

PAPER SUBMISSION FOR INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

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Paper Title: Beyond the Nuclear Age: Hazards of Uranium-Based Warfare and Post-Nuclear Exceptionalism

Abstract:

Nuclear exceptionalism, presented by Hecht (2012) as insistence on fundamental distinction of all things nuclear, including across technological, political, and cultural domains, is suggested by this paper to be of direct global health significance and cause for elevated concern associated with radioactive environmental contamination. On a broader theoretical level, nuclear exceptionalism is emphasized to be at the core of sociocultural attempts to delineate a “Nuclear Age”, a label which has largely become synonymous with modern and post-World War II international society. As movements and interactions of globalization increase, and biomedical understandings of radioactive damage on genomic levels become more nuanced, it is argued that a pivotal era of nuclear exceptionalism tied to a Nuclear Age is coming to a close, even in the hopeful continued absence of widespread nuclear war, yet with globalized society nevertheless still burdened by many new and undesirable consequences associated with health, environment, and democratic liberties. This paper ultimately assesses the sociocultural importance of ambiguous or ignored thresholds for both nuclear and “dirty” radioactive war, particularly in the context of controversy over uranium-based weapons, and suggests a need to re-evaluate any exclusivity of concerns and priorities associated with “all things nuclear.”