international tensions.

Nuclear weapons governance has sometimes been suggested as a useful comparison for SRM. However, key institutions of international nuclear governance are unravelling, and the governance of nuclear weapons technology is centralized, hierarchical, and hyper-securitized despite the open, cooperative, and science-led governance of the technology envisioned by its developers. Recent moves by the US and China to begin expanding their nuclear arsenals, and Russia’s nuclear saber rattling in the context of the war in Ukraine make these goals more distant. It is likely that SRM governance will

face similar political dynamics and challenges given already existing concerns about domination of SAI by the Global North and its potential to contribute to inter-state conflict. Also, the possibility of governing nuclear technology and climate change is currently predicated on the assumption of liberal international order informed by an understanding of state responsibility. However, this order is experiencing a period of disruption that has placed stress on extant and emerging global governance regimes and brought the assumption of their efficacy and viability into doubt.

The purpose of this one-day workshop is to bring together experts across a range of disciplines and expertise to consider the intersection of the political and governance parallels of these technologies with the hope of establishing an interdisciplinary network that continues to engage in an iterative process to analyze and shape the political and governance debates around SRM. The workshop serves as an opportunity to examine the implications of the erosion of nuclear arms control architecture for solar geoengineering governance and will function as a jumping off point for considering solar geoengineering as an edge point of the climate-nuclear science and politics nexus.

2nd July “Exploring the Climate-Nuclear Nexus”

Nuclear weapons and climate change are two catastrophic global threats that intersect in major ways. Widespread nuclear testing in the 1950s led to the atmospheric spread of radioactive isotopes like carbon-14 — a prime stratigraphic marker for dating the beginning of the Anthropocene, while the projected climate consequences of nuclear war represent a major intersection between climate science and nuclear politics. During the Great Acceleration of the 1950s, both greenhouse gas emissions and nuclear weapons grew exponentially. Today these interlinked histories of nuclear and climate politics are experienced directly by the inhabitants of Small Island States like the Marshall Islands: Marshall Islanders are subject to the environmental and health consequences of U.S. nuclear testing are also facing a future of climate displacement. Climate change and low-carbon energy transition will also alter geopolitics with consequences for global security. The role of nuclear power in any low-carbon future remains highly controversial but is currently undergoing a revival as countries like Japan and the U.S. recommit to nuclear and small modular reactors (SMRs) gain traction as a way to boost energy security. Nuclear treaties such as the Nuclear NonProliferation Treaty (NPT) are being used as examples of potential governance models for technologies such as solar geoengineering and a proposed Fossil Fuel NonProliferation Treaty (FF NPT). Despite these major historical and contemporary intersections, there is relatively little academic work that explores the deep social and political connections between nuclear technologies and climate change.

This in-person, one-day workshop invites papers across disciplines that aim to investigate the interconnections between the politics of nuclear weapons, nuclear energy and climate change. The workshop will also explore potential for a journal special issue on the subject. Topics could include, but are not limited to, research that explores:

- The political/economic/cultural relations between nuclear weapons, power and climate.
- Connections between nuclear weapons, militarisation and climate transitions.
- Narratives, analogies, imaginaries of nuclear and climate pasts, presents and futures.
- Questions of global governance of nuclear/climate and their links.
- Social/technological/material development of nuclear/climate spaces, communities and objects.
- Political and social responses to the environmental and health legacies of nuclear accidents, nuclear testing, and climate change.