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## **Nuclear Acceleration:**

### **The Birth of Nuclear Eternity and Global Surveillance in the 1960s**

**Benoît Pelopidas**

(Sciences Po (CERI), France)

**Discussant: Jan Slánský** (FSV UK)

**DECEMBER 15, 2020, 11am (CET), ZOOM: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7099881647>  
Register here <https://forms.gle/Eq7cq1nYE9EjEFkL8> or email [filip@filipvostal.net](mailto:filip@filipvostal.net)  
and you will receive preparatory readings**

The 1960s are commonly portrayed as the decade of emancipation and opening up of future possibilities. In this lecture, I will argue that this does not apply to the nuclear weapons realm at all. In that realm, the 1960s witness a series of intellectual and technological changes that considerably narrow the scope of imagined futures. The idea that nuclear weapons are the least changeable part of our world becomes entrenched to the point of turning the nuclear eternity into the only conceivable future. Further, I will argue that this nuclear eternity was born alongside an acceleration of nuclear weapons politics with the deployment and mass production of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) which travel roughly twenty times faster than bombers, the previous generation of delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons. Given the intolerability of nuclear explosions and the incentive to strike first which comes with such an increase in the speed of possible nuclear violence, locating and targeting any enemy nuclear weapons become imperative. These imperatives were the main drivers of the production of a satellite infrastructure of global surveillance which will produce the image of the Earth as a whole. In that respect, the entrenchment of an imaginary of nuclear eternity and the infrastructure of global surveillance were produced at the same time, during that decade hastily characterized as a time of emancipation.

**Benoît Pelopidas is the founding director of the *Nuclear Knowledges* program at Sciences Po (CERI) (formerly chair of excellence in Security Studies) and an affiliate of the Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC) at Stanford University. *Nuclear Knowledges* is the first scholarly research program in France on the nuclear phenomenon which refuses funding from stakeholders of the nuclear weapons enterprise or from antinuclear activists in order to problematize conflicts of interest and their effect on knowledge production. It offers conceptual innovation and unearths untapped primary sources worldwide to grasp nuclear vulnerabilities and rethink possibilities in the realm of nuclear weapons policies. Benoît has been awarded four international prizes for his research on the scoping of publicly available nuclear choices and the most prestigious scholarly grants in Europe (including ERC Starting Grant). He can be reached at [www.sciencespo.fr/nk/en](http://www.sciencespo.fr/nk/en)**

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