Response Week 10

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HST 415 / Alex Wellerstein

How good of a representation is the show Chernobyl on HBO? Just wondering. Why do they all wear white hats and gowns in the Chernobyl site? Do Americans wear these things as well?

Perrow seems like he very anti-nuclear. He doesn’t attribute nuclear accidents to any one human error but approaches it holistically. He is saying that these systems are so complex that any accident or catastrophic event could disrupt the any security measures in a nuclear system. I feel like what is not addressed is the fact that it is low carbon and a compact way to generate lots of energy. Perrow just describes how we cannot use this but does not give any alternatives to nuclear power.

Walker as a historian I feel gives an unbiased overview of Perrow’s opinion piece. He debunks the problems with 3 Mile Island. From his account, the accident could have been a lot worse, however it wasn’t. The accident itself did not hurt anybody and the radiation released was minimal. Walker is very grounded in what the reality of situation was at 3 Mile Island whereas I feel like critics are trying to scare you with the consequences of everything going wrong. Walker does mention this as well at the end, saying that tensions were high and this accident was attributed as a disaster in children’s books. He does not say whether nuclear is dangerous or safe. He pretty much just mentions that this accident was not as severe as people think.

Aytbaev et al. on nuclear accidents seems to run the same analysis that military strategists ran in the cold war for how many nukes we need as a deterrent. Basically what it boils down to is that he says the deaths that nuclear accidents cause are far less even with Chernobyl than coal powerplant deaths. Meaning the coal powerplant emissions release of CO2 and pollution kills more people than nuclear in general. Even if the statistics make sense in that regard, I feel like this is a flawed analysis since there are way fewer nuclear plants in commission than coal, also we pay more attention to nuclear safety than coal safety. The point I am trying to make is that we cannot just look at deathrate of different types of energy to see safety. The article also sees these accidents such as 3 Mile Island and Chernobyl as future lessons that we can use to improve reactor design and safety. I can see that as an alternative to coal, maybe in space. However, we have solar and wind as safer alternatives currently. However I see the point the article is trying to make. Even our glorious professor mentioned that Chernobyl was probably the worst a reactor could ever be, and even then it wasn’t that bad and the reactor design was flawed as well. Newer reactors would not have some of the issues like Chernobyl and we can learn from their mistakes.

I think a nuclear future would be in space. Compact energy production that can last a while sounds very appealing in space. Also safety concerns would only apply to the spaceship and not to neighboring countries like Belarus with Chernobyl. I don’t know the physics of nuclear fallout in space, but I feel like it be less of an issue than here on Earth. Nuclear reactors that could be engines sound pretty cool too.