

**Forum:** Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)

**Issue #04-02 :** Measures to address the possibility and development of international space militarization.

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## Introduction

Throughout history, space has always been in the interest of the human. The unknown and endless possibilities are appealing to us. However, during the Cold War, the Space Race between the US and the USSR began, thus provoking important technological developments. On October 4, 1957, Sputnik 1, the first artificial Earth satellite was launched by the USSR. Another historical event would be Apollo 11's landing on the moon on July 16, 1969. With major technological advancements, governments across the whole planet began to touch the surface of what was beyond our atmosphere. Space was and continues to be unexplored to us, and the full potential of what outer space could have not been reached. In 1959, The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) was created by the General Assembly. Through this committee, we began to set the norms and basic framework of outer space. A framework built upon the ideas of space being free and used for peaceful purposes. This framework continues to live on today.

As the decades passed, space technology began to touch the corners of the world and allowed countries to have the opportunity to have space technology. Countries have taken this opportunity as a luxury and dedicated themselves to explore space for peaceful and scientific motives. While other countries saw this as a new competition and a new way of being superior, thus intensifying the Space Race. The technology that was being developed was not only useful in demonstrating the capabilities and power a country had, but it benefitted in the communication through long distances, for example, satellites, and aid in developing a country, for example, Malawi. The result of developing space technology is favorable for developing countries and the production of technology can boost a country's economy.

What also began to occur is that as the decades passed, powerful nations began to see the potential in space militarization. They saw a new realm of warfare. A territory that needed to be theirs. They saw an opportunity to invest in a program and prepare for the future. Therefore, they began to expand their space program to not only an investigation but also the development of space weapons. Starting the militarization of space.

The militarization of space threatens the framework of space laws and increases the hostility, tension, and the probabilities of an arms race. When discussing utilizing space as a form of fighting, the development of a military space program is not balanced across the globe; the playing field is not even. Some states did not want to start a military space program, but for defensive motives, they had no choice. The militarization of space puts in jeopardy everything humanity has worked for and will only cause chaos, violence, and petrify society. This is why the governments present in the committee needs to work together, to avoid the escalation of the conflict.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

### **The Militarization of Outer Space**

The militarization of outer space consists of the process of placing arsenal and military technology in outer space. No actual warfare has taken place within this zone yet, but several governments have been developing weapons in preparation for a possible conflict. At the moment, the US is the nation with most space weapon development.

### **Space Weapon**

There is not an exact definition of what is a space weapon. At the moment, the definition is vague and this can generate confusion since nations can have different definitions. This is why the international community has to get together and define what a space weapon is. By responding to these questions, nations can proceed by also answering critical questions such as, "what will be considered space military attack?"

### **Anti-Satellite Weapons**

Anti-satellite weapons are space weapons with the capability of being able to destroy

or incapacitate satellites. These attacks are used for strategic offensive and defensive military purposes.

## **Hit-To-Kill Systems**

A hit-to-kill system is a defense system governments have developed that utilizes the mass and motion of a target to strike an object. The idea of the system is to have two objects colliding at a high speed to stimulate a massive amount of destructive energy, thus eliminating the attack and defend itself.

## **General Overview**

### **A New Battlefield// China's and Russia's Arms Race Prevention Resolution**

The militarization of space will create a fourth battlefield for humanity to fight wars, outer space. With the weaponization of space, governments are afraid of the initiation of an arms race in space. Human history has proven that an arms race increases tension and hostility through important historical periods such as the arms race during the Cold War. With the desire of preventing an arms race and one nation having complete control of outer space, countries have been urging for the creation of a resolution directed to prevent the plausible event. The countries of Russia and China have heard the call of the other countries and took it upon themselves to draft a treaty with the focus of preventing an arms race in outer space. The draft was submitted on the Conference on Disarmament of 2008 and 2014, yet according to the Russian Federation's delegate, there was no agreement when discussing key aspects regarding the safety of space operations. Although the Chinese-Russian treaty was supported by numerous countries, there were some countries hesitant and with a different viewpoint. Australia was afraid of possible "counterproductive consequences". South Africa is a supporter of the treaty, yet they believe that an agreement on the topic will not happen in the near future on the Disarmament Committee; therefore South Africa believes that other avenues should be explored for there to be an agreement on the issue. The UK stated that a controlled and legally binding treaty is important, but before such negotiations begin, the countries need to agree upon the definition of a space weapon.

## **Space Technology Impact on the Underdeveloped States**

While debating on the issue in question, it seems that there is an international agreement that all countries should have access to outer space. Governments argue that having equal access to space is a right, and having such access could decrease the harm of natural disasters, help human health, and also help achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. For example, when Malawi was experiencing their worst flood during 2015, the UN provided satellite images to Malawi, allowing them to plan evacuation routes. Through this example, one can observe how space technology was vital for Malawi and is now a vital resource not only for powerful and developed countries but also for developing states. The development of space technologies can help developing countries develop faster since the technology can support the economic prosperity of the state, it can help the government maintain the people safe from a natural catastrophe, and space weapons are beginning to be a vital way of managing the water resource a state has and global warming.

In addition, countries argue that with international cooperation small countries can have enough resources to explore space and be able to "apply related technologies." Third world countries do not have the same opportunities as other powerful nations do. Paraguay's representative, Enrique Carillo Gomez, has asked member states to increase international cooperation to help developing countries have access to related technology. The international community is aware that the development of space technology has helped countries achieve Sustainable Development Goals, and if developing countries had access to the advanced technology of developed nations, then the country will be able to develop faster and reach the Sustainability Goals.

## **Economic Impact**

Powerful nations already have technology in space and are already investing money in the creation and development of weapons. The increase rate of production of space technology of a government will allow the GDP of the state to increase. Not only this, but the increase in production will also allow for unemployment rates to decrease, hence diminishing poverty levels.

Nevertheless, the main country against a resolution for the prevention of an arms race

and a ban on space militarization is the US. The US has been investing in its space program since the Bush administration. Given this investment, other powerful nations such as China, India, Japan, or powerful European countries have begun investing in their space programs to match the US. However, most of the committee do not share the same views as the US. Therefore, countries may impose trade sanctions to pressure the country to support control. Some nations depend on other nations because they can not sustain themselves; such bans could harm the respected country and create serious issues such as inflation. This is merely one example showcasing that the militarization of space has economic benefits, but there may also contain economic consequences.

## **Political Impact**

The militarization of space has the potential to worsen pre-existing political conflicts. C A country's actions may be seen as a threat or a danger with the development of such weapons, causing other states to take hostile action and invest in developing space weapons for protection. Without any control on the development, one countries ambition to surpass another one will create tension, thus increasing the chances of a conflict.

The United States has been the main country on militarizing space. After the tragic event of 9/11, the War on Terrorism started. One goal of militarizing space is to have the technology to be able to fight the war on terrorism with space weapons. However, even before the tragic event, the US had an interest in space militarization. The Bush Administration's 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) was released on the 1st of October, 2001, states that the US has the intentions of "exploiting space for military purposes" and will also "deny adversary's to do so". The US's ambition on dominating the fourth battlefield makes them see outer space as an arena to fight economic and geopolitical battles. The US's ambition and intentions with space provoke other countries to be on the alert about the space weapons the US has and forces the powerful nations of the world to also develop space weapons to be able to defend and attack as well.

The trading of materials and the development of the weapons can also influence the creation of alliances between states to work on projects together and develop

weapons together. For example, India has begun to invest in their space weapons and the US is keen on joining them. India is happy with fermenting a strong alliance with the US despite possible tension with bordering countries.

With a possible new Cold War on the verge of existing between China and the US, the production of space weapons could increase the tension and hostility between the two states and provoke a space arm. China is planning to modernize its army and have one of the strongest economies of the world. This allows China to be a difficult adversary to the US. China does not want to militarize space, but they also desire for the US to not have domination on outer space. Another country sharing the same views as China is Russia, another power country that has tension with the US and a country that has been working closely with China recently. If the US continues to develop space weapons and does not choose to debate a control on space weapons, we may see China and Russia as allies challenge the US on space dominance.

## **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

### **United States**

The United States is one of the strongest governments in the world with a powerful outer space program. By being one of the two protagonists in the Space Race during the Cold War, the United States developed its space program and developed space technology. However, during the Bush administration, the United States began to militarize space, believing that this would provide them with superior military capabilities. According to Joseph W. Ashy, Commander-in-Chief of US Space Command, the US has "development programs in directed energy and hit-to-kill mechanisms". The US has never been in favor of any UN space militarization control resolution.

## China

China is not comfortable with the idea of the US having military dominance on outer space. Given this, China has been collaborating with Russia in the creation of a treaty directed to control the production of space technology and prevent an arms race. The governments have submitted their draft treaty on two separate UN Conference on Disarmament (2008, 2014). Nonetheless, China is a possible adversary for the US and could threaten US space domination.

Governments became alert when China utilized a medium-range ballistic missile to destroy one of their aging satellites. There is a growing fear within the international community that China is developing space weapons and did not inform anyone

## Russia

The Russian government is calling for control of space militarization. By collaborating with China they have developed a treaty to ban and control space militarization. However, along with China, the government is investing in developing space weapons for defense purposes. Like China and the US, Russia has developed weapons such as satellites with the capability to fire lasers, rockets with the ability to launch satellites, and are investing in hit-to-kill systems to be utilized against anti-satellite (ASAT) or missile attacks. The country's space program and the technological advancements of the government make Russia another possible adversary for the US.

Russia stated that the US is complicating a control on space militarization, and believe that due to their lack of support, their UN resolution is not passing. The United States is one of the most powerful countries in the whole world. Several countries depend on the US and the US has a major influence on other countries. Having the US against a resolution makes the debate more difficult since it will not only create tension and hostility between the US and Russia but other close allies, such as Israel, might support the US and the resolution is not any closer to getting passed. Even if every country is in favor of the resolution, the US has the power to veto it, and they have done it before like in October 2006 when discussing the prevention of an arms race.

## **North Korea**

Hyon Kwang-il, the director of the scientific research department of North Korea's National Aerospace Development Administration, said in 2016 that the satellite research of North Korea has military aims and said, "Even though the US and its allies try to block our space development, our aerospace scientists will conquer space". Reportedly, North Korea does not have ASAT capabilities, but given their relationships with Russia and China, there is a chance for them to develop them in the future. Also, if North Korea manages to engineer the technology to damage or destroy satellites in Low Earth Orbit (LEO), this will place a major threat to space militarization.

## **United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom has space capabilities similar to other powerful governments. The United Kingdom is also, like the majority of the countries on the UN, in favor of space control. However, they view the situation differently. The United Kingdom's government believes that the international community has to first define space weapons, a space attack, and define keywords. On the 24th of October, 2018, during the seventy-third session on the General Assembly, the United Kingdom is hoping that by defining key terms, the creation of resolutions and the discussion of the issue will be much clearer and easier to manage.



## Timeline of Events

*Date*

*Description of Event*

### **October 4, 1957**

The first artificial Earth satellite was launched by the USSR

### **1959**

The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) is created by the General Assembly

### **1967**

The Outer Space treaty is signed

### **July 16, 1969**

Apollo 11 landed on the moon

### **1972**

The Liability Convention, discussing the liability for damage caused on space object, is signed

### **2002**

China and Russia submitted a working paper titled, "Possible Elements for a Future International Legal Agreement on the Prevention of the Deployment of Weapons in Outer Space, the Threat or Use of Force Against Outer Space Objects"

### **2003**

A/RES/58/36 "Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space" was adopted by the First Committee of the General Assembly

### **2006**

Russia again introduced a resolution about transparency and confidence-building measures in outer space and although many countries supported

this, the US was against and Israel abstained.

### **February 12, 2008**

China and Russia introduce a Draft Treaty for the prevention of weapons in outer space.

### **4 February 2011**

The US releases its National Security Space Strategy.

## **UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events**

As seen through UN involvement, the militarization of space has been present in the conferences since the 1960s. In October 1967, the United Nations Outer Space Treaty came into effect. The treaty essentially states that space is something every country should have access to and will be used for peaceful purposes. During the year 2000, the General Assembly voted on the resolution titled, "Prevention of Outer Space Arms Race". 163 states voted in favor of the resolution, and only Israel, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the US abstained from voting. During June 2004, the UN expressed their concerns about the militarization of space. Space Militarization is a topic that the UN finds important and needs to be addressed. On October 2006, the General Assembly help a unanimous vote and 166 nations voted for prevention of an arms race in outer space. Israel abstained, and the US was the only state that voted against the resolution.

## **Possible Solutions**

Many solutions need to be explored to respond to this issue. One form of solving this issue is to create resolutions preventing an arms race. This is important because and the arms race will increase the rate of militarization and production of weapons with also creating tension between states. Another form is placing a ban on the militarization of space. Although this solution does have actual support from states, powerful governments, such as the US, are against a ban. The UK made a point on one of the conferences that allow there to be debating. One solution is to before placing bans

and focus on preventing an arms race, society needs to define key terms such as what is a space weapon or a space attack. These terms need to be clear and precise, and with these agreed-upon terms, governments will debate utilizing an accepted term. This issue is much in development and what it needs is creativity and clear terms for all nations to reach an agreement, find a middle ground, and avoid Armageddon.

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## Appendix

1. An article discussing the evolving space security rate.  
[www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/12/03/2018/weaponization-and-outer-space-security](http://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/12/03/2018/weaponization-and-outer-space-security)
2. Article focusing solely on North Korea plans for their space program.  
<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/13157/north-korea-space-program>
3. Article with quotes from the Russian and Chinese representatives on the US lack of collaboration.  
[www.newsweek.com/us-russia-china-space-weapons-ban-1369735](http://www.newsweek.com/us-russia-china-space-weapons-ban-1369735)
4. Detail article about the buildup to the PAROS treaty (currently being discussed)  
[www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/proposed-prevention-arms-race-space-paros-treaty/](http://www.nti.org/learn/treaties-and-regimes/proposed-prevention-arms-race-space-paros-treaty/).
5. Article of the UN reviewing the General Assembly conference held on the 24 of October of 2018.  
[www.un.org/press/en/2018/gadis3609.doc.htm](http://www.un.org/press/en/2018/gadis3609.doc.htm).
6. An article discussing in detail the situation in general from different perspectives.  
[www.globalissues.org/article/69/militarization-and-weaponization-of-outer-space](http://www.globalissues.org/article/69/militarization-and-weaponization-of-outer-space)
7. Site of UNODA. Has a lot of good general and specific information.  
[www.un.org/disarmament/](http://www.un.org/disarmament/)
8. The New York Times article discussing the near new Cold War  
[www.nytimes.com/2019/06/26/world/asia/united-states-china-conflict.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/26/world/asia/united-states-china-conflict.html)