



GENERAL ASSEMBLY 4

SEZMUN II. HRD SYMPOSIUM

ISSUE OF: THE MILITARIZATION OF OUTER
SPACE & ENSURING PEACEFUL USE BEYOND
EARTH

CHAIR:
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CO-CHAIR:
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Esteemed delegates,

We would like to welcome you to the second annual SEZMUN Symposium and the Special, Political, and Decolonisation Committee.

In our committee, we will discuss the issue of peaceful use of outer space and this issue's implications. How can SPECPOL address emerging challenges, such as militarization, commercialization, and unequal access, within the United Nations framework?

Our debate will explore these questions. We urge you to prepare yourselves to dive into a wave of ideas, questions, and solutions. This symposium will be a chance for you to step into the shoes of world leaders and become a crucial part of a political conversation that can shape the future. We are confident that with your additions, we will make this experience both memorable and unique.

This is your moment to make a difference. We look forward to your innovative and inspiring contributions.

Sincerely,

Mert İlgün & Yasemin Oakman

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SPECOPOL Overview

The Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (SPECOPOL) of the United Nations is one of the primary units tasked with addressing issues related to decolonisation, political conflicts, and international peacekeeping. Over the years, the committee has focused on a broad range of issues, including but not limited to; the elimination of colonialism, the self-determination of nations and peoples, regional disputes, and the enhancement of human rights in situations of turmoil and conflict.

In recent decades, SPECOPOL's mandate has expanded to encompass the emerging challenges of outer space governance, particularly the weaponization and militarization of space. As technological advancements accelerate, outer space has increasingly become a domain of strategic competition rather than purely scientific exploration. This transformation raises profound concerns about security, equity, and sustainability beyond Earth's atmosphere.

Within the United Nations framework, SPECOPOL has played a critical role in promoting the peaceful use of outer space and preventing its exploitation for military purposes. The committee collaborates closely with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) and the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) to establish guidelines, foster international cooperation, and ensure that space remains a global commons. It is a domain accessible to all nations for peaceful and developmental objectives.

Key Terms

Asteroid mining: Asteroid mining is the hypothetical extraction of materials from asteroids and other minor planets, including near-Earth objects.

Outer space: Outer space, or simply space, is the expanse that exists beyond Earth's atmosphere and between celestial bodies.

Outer Space Treaty: The treaty declares outer space free for exploration and use by all nations, prohibits national sovereignty over celestial bodies, and bans the placement of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction in orbit.

ASAT: Anti-satellite weapons are space weapons designed to incapacitate or destroy satellites for strategic or tactical purposes

Space faring: action of travelling to space

Arms race: An arms race occurs when two or more groups compete in military superiority.

Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines: This guideline sets out best-practice recommendations for the planning, design, operation, and disposal of spacecraft and orbital stages with the aim of limiting the creation of new space debris and preserving the long-term sustainability of the near-Earth orbital environment.

Weapons of mass destruction: A weapon of mass destruction (WMD) is a biological, chemical, radiological, nuclear, or any other weapon that can kill or significantly harm many people.

Key Terms

Conference on Disarmament: CD is a multilateral disarmament forum established by the international community to negotiate arms control and disarmament

UN (United Nations): The United Nations is an international organization founded in 1945 after the Second World War by 51 countries committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights.

SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals): SDGs are a set of 17 global goals adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They provide a universal framework for addressing the world's most urgent challenges.

Nuclear warfare: AKA atomic warfare, is a military conflict or prepared political strategy that deploys nuclear weaponry.

Background information

Outer space has been regarded as the “province of all humankind.” The 1967 Outer Space Treaty (OST) established that space shall be used for peaceful purposes and that no state shall place weapons of mass destruction in orbit or on celestial bodies. However, the rapid expansion of dual-use technologies and the increasing involvement of both state and private actors have blurred the line between peaceful and military uses of space. The (ASAT) weapons, space-based surveillance systems, and offensive cyber capabilities targeting space infrastructure has raised concerns about an emerging arms race beyond Earth. These trends threaten not only international security, but also the civilian and commercial reliance on space assets that underpin global systems. (Figure 1) shows satellite numbers per country

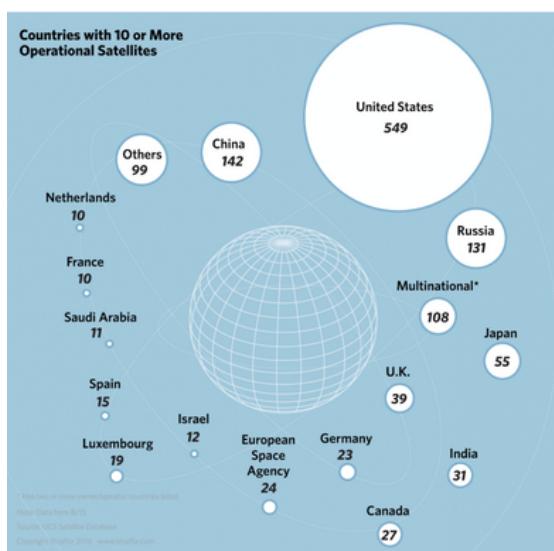


Figure 1, Country sattelite number, Stratfor

History



The weaponization of outer space traces back to the Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union began using space as a strategic frontier. In the 1950s and 1960s, both powers developed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and reconnaissance satellites, linking space technology to military superiority.

By the 1980s, initiatives like the U.S. Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) intensified fears of an arms race in space. Although the 1967 Outer Space Treaty banned weapons of mass destruction in orbit, it did not address conventional or dual-use weapons, leaving loopholes that persist today.

In the 21st century, major powers including the U.S., Russia, China, and India have tested anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons, demonstrating the ability to destroy satellites in orbit. These actions sparked growing concern over space debris, security instability, and the absence of global regulations.

Topics the Manifesto can Address

- Establish a joint working group between SPECPOL, COPUOS, and the CD focused on monitoring military developments in space.
- Develop a UN Space Security Index to systematically report on state compliance and militarization trends.
- Define “peaceful use” more precisely to prevent militaries from exploiting legal ambiguities (e.g., “defensive” satellites used for targeting).
- Advocate for transparency and confidence-building measures (TCBMs) through regular data exchanges on satellite launches and orbital activities.
- Establish and expand equitable access to space technologies to prevent the militarization of space by a few dominant powers.
- Expand technical cooperation and funding through UN partnerships with private and academic institutions.
- Launch a transparency initiative where states regularly share data on space activities.
- Update the 1967 Outer Space Treaty to reflect modern realities such as dual-use technologies, cyberwarfare, and private sector involvement.

Guiding Question examples for Debate

How can SPECPOL redefine and strengthen its mandate to remain effective in addressing the evolving security implications of space militarization?

What institutional mechanisms can be developed to enhance coordination between SPECPOL, COPUOS, and the Conference on Disarmament (CD) while avoiding mandate overlap and inefficiency?

In what ways can the committee ensure that non-space faring and developing nations have equitable representation and influence in global space governance and decision-making processes?

To what extent should the activities of private and commercial space actors be regulated to preserve transparency, accountability, and the peaceful use of outer space?

Conclusion

The militarization of outer space poses not only a threat to international security but also a test of institutional coherence within the United Nations. SPECPOL's challenge lies in evolving from a forum of political dialogue to a platform of actionable governance. Strengthening its inter-committee coordination, technical expertise, and policy follow-up mechanisms could enable it to play a decisive role in preserving space. SPECPOL can better anticipate risks, mediate conflicts, and promote transparency in space activities. This transformation would enable it to play a decisive role in preserving outer space as a domain of peace, cooperation, and shared benefit for all humankind. Embracing multilateral partnerships with scientific institutions, the private sector, and regional space agencies can further enhance its ability to govern effectively.

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