

Call for Abstracts: China's Nuclear Belt & Road

Socio-technical perspectives on China's export nuclear infrastructures

This will be the second of three workshops organized for the project *A Tale of Two Asias: Living In and Beyond the Nuclear Age*, hosted by the Center for Asian Studies. Funding for the project is being provided by the Albert Smith Nuclear Age Fund at the University of Colorado Boulder.

About the project

The Center for Asian Studies is hosting three focused workshops exploring the similarities and differences in Japanese and Chinese experiences of nuclear energy development. Already engaged in a broader examination of Asian infrastructure development through the [China Made project](#), we explore Japanese and Chinese modes of living in the nuclear age through a socio-technical lens, including considerations of the impacts of energy infrastructures on everyday life, social movements and cultural engagements with nuclear energy development, and the political implications of infrastructural risk and vulnerability. Collectively, these workshops ask: What are the socio-technical dimensions of efforts to both survive in and move beyond the nuclear age in Asia? What do we learn from paying particular attention to the Japanese and Chinese contexts of these efforts?

In March 2021, we hosted “A Decade of Fukushima: socio-technical perspectives on surviving the nuclear age in Japan.” This first workshop in the project featured an international gathering of 10 scholars, with 5 papers presented. Workshop papers and discussion comments can be found on the [project website](#). With this workshop, attention focused on the case of Japan which experienced a decade ago the triple disaster earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear reactor meltdown in the northern Tohoku region. Presentations explored socio-technical perspectives on how people in Japan have lived with the aftermath of the March 11, 2011 events. Our approach for the workshop was meant to recognize that nuclear power enrolls people, as individuals and as social collectivities, into a particular and peculiar set of relationships with technology. Those relationships blur the boundaries between science and society, and between technology and culture, in unique and compelling ways. The workshop focused on questions such as: How do people – in their everyday lives – understand and practice their relationship to radiation? How do they calculate different kinds of risk? How do they come to be involved in the measurement of radiation and the science of predicting health-related effects of radiation?

About the second workshop: China's Nuclear Belt & Road

Three years after the Fukushima disaster, China's President Xi Jinping announced his signature foreign policy initiative: the 'Belt & Road' (一带一路). Designed in large part to address China's chronic oversupply of domestic infrastructural construction capacity, much of the BRI focuses on developing energy infrastructure connectivities across Asia and beyond, with nuclear power being a significant part of this infrastructure development. With 47 existing reactors which already account for 1/5 of global nuclear power generating capacity, China proposes to build at least 30 new reactors across Asia, as part of the BRI, by 2030. This in addition to the 43 new reactors already planned for construction *within* China. In contrast to Japan, then, China's future reliance on nuclear power is guaranteed. Indeed, China increasingly presents itself as a model of how to live in the nuclear age, while in Japan there has been much greater emphasis on living *beyond* the nuclear age.

This second workshop will explore the prospects for, and possible consequences of, China's efforts to position Asia as the global leader in nuclear power production. What have been the social, economic, cultural, and/or political effects of China's nuclear energy infrastructure development both within China and in other Asian countries where China is currently investing in nuclear energy development projects? We are particularly interested in grounded case studies that provide qualitative, local-scale insights into China's nuclear power development. In keeping with the broader project's socio-technical lens, we hope to emphasize in our discussions the relationships between local communities and nuclear technology within the broader context of China's growing influence throughout the Asian continent and beyond.

Schedule and Format

We are tentatively scheduling the 2 day workshop to be held in-person on the University of Colorado Boulder campus April 22-23, 2022. All travel expenses for invited paper presenters will be provided by the Center for Asian Studies, including 3 nights in Boulder (4 nights for international participants). As with the first workshop, invited presenters will submit a draft short paper/commentary (3,000-5,000 words) about 3 weeks prior to the workshop. These papers are meant to be 'thought pieces' rather than formal papers. Drafts will be shared among workshop participants only, but final (revised) versions will be posted as downloadable PDFs on the CAS website following the workshop (see the Fukushima workshop papers [here](#)), and will be considered for eventual publication in an edited project volume.

Participants are asked to consider the general questions raised in the project and workshop descriptions above. These can be summarized as follows:

- For the project overall: What are the technopolitical dimensions of efforts to both survive in and move beyond the nuclear age in Asia? What do we learn from paying particular attention to the Japanese and Chinese contexts of these efforts?
- For this workshop more specifically: What is the current state of China's export nuclear energy infrastructure efforts? What connections can be drawn between those exports and China's domestic nuclear industries? To what extent is China promoting itself as a model for a new generation of nuclear power developments? What have been the on-the-ground effects of China's nuclear energy infrastructure investment and development? How has China addressed potential and/or actual nuclear accidents? How have the risks of nuclear energy been addressed at local levels within China and/or in Belt & Road partner countries? What sorts of local political issues have emerged around Chinese nuclear infrastructures outside of China? How have non-Chinese civil society and media institutions engaged with China's nuclear investments?

These questions are merely meant to generate thoughts and ideas. Participants should feel free to consider other issues in their responses. Participants are also encouraged to be provocative, experimental, and not constrained by normal academic conventions when writing their papers.

The workshop will consist of brief presentations by presenters, comments by invited discussants, and discussion among all workshop participants

Call for Abstracts

Please submit an abstract of no more than 250 words, along with a brief bio, affiliation, and contact information to Tim Oakes at toakes@colorado.edu by October 15th, 2021.