

Topic #1: Preventing further arms race in outer space

I. Background

At the height of the cold war in the late 1950s, the Soviet satellite *Sputnik* was launched into the earth's orbit. With this one decision, the frontier of space exploration became a new target for national expansion, as well as for potential military activity. International panic about the satellite, as well as the others that would follow it, ensued. What would happen when nuclear weapons reached into space? When anyone could strike another nation without warning from orbit, how would international peace exist?

Immediately, the United Nations and most international organizations agreed outer space should be a neutral ground for collaborative expansion, not the growth of military arsenals. As early as 1958 (one year after *Sputnik*) talks were started to host the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, which was established in 1959 to govern future international projects in space.

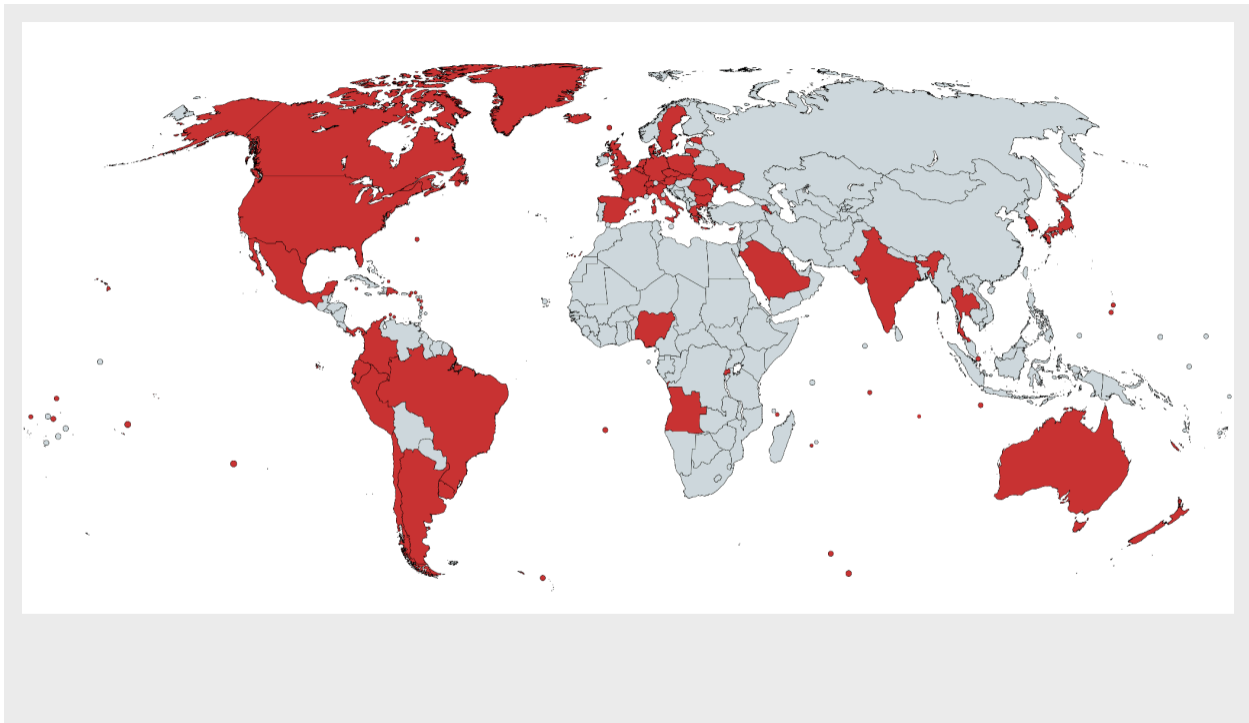
With space being established by the international community as a neutral ground that should be kept out of military conflict, international discussion of the potential weaponization of space only increased. In an effort to prevent the proliferation of arms in geosynchronous orbit, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty and 1984 Moon Agreement were negotiated under UN jurisdiction, with the latter being adopted by the general assembly. These agreements stand to prevent any nation from launching a weapon into orbit, although this situation has become more complicated in recent years.

Although no formally military-oriented satellites have ever been launched, many modern commercial satellites have potential military functionalities. Additionally, debate over the current terms of the previous treaties has intensified, as neither fully define the concept of a weapon, or even militarization itself. In an effort to modernize standards, the US backed Artemis Accords seek to clearly define the militarization of the Moon, Mars, and other objects.

The Non-Aligned Movement, however, supports the expansion of the 2014 PAROS Treaty, which passed the general assembly and formed a sub-committee of disarmament.

Notably, neither of these major resolutions for non-proliferation have the support of all major nuclear powers. Generally, China, Iran, and Russia abstain from discussion on the topic, with each being heavily criticized by other nations for potentially militant activity in space.

As space becomes an increasingly relevant and privatized issue, the dynamics of the space age are beginning to shift in unpredictable ways. As you move forward with your resolution, consider: What role should the UN take to enforce and maintain the demilitarization of outer space?



Map of Artemis Accords by country (Red is a signatory, Grey has not agreed)
[map from wikipedia]

II. Sources and Further Reading:

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