

**GHSMUN FALL 2018**



**DISARMAMENT AND SECURITY COUNCIL**

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**Dias:**

**Akshay Joglekar Matthew Meyers**

**Chase Pellegrini Tolik Shterk**

## **An Overview of the Topic:**

### **History and Prior UN Action**

The issue of the militarization of outer space began in the 1950s when the Soviet Union began its space program, with the United States soon following. With the two most powerful military powers expanding into Outer Space, the United Nations sought to regulate. In 1959 The United Nations created The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) in GA resolution 1472. The members of this committee include Albania, Argentina, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, Hungary, India, Iran, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Mexico, Poland, Romania, Sweden, the USSR, the UK, and the US. The purpose of this Committee is to review the possibility of international cooperation on the issue of the militarization of Outer Space. It also sends annual reports to the general assembly to review.

The Soviet Union sent its first satellite in 1957 and the United States followed in 1958.

The United States also created The National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA). The first man to enter orbit, Yuri Gagarin, did so in 1959 for the Soviet Government. This prompted the United States government to sign the National Defense Education Act. Three years later, in 1962, president John F Kennedy announced that the United States would send a man to the moon by the end of the decade. This



lofty goal was ultimately achieved when Neil Armstrong and the Apollo 11 crew landed on the moon on July 20th, 1969. With this, The United States is said to have won the Space Race, but the process had greatly developed the infrastructure of the Soviet Union as well as its own. The rest of the world watched as these two countries jockeyed for celestial dominance, and those with the capability began preparing their own Space Programs. The United Kingdom

launched its first satellite in 1962 and the French in 1965. China, whose space program today is arguably as strong as the American or Russian also began developing its space program during the cold war. It began developing its first satellite in the late 1960s and launched it in 1970.

The next major step in the weaponization of outer space came in the form of the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT). This was signed in 1963. While the primary purpose of this treaty was nuclear non-proliferation, one clause banned nuclear testing in outer space. While nearly all countries with a developed space program have signed this treaty, China notably has not ratified it yet. The PTBT was ruled redundant when the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was proposed. This treaty also bans outer space nuclear tests. Like the PTBT, China has not signed the CTBT. This is significant because China has the third most powerful space program in the world, and China is building an outer space military division.

The Outer Space Treaty, passed in 1967, is the last critical piece of legislation regarding the militarization of Outer Space. This treaty says that all uses of outer space must be done for the purposes of bettering mankind. It also says that no military maneuvers may be done on a celestial body, and there are to be no weapons of mass destruction sent into orbit. No country has authority or may claim authority over any celestial body, all of which must be used for peaceful purposes only. In addition, all astronauts are to be considered “envoys of mankind,” and that the maintenance of the peace and cleanliness of outer space is an international responsibility, even if a sovereign state created the problem at hand. The Treaty also calls upon the General Assembly to report on each

#### Status of Outer Space Treaty Worldwide



country's adherence to the treaty. Because China is a party to the Outer Space Treaty, the CTBT's status in China is less significant. If China is unable to put weapons of mass destruction into orbit, then it is unable to test nuclear weapons in outer space.

The Outer Space Treaty and CTBT are extremely significant because they have the force of law. The majority of General Assembly actions are simply recommendations for countries; however, a treaty is binding when a country ratifies it. This means that if a country who has ratified the Outer Space Treaty or the CTBT, other ratifying nations could retaliate legally, economically, politically, or even militaristically. Keep this history and legal background in mind as you learn about the current status of outer space militarization in America, Russia, China, and around the world.

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### **Current Situation**

Many nations have cooperated to maintain the International Space Station (ISS), first created in 1998 and at any given time

astronauts from various powerful countries, including the US, Russia, the UK, and China, are present on board. While the function of the ISS is purely research-oriented, some nations coordinate and manage their individual activities aboard the satellite not through research-oriented governmental space programs—such as NASA in the United States—but through the nation's military. This irony presents an interesting relic of the Space Race in the 1960s during the Cold War. Many governments view participation in ventures such as the ISS to be a form of diplomatic weaponization, projecting the power implied by being capable of funding them and also politically accepted by other nations. The ISS, however, is only projected to continue in operating condition until 2028, a remarkably short time for countries to create plans for a successor to the station. While the Chinese government has already announced blueprints for such a design, no multinational organizations have publicly announced similar aspirations.

However, in recent years, the business of travelling to and from space has gone from

being solely in government hands to becoming a product sold by private companies. Wealthy altruists such as Elon Musk with his SpaceX program have begun to promote the idea of outer space travel as a form of tourism. While it may seem to be off to a slow start, it is expected to gain popularity soon; SpaceX is closer to creating a sustainable method of transporting humans to Mars than any government is. With the rapid privatization of the final frontier, the UN must think of new ways to prevent military disaster in what could become a massive, dangerous civilian environment.

Furthermore, many large businesses wish to make good economic use of the rich, exotic mineral resources found in outer space. While the market and even the technology for this are unlikely to develop within the next decade or so, both individual governments and the UN General Assembly have begun debates on the legality of interstellar mining and who has the greatest right to extraterrestrial resources. Besides environmental worries, there are concerns that the development of a niche

industry could result in international competition for resources, a common cause of war in the past century.

In 1999, the Russian Federation proposed the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space Treaty (PAROS), which outlined the following measures: no weapon of any kind may be placed into orbit around the Earth; no military force or missile systems may be created in outer space; and “confidence-building exercises” must occur amongst UN member states. It essentially bars any country from obtaining a military advantage in outer space. PAROS is still being debated on the floor of the General Assembly 19 years later and has yet to approve it, consistently due to vetoes by the delegation of the United States of America.

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### **Bloc Positions**

Students participating in this committee will want to consider their country’s history with space exploration and its role in the Cold War.

*United States, Russia, and China*

These three countries are the primary military powers in outer space. It is very unlikely that The United States would work with one of them as they are fierce competitors in this regard. It is also unlikely that Russia and China would cooperate, but more plausible than the United States. These countries will most likely try to limit the aspects of space warfare that pertain to the others, but not themselves. In addition, Russia may try to ratify PAROS which the United States opposes.

#### *Free Developed Country Bloc*

The United States, Canada, and NATO, and possibly Japan and South Korea would support allowing countries to develop their outer space military, but would be less cavalier about restrictions than China would be. Canada and NATO countries may also support the PAROS treaty, but the United States would not.

#### *Russia and Former Soviet Bloc*

Russia's strategy is to pass the PAROS treaty. It most likely views this treaty as the best one to

limit military action in Outer Space, although there may be a sinister motive behind the treaty considering that Russia has an outer space military division.

#### *China and allies*

China and its allies would be the strongest proponents of limiting regulation on Outer Space militarization.

#### *Emerging Powers*

Emerging Powers such as India, Brazil, and South Africa would want to foster peaceful cooperation among the countries. These countries are at or are nearing the point where they can afford a space program, but would not be able to keep up with superpowers in terms of military capability. They would want to share ideas with other nations to limit the cost of research and development so that they may create a strong space program; however, they would restrict military action so that they don't develop a strategic disadvantage when compared to more powerful nations.

### *Developing Nations*

Developing Nations would be very restrictive about space warfare. Because they do not have the resources to create a space program, they would want to restrict space programs, but create ways to share the infrastructure already in place. Also, they would be at an insurmountable disadvantage in a space war, so they would likewise heavily restrict military forces in outer space.

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### **Questions to Consider:**

1. Is it the UN's duty to regulate military activity in outer space? Does doing so infringe on national sovereignty of the member states?
2. How can the UN effectively monitor nation's activities in outer space and punish malpractices?
3. Should countries be recommended on how to regulate private ventures into outer space?

4. How can the UN encourage the exploration of outer space, especially in developing and underdeveloped nations that lack the infrastructure to support such programs?
  5. What should be done about the ISS?
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