

Oceanographers And The Cold War: Disciples Of Marine Science



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RÉFÉRENCE

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GLOBAL REGULATION: CONTROLLING AND ACCEPTING RADIOACTIVITY RISKS

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the determining role of nuclear hazards in the emergence of a new category of risks, "global risks" and to retrace how an international structure for expertise and regulation of these risks was constructed as result of American foreign policy, international relations in the context of the Cold War, public mobilization against nuclear weapons, criticism and demands for "social precautions" as well as scientific research interests and professional legitimization. By focusing on the role of scientists in this process, this paper aims to discuss the political and social role of these regulation activities.

Key words: Atomic Fallout, Health and Environmental Radioactivity effects, Radiation and Nuclear Risks Scientific Expertise, Global Regulation.

INTRODUCTION

Nuclear fallout emerged in public debate in the 1950s as the first global health and environmental risk. Radioisotope contamination from fallout later became a focus point for pollution, notably in Rachel Carson's bestseller, *Silent Spring*. The word *global* was taken up in many discussions to mark a change in the spatial and temporal scale of the threats to which human health would subsequently be exposed, either directly or from environmental pollution. The emergence of a category of problems brought about by human activity, their scale and their irreversibility appeared then to be a new situation, demanding action on an international scale. Among the most publicly visible solutions was the creation of international institutions to regulate these new problems.

Structures for discussing and regulating problems at international level began to develop in the 19th century; it was not, however, until after World War II that the number of international institutions increased significantly. Today, the activities of a whole series of intergovernmental agencies and organizations, such as the International Agency for Atomic Energy (IAEA), via the Iraq war, or the World Health Organization (WHO), with the worldwide alert over bird flu, show the public and media importance of this type of structure. In this article, I will examine the determining role of nuclear hazards in the emergence of a new category of risks: "global risks". I will retrace how an international structure for expertise and regulation of these risks was constructed by the convergence and overlapping of several different committees. This international system is simultaneously the result of American

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