



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

**Question of:** Preventing militarization of outer space

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## **I. Description of the Issue**

The issue of militarization in outer space is one that could potentially pose a huge threat to global peace and safety of the world population. The topic refers to the increase of the presence of military equipment and weaponry, including space-based weapons or anti-satellites with the intention of gaining a military advance and dominance in space but generally speaking of military dominance as a whole.

The militarization of outer space is a result of the development in space-based technology, as outer space has become an essential part of military operations concerning national security. Most nations heavily rely on technology located in space for communication, navigation and so on, meaning that these brackets of our societal life are an essential part of modern-day societies, so if these are being damaged, everyday life can be hindered, making these technologies especially vulnerable for attacks. Several countries have tested anti-satellite technologies, giving cause to worry about potential space arms races, with the focus on competing against the most effective space-based weaponry in order to cause harm to other nations or in order to protect their own. Thinking more broadly, the further militarization of outer space would complicate international relations even further, as tensions between countries could escalate in the process of trying to protect national assets.

## **II. Definition of Key Terms**

- **Outer Space Treaty:** This treaty is especially important when it comes to debating this issue, which is why it's being mentioned here. The international treaty established in 1967 lays the foundation for space law and is often mentioned when it comes to the issue.



- **Arms Control:** Arms control refers to the limitations of arms and weapons being developed for outer space by treaties, agreements, and resolutions.
- **Verification:** This refers to the process of making sure that countries are abiding by treaties and agreements that have been made regarding the issue.
- **ASAT (Anti-satellite weapons):** ASAT can be used as an abbreviation that refers to the missiles that are being tested/produced to damage/destroy satellites; this is the type of weaponry that is talked about when it comes to the militarization of outer space.

### III. Background Information

Potential threats posed by militarization in outer space could be extremely harmful and there's plenty of them. Starting with one of the most likely one of the assumed risks, an arms race. A scenario like this could destabilize the normal function of international modern developed societies, as satellites are responsible for important functions, such as stated earlier navigation and communication. This wouldn't just be the only consequence though, the further militarization of outer space is also likely to heighten tensions between states, and potentially let them escalate, which could lead to wars that would put millions of people at risk of injuries, death, and harm. Again, in the process of destroying/harming satellites, communication, navigation, and other important services that satellites are responsible for would be interrupted, most likely leading to mass destruction. Even when only considering further "tests" done on anti-satellite missiles a "race" could occur, fueled by more nations doing tests, leading to even more insecurity felt by other nations, leading to further tests being done, letting the situation escalate and making international tensions rise to an all-time high. This must be avoided at all costs, not just due to slight inconveniences but to prevent dangerous situations of crises.

### IV. Major Countries and Organizations Involved

- **Russia:** Russia is one of the most important nations in the debate around the militarization of outer space, as it was them who conducted the first ever successful



anti-satellite weaponry tests and ever since have been modernizing their space-based weaponry and ASATs.

- **USA:** As well as Russia the US are at the forefront of developing ASATs and militarization in space, as they have a separate military branch dedicated to operations and development in outer space and have done many successful tests on anti-satellite technologies.
- **India:** As mentioned below India was the fourth country to test out anti- satellite technologies, making them a front runner in terms of militarization in space too.
- **China:** China likewise has made many advancements in terms of technologies that play a role in the militarization of space in the past years.
- **UNODA (United Nations Office on Disarmament Affairs):** The UNODA plays a crucial role in addressing this issue as they promote dialogue, point out risks and are raising awareness around disarmament, also disarmament in outer space.
- **UNOOSA (United Nations Office on Outer Space Affairs):** As the Organization deals with Outer Space Affair, they have a key role in addressing the issue by providing data, information and supporting agreements dealing with the issue.

## V. Timeline of Events

Date	Event
1957	The Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the first ever artificial satellite. This marks the beginning of military interests in outer space and the space race between the USA and the Soviet Union.
1967	The Outer Space Treaty has been adopted by the UN, for the first time ever establishing principles for peaceful behavior in space and also prohibiting the placement of weaponry in space.
1983	The USA announced their SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative, causing worries about the militarization of space.



<b>2007</b>	China tests anti-satellite missiles for the first time, raising concerns.
<b>2019</b>	India too conducts tests on anti-satellite missiles, making them the fourth country to do so after the USA, China, and Russia.
<b>2020</b>	The USA established its so-called “U.S. Space force” as the sixth branch of their military, recognizing space as a warfighting domain.

## **VI. Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue**

There have been various attempts to solve the issue dating back decades, e.g., various treaties and agreements, some of them are listed below under “Relevant UN Treaties and Event”. Another forum dealing with the issue was and still is the UN Conference on Disarmament that has been in place since the 1980s and is discussing how to prevent an arms race in outer space. Although this forum has been in place for so long there have been no legally binding agreements. The challenge faced by forums and general treaties is that it is almost impossible to reach consensus on a topic like this, because some nations are very intent on developing military branches focused on space, whereas others are very opposed to this.

## **VII. Possible Solutions**

To find possible solutions on the issue is not particularly easy as international cooperation and agreement are essential, nonetheless it's most important to find common ground, this can be aided through confidence-building measures, like implementing actions that entail transparency when it comes to information sharing about space actions and in this case especially when it is about tests done on anti-satellite missiles. It is also essential to lay down a new set of ground rules concerning outer space as a whole but most importantly the militarization of space, as outer space has gained new significance in our everyday life, by satellites playing important roles for the function of societies. Diplomacy and transparency are the pillars this discussion needs to be held on, as without agreement and honesty little to no change can be done.



### **VIII. Questions Delegates Should Consider during Research**

- Is my country in favor of developing anti-satellite technologies?
- What are solutions to this issue?
- What countries have a similar stance as my country? Who could be my ally?

### **IX. How to prepare as a Delegate?**

Again, it's most important to think of the country you represent in relation to the topic, the questions one should ask themselves during the research process are important to answer for this. Think about how this issue affects the country you represent and also do your research on which countries are in a similar situation and with whom you might be able to form alliances in order to advocate for the actions you want to implement regarding the topic. You will need to write at least one draft resolution and a minimum of two position papers on your topic of choice, just make sure that you have every topic covered with the three documents you are supposed to write. The deadline for you to send in all three documents is the 13th of September 2023, please remember that and make sure to send them until no later than this date.

### **X. Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 75/36: "Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space" (2020)
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 74/47: "No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space" (2019)
- United Nations General Assembly Resolution 72/250: "Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures in Outer Space Activities" (2018)



## XI. Useful Links

- This video will give you a good overview of the issue and presents the potential threat of an increasement in weaponization of outer space: <https://youtu.be/Y7tcVODRK2I>
- This pdf by the UK Parliament is another great compact but detailed overview over the topic: <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9261/CBP-9261.pdf>

## XII. Sources

- UNODA, “Outer Space”, <https://disarmament.unoda.org/topics/outerspace/#:~:text=In%20particular%2C%20it%20prohibits%20the,peaceful%20use%20of%20outer%20space.>
- UK Parliament, “The militarization of space”, <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9261/CBP-9261.pdf>
- UN Meetings Coverage and Press releases, <https://press.un.org/en/2022/gaspd761.doc.htm>
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- UNOOSA, “Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies”, <https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties/introouterspacetreaty.html>
- GCSP, “Preventing increased uncontrolled militarization of outer space” <https://dam.gcsp.ch/files/doc/policy-brief-3-preventing-increased-uncontrolled-militarisation-outer-space>
- ETH, “The militarization of outer space”, [https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/130808/ISN\\_Special\\_Issues\\_Aug.2008.pdf](https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/130808/ISN_Special_Issues_Aug.2008.pdf)