



Disarmament and Security Committee: Topic 1

Addressing the Militarization of Space

Background:

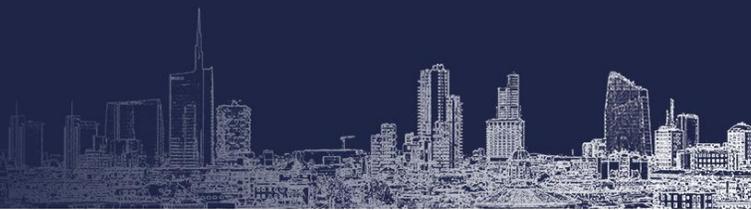
The first significant instance where space was discussed in a military context was in the 1960's, when the Limited Test Ban Treaty (1963) and the Outer Space Treaty (1967) were signed, prohibited the testing and deployment of nuclear weapons in space. Nations such as the United States and the Soviet Union, however, used surveillance satellites to support their military operations. Such satellites were used to provide imaging of the earth, track enemy aircraft carriers, and target enemy anti-ship missiles. This large increase in satellite use incentivized nations to create anti-satellite weaponry, which is still in development and possession of many countries to this day.

In 2007, China performed a satellite-destruction test with their anti-satellite weaponry, destroying one of their weather satellites and creating large amounts of space debris in the process. The pieces from such explosions are potentially very dangerous, and could both damage other satellites or possibly fall back to earth if big enough to survive re-entry into the atmosphere. This led to criticism from many countries around the world, and inspired renewed interest in the development of space militarization after the Cold War.

Current Situation:

In recent years, many nations have started to develop space militarization projects. Countries such as China and Russia have developed anti-satellite weapons to prepare for possible conflict with the United States' military. It is again important to note that the United States' military is heavily assisted by satellites, which can provide information ranging from weather conditions to imaging to ballistic missile alerts. India tested anti-satellite weaponry in 2019, while Iran launched its first military satellite in 2020.

Many technologies are being developed to address air and missile threats, many of which are satellite-based: these include sensors, ballistic interceptors, and directed energy weapons. These are clearly much harder to locate and respond to from the ground, causing an increase in space-related threats.



UN Resolutions:

- [RES 1721 \(XVI\)](#) (1961)
 - International Co-operation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
- [A/RES/55/122](#) (2000)
 - International Co-operation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space
- [A/RES/59/115](#) (2004)
 - Application of the concept of the "launching State"
- [A/RES/62/101](#) (2007)
 - Recommendations on enhancing the practice of States and international intergovernmental organizations in registering space objects
- [A/RES/68/74](#) (2013)
 - Recommendations on national legislation relevant to the peaceful exploration and use of outer space
- [A/RES/72/78](#) (2017)
 - 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

UN Treaties (known as the "five UN treaties on outer space"):

It is important to note that besides the first treaty (Outer Space Treaty) below, none of the other treaties seem to cover the topic of militarization of space.

- [Outer Space Treaty](#) (10/10/1967)
 - "Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies"
- [Rescue Agreement](#) (3/12/1968)
 - "Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts, and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space"
- [Liability Convention](#) (1/9/1972)
 - "Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects"
- [Registration Convention](#) (15/9/1976)
 - "Convention on Registration of Objects Launched into Outer Space"
- [Moon Agreement](#) (11/7/1984)
 - "Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies"

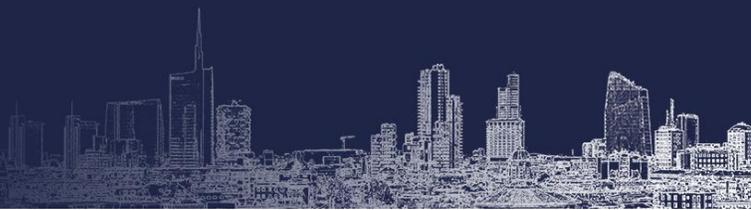


Important bloc positions:

- China has openly declared multiples times that it is against the weaponization of space and has submitted, often supported by the Russian Federation, several resolutions and draft treaties on the topic.
- The members of the European Union are divided on the topic of militarization of space. In 2019, France outlined plans for deploying weapons in orbit.
- The United States is planning to establish a sixth branch of its military – the US Space Force (USSF). The US was one of the first countries to militarize space and it is still one of the greatest forces on the topic.

Possible solutions:

- Creation of a treaty to add to the UN Treaties on Outer Space, which focuses on addressing the militarization of space.
- Creation of UN body or task force which controls and/or regulates:
 - space-based military equipment,
 - antisatellite weaponry, both air-based and ground-based,
 - missiles designed to enter high orbits/high altitudes.
- Creation of norms which focus on space operations with military/weaponized intents.
- Encouragement of transparency on outer space development, research, and activities.
- Agreement on procedures for assigning fault for accidental damage caused during space operations, either to other space equipment or to national area on earth.
- Discussing space territory – either:
 - private/state property in space and on celestial bodies,
 - the idea of space being shared territory.



Further reading:

- [Article on satellites as military targets](#) (from 2019)
- [Article on space warfare and positioning](#) (from 2008)
- [United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs](#) (UNOOSA)
- [UN Meeting Coverage](#) of the October 24, 2018 General Assembly, DISEC Session (GA/DIS/3609)
 - Contains statements made on the topic of militarization of space from several different countries
- [European Space Agency](#)
- [ESA's Page linking](#) to Treaties and Resolutions on the militarization of space
- The Swedish Institute of International Affairs Report titled "[The EU, Space Security and a European Global Strategy](#)"
- United States Department of Defense [Space Strategy Summary](#) (June 2020)

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