



ZiMUN 2019 Security Council Research Report

Forum: Security Council

Issue: The Issue of the Militarization of Space

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Overview of the Issue

The militarization of space is the placement and development of weaponry and military technology in outer space.

This issue dates back to the Space Race during the Cold War, when the United States of America (USA) and the Soviet Union (USSR) began competing to launch the first satellite into outer space. The USSR sent the first one, Sputnik 1, in 1957 and by the late 1960s, both nations had launched their own artificial satellites into orbit. Both countries were also using space exploration for the demonstration and development of Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles, and the defense systems to stop them. The USA once had plans to detonate a nuclear bomb on the moon through Project A119, whilst the USSR made space stations with cannons that could shoot in space through the Almaz program.

In 1967, the United Nations General Assembly passed the Outer Space Treaty which banned placing weapons of mass destruction in space, and prohibited military activities on celestial bodies.

After this was passed, there was also a shift towards developing Anti-Satellite (ASAT) weapons, which could damage and destroy satellites 'that provided military effects on earth, such as intelligence and reconnaissance satellites.' ASAT weapons are dangerous because they create space debris which can severely damage objects already in orbit.

Half a century later and over 60 countries are actively utilizing space. Artificial satellites are being used for various military purposes such as command and control, communication, monitoring, and other functions.



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The problem with the international legislation for the militarization of space, namely the Outer Space Treaty, is that the international community is not confident that it will completely avoid a war from breaking out. For decades, there have been multiple requests by member states to adopt a treaty which would prevent an arms race in space from taking place because the Treaty only explicitly bans nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in space. These requests have shown that the international community believe that existing legislation is inadequate and space law needs to be re-visited.

An arms race is a dangerous possibility because we could see a repeat of factors leading to the break out of World War One, as international relations could become fragile, countries may refuse to disarm as a deterrent to more powerful nations, and developing countries may redirect funds to arming themselves in space thus slowing their socioeconomic growth. There is also ongoing debate about whether or not arms in space should be reserved for specific countries, such as with nuclear weaponry.

Key Terms

Militarization of Space

The placement and development of weaponry and military technology in outer space.

Liability Convention

This is an elaboration of Article 7 of the Outer Space Treaty and states that a State shall be absolutely liable to pay compensation for damage caused by its space objects on the surface of the Earth or to aircraft, and liable for damage due to its faults in space. The Convention also provides for procedures for the settlement of claims for damages.

Registration Convention

Also known as the Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space (1976), it is a Convention which created an international registry of objects placed into orbit. Parties were required to record all said objects with an appropriate national space agency.

Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD)

"A weapon with the capacity to inflict death and destruction on such a massive scale and so indiscriminately that its very presence in the hands of a hostile power can be



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considered a grievous threat. Modern weapons of mass destruction are either nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons."

Anti-Satellite (ASAT) Weapons

A weapon, weapons system, or technology designed to destroy or damage a satellite.

Reconnaissance Satellites

These are spy satellites are robotic observational platforms that orbit the [Earth](#) in order to image its surface and to record radio signals for military and political purposes.

Space Debris

This is the term used to describe man-made rubbish floating in space – often litter from space exploration, including spanners, nuts, bolts, gloves and shards of space craft. More than 500,000 pieces of debris, or “space junk,” are tracked as they orbit the Earth. They all travel at speeds up to 17,500 mph, fast enough for a relatively small piece of orbital debris to damage a satellite or a spacecraft.

Countries and Organizations Involved

Russia

Russia has the second largest presence and utilization of space, after the USA. It views space as a strategic region to enhance its military capabilities on earth as it provides intelligence and communication through satellites. Russia hopes to shape the international system to be closer to Russian views, and is actively working to offset American military advances in space by developing counter-space weapons. Russia recently submitted a proposal to limit the militarization of space.

China

China is not a large player in terms of space militarization yet, but recent economic, industrial and technological advances have allowed them to develop systems that will make them less reliant on US Systems. The People’s Republic of China is conducting “sophisticated satellite operations and probably is testing on-orbit dual-use technologies that could be applied to counter-space missions,”

United States of America

The USA has had military presence in space for the last six decades. They have been at the forefront of advancements in space technologies, which many countries depend



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on upon. \$25 billion is designated annually by the government for military communication satellites and for the National Reconnaissance Office.

European Union (EU)

The European Union has pooled the technological and financial resources of all its member nations to create the European Space Policy, which has systems responsible for communication and civil protection, along with navigation systems.

United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

One of the main agendas of the UNODA is to avoid an arms race from taking place. Resolutions have been debated and talks have been held since 1980 regarding this and in 2018, they adopted 'Group of Governmental Experts on Transparency and Confidence-building Measures in Outer Space Activities (A/68/189)' for their 2018-2020 talks.

Related UN resolutions and Previous Approaches to Solving the Issue

A/RES/68/75 - International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space

Adopted by the General Assembly without a vote in 2013. This resolution calls upon member states to continue using outer space peacefully.

A/RES/72/78 - Declaration on the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies

Adopted without a vote in December 2013. This resolutions was a follow up to the Outer Space Treaty and reiterates many of the points stated and follows up to progress made since 1967.

Outer Space Treaty

Endorsed by the United Nations on the 19th of December 1966 and formally known as the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (1967), it is a treating binding member states to the peaceful use of outer space. It prohibits parties from placing nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction in orbit, on the moon, or on any other celestial bodies. It also hold nations liable for any damage caused by the objects they place in orbit and are required to assist any astronauts in distress.

Click [here](#) to read it.



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Appendix

Appendix 1: Chart Showing Space Launches.

