Forum: Security Council

Issue: Establishing frameworks to regulate the militarization of outer space and space warfare

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Introduction

With the rapid advancement of technology, the militarization of outer space has become one of the most pressing global concerns today. Conflicts in space beyond Earth's atmosphere are no longer the stuff of science fiction, but a grave reality that threatens international peace and security. Once regarded as a domain for scientific and peaceful exploration, outer space is increasingly being utilized for defense, intelligence gathering, and surveillance activities. Satellites are critical to communications, navigation, and even military operations, making them potential targets during times of conflict. The Security Council must carefully consider how to regulate these developments before they escalate into an arms race or open conflict. This report aims to provide delegates with contextual analysis of the issue, outline the roles of key

stakeholders, summarize existing countermeasures, and propose solutions for discussion at the meeting.

Definition of Key Terms

Outer Space Militarization

Outer space militarization refers to the growing involvement of military activities and capabilities in outer space. The concept emphasizes outer space infrastructures and their role in national security. In practice, this includes the deployment, testing, and use of satellites and other space assets for purposes such as surveillance, communications, navigation, early warning, and targeting support.

Outer Space Warfare

Outer space warfare refers to the set of strategies, doctrines, and operations that occur in a conflict extended to outer space or that are deeply associated with outer space. This concept encompasses activities such as anti-satellite operations (blinding or destroying satellites), cyberattacks against space infrastructure, kinetic or non-kinetic attacks on space assets, jamming or deceiving satellite signals, and the broader struggle for dominance and resilience in space.

Anti-satellite weapons (ASAT)

ASAT weapons are specialized technologies designed to disable, destroy, or interfere with satellites in orbit for strategic or defensive purposes. They serve a key role in outer space warfare capabilities and are used to neutralize enemy satellites for surveillance, communication, navigation, or early warning systems. Broadly classified into two types, Kinetic Energy ASATs, which involve direct physical impact, and non-kinetic ASATs that use non-physical means such as cyber-attacks, jamming, spoofing, and directed energy weapons (Vajiram and Ravi).

Background

The militarization of outer space dates to the Cold War era, when the United States and the Soviet Union competed in space exploration and military capabilities. During this period, both nations developed reconnaissance and communications satellites and contemplated deploying nuclear weapons in orbit. This space race began with the Soviet Union's launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957, which spurred the development of numerous space technologies with both civilian and military applications.

Over the following decades, multiple treaties were enacted to curb the weaponization of outer space. The most significant milestone was the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which established principles for the peaceful use of outer space. However, the treaty did not completely prohibit all military activities, leaving room for ambiguity. As space technology advanced, nations began developing anti-satellite weapons and systems capable of disabling or destroying other countries' satellites. These developments have raised serious concerns about future space security.

Today, with rapid societal development, outer space has assumed a critical role in global infrastructure. From GPS systems and weather forecasting to financial transactions and internet connectivity, numerous aspects of modern life depend on satellites. A single act of aggression in space could disrupt communication networks and trigger global economic turmoil. Military assets in orbit also exacerbate the risk of space debris, which could damage both military and civilian satellites. The challenge in addressing the militarization of outer space lies in establishing a framework that ensures security without stifling scientific and commercial advancement.

Major Parties Involved

The United States of America

The United States of America has made active efforts to establish frameworks for regulating the militarization of outer space and space warfare. It established the U.S. Space Force in 2019 as a separate branch of the U.S. military responsible for space operations. While the U.S. supports maintaining freedom of operation in space, it has opposed certain legally binding restrictions proposed by Russia and China. The U.S. emphasizes transparency and responsible behavior rather than strict treaties

The People's Republic of China

China has expanded its military and civilian space programs at an impressive rate. Its 2007 ASAT test, which destroyed one of its own satellites, generated a large amount of space debris and demonstrated its growing capabilities. China has called for a treaty to prevent an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) and supports regulations that ensure equal participation of developing countries in space exploration.

The Russian Federation

Russia inherited much of the Soviet Union's space capabilities and remains one of the most advanced nations in space technology. It has repeatedly tested anti-satellite weapons and has been accused of deploying satellites with potentially hostile capabilities. Russia promotes international agreements that prevent the placement of weapons in space but has also acted unilaterally in ways that raise suspicion.

European Union (EU)

The European Union advocates for transparency, cooperation, and peaceful use of outer space. It supports the establishment of international norms that would increase trust between countries. The EU also funds research and monitoring efforts aimed at preventing the militarization of orbit and promoting responsible satellite operations. In recent years, the EU has deepened its commitment to space security by adopting the EU Space Strategy for Security and Defense and planning new legislation, such as the EU Space Law Act, which was proposed in 2025. These initiatives aim to harmonize European space standards, coordinate space defense resources, and counter new threats to critical space infrastructure (Frontiers).

India

India has rapidly advanced its space program, launching its first successful anti-satellite (ASAT) test in 2019. India maintains that its actions are for defense and deterrence purposes. Indian authorities have consistently expressed their support for international space cooperation, as evident in joint lunar and Mars missions, as well as their participation in global forums that regulate space operations. Nevertheless, India maintains the right to take national security

measures in space, working for a balanced approach that enables both international collaboration and independent capability for deterrence and defense. Indian policy voices in the international community have called for updated global norms, emphasizing the need for equitable frameworks that consider the interests of emerging space powers (Institute of International Relations).

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Outer Space Treaty (1967)

Any military activities that occur in outer space are governed by existing international law, including the Outer Space Treaty. The Outer Space Treaty acknowledges the shared interest of all humanity in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. Article IV of the treaty explicitly prohibits the placement of objects carrying nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit, the installation of such weapons on celestial bodies, and the deployment of such weapons in outer space in any manner. The Outer Space Treaty also prohibits the establishment of military bases, facilities, and fortifications on celestial bodies, bans all types of weapons testing and military exercises, and requires that outer space be used solely for peaceful purposes. However, it does not ban conventional weapons in space or address the issue of anti-satellite systems. Other related agreements include the Moon Agreement of 1979 and several UN General Assembly resolutions promoting transparency and confidence-building measures.

The UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) has also worked to promote responsible behavior and to prevent the weaponization of space. The Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) initiative has been proposed multiple times; however, negotiations have faced significant political obstacles. While most countries agree on the importance of maintaining peace in outer space, disagreements over verification and enforcement mechanisms have prevented progress.

Possible Solutions

Negotiations and collaborations could be initiated by the UN Security Council to implement new treaties or regulatory frameworks specifically addressing modern security threats in space, including anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons, cyberattacks, and directed-energy technologies. This framework should clearly define prohibited and permitted activities, establish robust verification and compliance mechanisms, and outline the consequences for violations. Recent UN discussions have emphasized the need to expand the Outer Space Treaty from 1967 to cover emerging technologies and threats, with several countries expressing support for updated multilateral agreements that reflect the rapid evolution of space capabilities and security challenges.

Moreover, to ensure the effectiveness of these discussions, the UN could organize regular international conferences or working groups that foster collaboration between both major space powers and developing nations. This approach would make sure that, regardless of their technological level, all countries have a voice in shaping global space security rules. Member states should collaborate with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) to collect data, monitor activities, and provide transparent reports on military and dual-use operations in orbit. Through involving regional organizations and private space companies as observers, the negotiations could reflect the growing diversity of actors in outer space. Such cooperation would not only increase trust between nations but also raise awareness of the idea of regulating military activities in outer space.

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