

The Material Culture of Nuclear Diplomacy-double symposium of 9 papers

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In the early 1960s two mobile laboratories, property of the International Atomic Energy Agency, toured Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America in order to train young physicists in the use of radioisotopes in medicine, nuclear science and technology. A number of developed countries donated nuclear reactors and bargained uranium in several cases with a long list of developing countries worldwide. Indeed, radioactive materials and nuclear technologies, sometimes as gifts and others as precious commodities, have constantly changed hands following complex bilateral and multilateral diplomatic negotiations. We have for long known that materials matter. Despite the fact that scientific artifacts have played crucial roles in diplomatic negotiations, historians of science have invested little attention to the material culture of science diplomacy. Objects are not merely 'alternative sources' that can complement documentary materials in answering the questions posed by the history of nuclear sciences. They are primarily involved and affect the ways science and diplomacy are co-constructed.

This proposed session is concerned with the relationship between artifacts and nuclear diplomacy and aim to systematically explore the linkage between the use of science as a diplomatic tool and the role of materials and artifacts as diplomatic assets in crucial political negotiations.

Papers included here explore the ways the material aspects of nuclear science conditioned post-war diplomacy. We focus on unique and often overlooked radioactive materials and nuclear artifacts. By following objects, over time and across, they reveal the specificities of diplomatic practices and the role of scientific knowledge in diplomatic negotiations.