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Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space



**RESEARCH
REPORT**

Recommended by:



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Issue: Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space

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Introduction

Humankind has always been exploring what's around itself and in the 20th century, it was space's turn. After the exploration of space, stronger nations, more dominant in military and political influence, began to use outer space as a demonstration place. The set of demonstrations grew from the first artificial satellite to the first human in space, and then to the first human on the Moon. All of these advancements in the outer space technology led humankind to a possible arms race in outer space.

Definition of Key Terms

Militarization and weaponization of space: Placement and development of weaponry and military equipment in outer space. A small distinction between militarization and weaponization is that militarization does not necessarily include weaponry; it also can be military-purposed satellites.

Cold War: Cold War was a tension between the East and West Bloc, mainly the United States of America and the Soviet Union, after the World War II had ended. Powers tried to demonstrate military, scientific, and political achievements to distinct themselves in the Cold War as well as the global community.

Outer space weaponry and self-defense missiles: Outer space weaponry is any kind of mass destruction weaponry or firearms. Self-defense missiles are only created with defensive aims and are not used in order to attack any other actor.

General Overview

For the humankind, exploring outer space, advancing in outer space technology and announcing the achievements regarding outer space were not only ways to show intellectual and scientific development, but also a way to exhibit military strength.

For instance, the Soviet Union and USA used outer space technologies as ways to distinct themselves in the Cold War and this race was called "the Space Race". The Soviet Union had the first renowned achievement of sending the first human to space on 12 April 1961. This achievement was followed by many other achievements by the Soviet Union and USA such as the United States sending the first

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human on the Moon. However; finally, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Cold War ended and so did the Space Race.

After the Space Race was over and USA was able to prove its dominance in the field of outer space, countries' outer space policies started to differentiate. While the US started to define itself as the leader of outer space activities and defend every country's right to place self-defense weaponry; countries such as the Russian Federation, People's Republic of China (PRC), India and Brazil started to demand a comprehensive ban on outer space weaponry. Even though every country agreed on the fact that the outer space should only be used for peaceful purposes by signing the Outer Space Treaty in 1967, the problematic part was the outer space weaponry: the reason the world has a concern of an arms race in outer space.

The concern of an arms race in outer space led a number of countries to a desire of an internationally accepted treaty. In 2002, PRC and Russian Federation have submitted a joint working paper, which had the main objective of prohibiting any kind of weaponry in outer space. However, National Space Policy of the United States declares that the developing outer space weaponry production in superpowers threatens their outer space activities' security; therefore, they have a right to use self-defense weaponry. In addition to this, United States have rejected the working paper with the reasoning of "no outer space arms race being present".

In the following years, in 2008 and 2014, Russian Federation and PRC have submitted reviewed draft treaties with similar aims but milder enforcements; however, these treaties were again rejected by the United States. US ratifying these treaties is highly important, as the US is a significant actor in outer space; therefore, when the US didn't sign these treaties, they had no significance whatsoever. As an outcome, the concern of an arms race in outer space is still present and there is no internationally accepted outer space weaponry ban. Outer space experts and UN subsidiary organs see transparent and legally binding frameworks as the main solution and many are currently working on this topic with different measures like transparency or confidence-building measures.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States of America: The national space policy of United States declares that the country is willing to work in the boundaries of peaceful purposes; however, it also states that the outer space is a competition for major powers in the world and because of that reason, every country has a right to explore outer space and if deemed necessary, place self-defense weaponry.

Russian Federation and People's Republic of China: These countries are staunch supporters of prohibiting any kind of weaponry in outer space and have been very vocal about their stance on the issue. However, they have been accused of placing weapons in outer space by the United States.

UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA): The office controls any subsidiary organ related to outer space in the UN, helps developing countries to integrate outer space into their agendas in order to

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ensure the future of outer space and works in cooperation with governmental and/or non-governmental actors on the topic of outer space.

Treaties and Events

Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapon Tests In The Atmosphere, In Outer Space And Under Water (1963): The treaty was presented by the United States of America, United Kingdom and the Soviet Union; with this multilateral negotiation, a nuclear test ban was presented to the world as well as taking a step into the protection of outer space.

Outer Space Treaty (1967): The treaty provides the basic framework on international space law; therefore, it is accepted as a milestone in the PAROS process. Fundamentally, it presents the idea that the outer space should only be used for the common benefits of the humankind and outlaws any country-specific uses of outer space.

Liability Convention (1972): The convention states that a launching State shall pay compensations and should be held accountable for any and all damages given either to land or to an aircraft.

Registration Convention (1975): The convention states that all States shall register the produced aircraft or space related materials for identification processes.

Moon Agreement (1979): The agreement reiterates the idea that celestial bodies such as the Moon should only be used for peaceful purposes as stated in the Outer Space Treaty.

Joint Russia-China drafts (2002, 2008, 2014): Russian Federation and PRC worked collaboratively in order to come up with a working paper and later two draft treaties. These documents had a common aim, which was to prevent the militarization of outer space; however, the United States of America rejected those documents, as the country believed that an arms race was non-existent, therefore seeking a solution for such a thing was unnecessary.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space (PPWT): Other than the prevention of an arms race in outer space, this is a critical agenda item that some delegations such as United States of America have refused to agree with. Placement of self-defense weaponry were viewed as a right by some of the delegations and this is the reason why it was a failure for Russia and China to get their treaties signed and ratified.

Transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) in outer space: A report was released by the UN Secretary-General in 2007, which was made up of different views of countries on the topic of outer space. This report was aiming to ensure transparency in outer space policies and was encouraging other countries to provide information on the topic of outer space.

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Group of Governmental Experts (GGE): This project is again an outcome of transparency requisitions, this group consists of international space experts and aims the interchange of information between countries as well as a cooperation between them. After three meetings of this group a consensus report was published and the suggestions were the cooperation of countries, visits to national space centers and risk reduction notifications.

International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities (ICoC): The procedure was initiated by the European Union; however, this was only a set of guidelines that were not legally binding. The code is dependent on three main objectives: “using space for peaceful purposes, security of space objects and countries’ rightful defense requests”. However, some delegations such as Russian Federation, PRC, Brazil and India have stated that they were disappointed that they were not included in the process of creating this framework and the ICoC had a potential of limiting development in outer space. On the other hand, United States of America, as an opposition voice in this debate, was also against this legal framework, as the country believed that this could lead to misunderstandings and would constrain anti-satellite weaponry.

Possible Solutions

It is perfectly clear that all the failing solution attempts have one thing in common which is the non-existent cooperation between countries. Delegates should seek for favorable circumstances for negotiation between countries and then work on possible ways to prevent arms race in outer space:

- As stated before, on this specific topic, countries should be encouraged for negotiation. Delegates should aim to reach transparency between Member States by ensuring transparency in countries’ outer space policies, summits on the topic of outer space, increasing the activity of non-governmental supervisor actors such as the COPUOS or the UNOOSA or creating a common database to inform every Member State about outer space related activities.
- After getting these countries into a favorable circumstance for negotiation, delegates should find a middle ground talking of weaponization of outer space. Whereas some delegations are totally against it, some of them have a positive approach to self-defense weaponry. Prohibition or limitation of space weaponry should be debated upon and an internationally accepted, legally binding framework should be established.

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