

Exploring the Climate-Nuclear Nexus

University of Leeds

2nd July 2024

The Centre for Global Security Challenges (University of Leeds) and the POLIS Climate Politics Group are pleased to announce a joint workshop on the theme of 'Exploring the Climate-Nuclear Nexus' on 2nd July 2024 at the University of Leeds.

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.

Finding us in Leeds.

The conference will take place in the Fine Art Building, University of Leeds Seminar Room 2.09. A campus map is available [here](#). Directions to get to the University are available [here](#).

For those travelling to Leeds from elsewhere, there are several accommodation options available in the city centre.

Any questions?

Please email climate.politics@leeds.ac.uk with any questions.

To reduce plastic waste, we will not be providing bottled water. Please bring your own bottle or reusable cup to fill at the water fountains on campus. We will also not print programmes. A QR code to access the final programme will be available in all conference rooms.

Workshop Programme

Location: Fine Art Building SR2.09	
10.00am-10.30am	Registration and Coffee, welcome
10.30am-12.10pm	Panel 1 - Risks (and Lessons)
12.10am-1.15pm	Lunch
1.15pm-2.45pm	Panel 2 - Narratives and Entanglements
2.45pm-3.00pm	Coffee
3.00pm-4.00pm	Panel 3 – Political Energies
4.00pm-4.30pm	Discussion of next steps

Panel details

Panel 1	Risks (and Lessons) Chair: Andrew Futter, University of Leicester
Time:	10.30-12.10pm
Jürgen Scheffran, University of Hamburg The Climate-Nuclear Nexus: From double threat to synergies in threat reduction	
Elin Bergner, Open Nuclear Network and One Earth Future Foundation Climate Change and Nuclear Risks in the Indo-Pacific: Exploring the Nexus	
Laurie Laybourn, Strategic Climate Risks Initiative (SCRI) and Chatham House ‘Not the end of the world’: comparing risk assessments of climate change and nuclear war	
Matthew Rendall, University of Nottingham Termination shock or no exit? Lessons for solar geoengineering from the history of the bomb	

Panel 2	Narratives and Entanglements Chair: Frances Hemsley, University of Leeds
Time:	1.15-2.45pm

Charlotte Weatherill, The Open University Operation Hurricane: Narrating climate change as part of the ‘imperial mess’ and colonial violence wrought in the Pacific
Isobel Cook, University of Sheffield Articulating nuclear fear within Anthropocene polycrisis: British Fukushima/3.11 poetry
Tom Vaughan, Aberystwyth University and Rob Cullum, King’s College London Siloed imaginations: the separation of climate and nuclear weapons in narrations of the future

Panel 3	Political Energies Chair: Jan Selby, University of Leeds
Time:	3.00-4.00pm
	Hely Desai, University of Cambridge and Javed Alam, Academy of International Studies Nuclear Energy, the Climate Crisis, and Small Modular Reactors: Interconnections, Challenges, and Prospects
	Syeda Saba Batool, Quaid e Azam University Islamabad. Social and Political Implications of SMRs: Advancing Climate Change Mitigation Strategies in Pakistan