

# Committee on Disarmament and International Security

*Co-chaired by Ketty Bai and Andrew McCullough*

## Committee Overview

The Committee on Disarmament and International Security (DISEC) is one of the six main organs of the United Nations. It seeks solutions to disarmament and international security issues among nations and promotes the preservation of peace and cooperation. DISEC, also known as the First Committee, was created following the events of World War II. The leaders of each nation met for the first session in January of 1946. The structure of each session is separated into general debate, then discussions on certain topics, and lastly the drafting of resolutions.<sup>i</sup>

## Topic One: Foreign Intervention in International Conflicts

### Introduction

Since ancient times, Romans, Mongols, and dozens of other ethnic groups have conquered hundreds of civilizations and politically intervened in thousands more. The British empire is the most recent example of such dominance. At its peak, Great Britain controlled 13 million square miles of the planet, nearly a quarter of the Earth's land.<sup>ii</sup> Yet the gradual disintegration of the British empire throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries indicated the end of foreign domination at such a scale. During the twentieth century, the United States and the Soviet Union overtly and covertly interfered in dozens of nations across the globe, constantly trying to defeat the other in an ever-shifting and fast-moving conflict that lasted decades. Today, developed nations like the United States and Great Britain rarely intervene in international conflicts unless human rights are at stake or their domestic security is threatened. Since 2001, the United States, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the United Nations have waged a

“War on Terror,” invading and intervening in countries considered terrorist threats or flagrant violators of human rights, like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Somalia.<sup>iii</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that a specific distinction between invasion and intervention has yet to be created. While foreign interventionism is technically defined as “the policy of intervening...in the affairs of another state,”<sup>iv</sup> the line between invasion and intervention remains blurry. In this document, the primary distinction is the intent behind the conflict. Foreign intervention (by this definition) is intended to protect the intervening country’s national security or modify the policy of another nation — whether economic, foreign, or governmental — while invasion is intended to simply gain land and natural resources. Accordingly, intervention could be compared to puppet rule (if the intervention was solely self-serving for the country intervening), while invasion would be more analogous to direct rule. Furthermore (and as mentioned above), most interventions today are aimed at bettering the country experiencing the intervention, not just the country intervening, as in Iraq and Libya.

The topic of foreign interference in international conflicts has never been more relevant. As civil war rages in Syria, conflict between Israel and Hamas continues, militant groups like ISIS tear across Iraq, rebels fight the government in Ukraine, and violent unrest persists in Libya and Egypt, the United Nations — and specifically, this committee — must clearly define intervention for the world and decide who should be allowed to conduct interventions and when they are necessary.

## History

The first real example of foreign interventionism, at least by this definition, is the First Opium War. During the conflict, Great Britain clashed with the Qing dynasty, whose attempts to reduce the smuggling of opium from the area rendered British traders unable to keep up with their own nation’s demand.<sup>v</sup> When the war finally ended in August 1842 after nearly 20,000 Chinese

casualties, the Daoguang Emperor was forced to sign the Treaty of Nanking, which ceded Hong Kong Island and port cities in China, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan to the British Empire and destroyed China's monopoly on trade — most importantly, of opium — within the region. Nearly fourteen years later, the Second Opium War erupted. As China became more reluctant to follow the exorbitant terms of the Treaty of Nanking, Great Britain, this time with France at their side, struck at the Qing empire again, with similar results. After the Chinese defeat, the Xianfeng Emperor was forced to sign the Treaty of Tianjin, which ceded more Chinese ports to the British, loosened trade restrictions on opium, and allowed Christian missionaries to enter the country.<sup>vi</sup> As the Treaties of Nanking and Tianjin prove, the Opium Wars were an intervention, not an invasion; Great Britain did not gain direct control over China or its land, but instead modified China's economic and foreign policies so as to wield indirect control over the country, its resources, and its economy.

China was again the recipient of foreign intervention in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion, when the Chinese “Militia United in Righteousness” led a rabidly nationalistic anti-Christian rebellion against foreigners throughout the country. In June 1900, Boxer fighters, believing they could not be defeated by foreign weapons, marched on Beijing, wielding the slogan, “Support the Qing, exterminate the foreigners.”<sup>vii</sup> Then-empress Dowager Cixi supported the Boxers and allowed them into the city. Diplomats, foreign civilians and soldiers, and Chinese Christians fled to the Legation Quarter, and remained under siege by the Imperial Army of China and the Boxers for 55 days until military forces of the Eight-Nation Alliance — the United Kingdom, Russia, Japan, France, the United States, Italy, and Austria-Hungary — defeated the Imperial Army, captured Beijing, executed any suspected to be associated with the Boxers, and plundered the capital and the surrounding countryside.<sup>viii</sup> In this instance, the nations intervening in China did so

both for economic stability (as the British and French did during the First and Second Opium Wars) and the security of their own citizens, another distinction between intervention and invasion.

The next great example of foreign interventionism occurred 3,000 miles to the northwest, when, in 1917, the Russian Bolsheviks (dubbed the “Red Army”) rebelled against pro-government forces (the “White Army”) in the country. Throughout the conflict, the Allies provided munitions and supplies to the White Army, and after World War I, backed the anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia. With the Allies hampered by war-weariness, they soon withdrew, allowing Russia to fall to the communist forces of the Red Army.<sup>ix</sup> The Allies’ motivation to intervene in Russia was for reasons of both national security and political policy, classifying their involvement in the conflict as an intervention, albeit a failed one.

In fact, the Bolshevik Revolution led to nearly seven decades of proxy conflict between communist and capitalist forces across the globe, called the Cold War. From 1918 to 1992, frosty diplomatic relations and dozens of proxy wars filled the conflict with plenty of examples of foreign interventionism. In the Vietnam and Korean Wars, the United States intervened militarily in an attempt to slow the spread of the “Iron Curtain,” the capitalists’ term for communism’s growing influence. Lesser-known interventions occurred in Iran and Guatemala, where Central Intelligence Agency operations toppled communist regimes without the help of military forces.<sup>x</sup> During the Cold War, it was evident that conflicts were motivated by interventionism, not a desire for land — both Russia and the United States were fighting to change the political policies of the countries they were fighting in, not expand their borders in a grab for more land.

It is only in recent decades, however, that the United Nations has begun to involve itself in and even condone interventions during specific conflicts. The first example of U.N. involvement in an intervention occurred during the Gulf War in 1990. The catalyst for the conflict was Iraq’s

invasion of Kuwait, a sovereign nation on the northwest coast of the Persian Gulf.<sup>xi</sup> Within hours of the invasion, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 660, condemning the invasion and demanding the withdrawal of Iraqi troops. When Iraq failed to respond to the resolution, subsequent resolutions were passed placing economic sanctions on the country and enforcing it with a naval blockade. Iraq's invasion was also met by the coalition forces of thirty-four nations, including the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and many other members of the United Nations and North Atlantic Treaty Organization. After a decisive coalition victory, Iraq withdrew from Kuwait and passed United Nations Security Council Resolution 687, which established the terms of the ceasefire.<sup>xii</sup> Clearly, the United Nations played a large and invaluable role in orchestrating military operations and resolving the conflict.

U.N. involvement also occurred during and after an intervention in the Kosovo War, a year-long conflict in Kosovo, a now-independent nation in southeastern Europe that remained under the governance of Yugoslavia during the Cold War. As the Soviet Union began to disintegrate, so to did satellite states like Yugoslavia, which splintered throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s into Serbia, Montenegro, and the semi-independent nation of Kosovo. Though not formally recognized by any nation but Albania, its ethnic distinction from the other nations that once were part of Yugoslavia made it aspire for independence. Serbia did not support those aspirations, a sentiment which was further reinforced after armed rebels in Kosovo began attacking Serbian military and police forces in the country. When Serbian and Yugoslavian military forces began fighting back, they displaced more than 230,000 people in Kosovo and led to the United Nations' concern over "the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Serbian security forces and the Yugoslav Army." (Resolution 1199) Further resolutions demanded Yugoslavian withdrawal from the region and humanitarian aid for injured civilians and refugees. While the U.N. did not authorize military

intervention in the region, NATO did after attempts at a diplomatic solution failed. The war ended with the Kumanovo Treaty, which stipulated the withdrawal of Yugoslavian forces from the region and, with the help of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244, authorized an international military presence in the country. International supervision continued until 2012, after Kosovo declared independence from Serbia.<sup>xiii,xiv</sup>

Intervention against Iraq occurred for a second time in 2003, when the United States brought allegations of human rights violations and the use of weapons of mass destruction against Iraq to the United Nations. The Security Council had passed Resolution 1441 six months before the invasion, which offered Iraq “a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations” as set out in previous resolutions.<sup>xv</sup> In March 2003, the United States stated that “diplomacy had failed” and that it would proceed to use military force against Saddam Hussein and his forces. The U.N. Security Council was highly divided over the invasion. The United States, the United Kingdom, and Spain supported an invasion of the country, while other members of the Security Council were more hesitant, with many echoing France’s sentiment that “...military intervention would be the worst possible solution.” The supporting nations withdrew the resolution, as it was clear the motion was unlikely to pass, and invaded Iraq without the explicit support of the U.N. or its Security Council. Despite the invasion’s success, then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated in 2004 that, “From our point of view, from the charter point of view, it was illegal.” The decision to invade Iraq remains highly contentious today, three years after the United States withdrew from the country.<sup>xvi,xvii</sup> A poll conducted by Gallup in June 2014 found that 57% of Americans believed that sending troops to Iraq was a mistake, and 54% believe that the United States should not intervene despite the aggression of the Islamic State.<sup>xviii</sup>

The latest major United Nations intervention occurred in response to the Libyan Civil War in 2011. When protestors supporting the ousting of then-ruler Muammar Gaddafi were fired upon by government security forces, the riots devolved into rebellion. The U.N. responded to the conflict with Resolution 1970, imposing sanctions on the Libyan government, freezing the assets of Gaddafi and his inner circle, and condemning the use of violence by Libyan forces against unarmed civilians. When the government continued to use force against civilians, the Security Council passed Resolution 1973, which supported an immediate ceasefire in the country, imposed a no-fly zone over the area, and tightened sanctions on the Gaddafi regime. The U.N. authorized the use of military strength to enforce the resolution, and naval blockades and airstrikes were implemented by the countries involved. NATO provided much of the military support called for by the resolution. The intervention ended with a decisive coalition victory and the death of dictator Mummer Gaddafi.<sup>xix</sup> While it does draw criticism, the intervention was largely well-received by the media and the governments of the world.<sup>xx,xxi</sup>

## Current Situation

Today, the United Nations is actively involved in sixteen peacekeeping missions across the globe, in locations ranging from Kosovo to Haiti to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and everywhere in between.<sup>xxii</sup> Nearly 120,000 U.N. personnel from 122 countries staff these locations, serving important roles like monitoring peace agreements, protecting civilians, and securing dangerous locations. The job of peacekeeping is not entirely peaceful, however: nearly 1,500 U.N. staff lives have been claimed by the sixteen operations that are active today.<sup>xxiii</sup> These fatalities should be considered in any proposed intervention or peacekeeping operation.

Delegates should also consider the mixed success of past interventions. While dozens of U.N. peacekeeping operations have been quite successful, many highly publicized interventions like the Gulf and Iraq Wars and the intervention in Libya have proven to be less successful over

time than originally hoped. After the combined efforts of the U.S., the U.K., and Spain were able to defeat Saddam Hussein's forces, a new threat has appeared on the horizon. An extremist militant group called the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria has been capturing cities and towns across Iraq and slaughtering and displacing thousands of Iraqis and Syrians as a result of their aggression. Because Iraq has been largely unable of stopping ISIS in their tracks, it has led some to believe that the U.S. intervention in Iraq was largely unsuccessful in establishing a stable, reasonable, and strong government that could successfully lead Iraq.<sup>xxiv</sup> The U.N. intervention in Libya has also left the country with no clear leader. In 2014, Libya's parliament voted 111 to 13 in favor of requesting foreign intervention to protect citizens from skirmishes between rival militia groups, some of whom aided in the defeat of Muammar Gaddafi.<sup>xxv</sup> In light of these failures, delegates should consider what went wrong (and even if an intervention should have occurred) and how to best structure an intervention for success.

Delegates should also be mindful of that the U.N.'s decision to refrain from intervening in a conflict is just as important as their decision to intervene. In fact, this choice of non-intervention can be even more telling of the motivations and political mindsets of the members of the United Nations. Many journalists and activists have questioned why the U.N. has not intervened more extensively in Syria's civil war, where most allegations of human rights abuse have gone uninvestigated and unaddressed.<sup>xxvi</sup> While the organization did intervene when chemical weapons were used on noncombatants, this was just the tip of the iceberg: the Assad regime has shelled neighborhoods, allowed government soldiers to pillage homes and rape civilians, has murdered children in cold blood. A debate continues to rage if intervention in Syria's civil war falls within the U.N.'s purview,<sup>xxvii</sup> and some even suggest that Russian arm-twisting may be responsible for the lack of United Nations involvement in the conflict.<sup>xxviii</sup> The U.N. also refrained from involving

itself in Russia's invasion and annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, despite the fact that any member of the United Nations is restricted from attacking another U.N. member state.<sup>xxix</sup> The U.N.'s decisions *not* to intervene in a conflict should be studied as thoroughly as their decisions *to* intervene.

## Possible Solutions

The approaches to interventionism are as varied as the members of the United Nations themselves.

The policy of noninterventionism has grown in popularity with American citizens and many other first-world nations; countries that are largely responsible for providing the forces behind an intervention.<sup>xxx</sup> Many believe that their country (and by extension, the United Nations) should reduce its attention to conflicts outside its borders and focus more intensely on problems within. Proponents of this solution argue that interventionism actually causes more civilians casualties, and that Western intervention, especially in the Middle East, often exacerbates existing conflicts and creates long-lasting resentment to the country or countries intervening.<sup>xxxi</sup> Their argument is supported by interventions in Iraq and Libya, where the interventions were unsuccessful in creating long-term stability and created resentment (primarily towards Americans) in the countries.

But many disagree with this stance on intervention, and instead believe that the United Nations should function as a police force that monitors and diffuses conflicts in countries across the globe. Proponents of this argue that it is the duty of the U.N. and its members to prevent violations of human rights and to work to keep peace across the world. Those who support this position also believe that interventions should be executed with a long-term goal in mind — creating a stable and moderate government that is liked by its people — not just a short-term mission like dethroning a dictator.

In all likelihood, the ideal solution will be a mix of both paradigms. There is no right or wrong answer, and even if there is, we will almost certainly never conclusively identify it. As delegates of the United Nations and of the committee responsible for regulating international interventionism, you must work together to make intervention distinct from invasion, assemble a plan to regulate and organize interventions, and learn from the successes and failures of interventions that have come before. You must also identify if any conflicts occurring today require an intervention by the United Nations and its member states. The nations of the world look to you and your fellow delegates for a solution.

### Questions to Consider

1. What is the definition of “intervention” and how is it distinct from invasion? Should DISEC and the United Nations standardize this definition?
2. What are the motivations behind an intervention for both the country being intervened within and the country intervening?
3. To what degree should the United Nations support intervention? Should it be banned, regulated, or supported? What criteria must be met if an intervention is to be supported by the United Nations?
4. Should certain countries be allowed to intervene while others are disallowed such a privilege? What would the criteria be to distinguish countries that have intervention permission from those who do not?
5. Was the United Nations justified in its intervention in Libya’s recent civil war? Why or why not?
6. Should the United Nations have intervened or authorized intervention in Syria’s recent civil war? Why or why not?
7. Should the United Nations have intervened or authorized intervention in Egypt’s recent uprisings and unrest? Why or why not?
8. Should the United Nations intervene or authorize intervention in the conflict between Israel and Hamas? Why or why not?
9. What political parties (not just in the U.S. but also overseas) are for or against intervention in international conflicts? What political party is dominant in the country you are representing? Make sure you act in accordance with the stance of your country’s government when you are in committee.

10. ISIS has been sweeping across Iraq and Syria, and Iraq's military forces have been unable to stop it. Because of this, the United States has been forced to reintervene after withdrawing only three years ago. What should the United Nations and the countries of the world learn from the United States' failure in establishing a stable government and military after intervening in 2003?

## Further Research

- a. Learn more about current United Nations peacekeeping missions at [www.un.org/en/peacekeeping](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping).
- b. Read nearly a dozen articles recommended by a Model U.N. conference in Slovakia on this topic at [www.zamun.sk/disecc-international-intervention-in-civil-wars](http://www.zamun.sk/disecc-international-intervention-in-civil-wars).
- c. Go to [debate.org](http://debate.org) to read about the controversy over foreign intervention in different places, or read an article summarizing the basic debate at [www.debate.org/military-intervention](http://www.debate.org/military-intervention).
- d. Explore the dilemma of American military intervention at [www.northeastern.edu/news/2012/09/mckiernan](http://www.northeastern.edu/news/2012/09/mckiernan).
- e. Read about the pros and cons of military intervention in the Syrian civil war at [www.madisondodgeronline.com/news/2013/09/27/the-pros-and-cons-of-us-intervention-in-syria](http://www.madisondodgeronline.com/news/2013/09/27/the-pros-and-cons-of-us-intervention-in-syria).
- f. National Interest provides an excellent article weighing the pros and cons of NATO's and the U.N.'s intervention in Libya at [nationalinterest.org/feature/keeping-score-the-libya-intervention-good-idea-or-tragic-11119](http://nationalinterest.org/feature/keeping-score-the-libya-intervention-good-idea-or-tragic-11119).
- g. Read NBC News' article on potential strategies to combat and defeat ISIS in Iraq and Syria at [www.nbcnews.com/storyline/iraq-turmoil/what-are-obamas-options-stomping-out-isis-iraq-syria-n187136](http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/iraq-turmoil/what-are-obamas-options-stomping-out-isis-iraq-syria-n187136).

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> "Committee on Disarmament and International Security," The General Assembly of the United Nations, <<http://www.un.org/en/ga/first>>.

<sup>ii</sup> Niall Ferguson, "Colossus: The Price of America's Empire," published 2004.

<sup>iii</sup> "List of Peacekeeping Operations 1048-2013," The United Nations, <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/operationslist.pdf>>.

<sup>iv</sup> "Interventionism," Dictionary.com, <<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/interventionism>>.

<sup>v</sup> The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Opium Wars," The Encyclopædia Britannica, <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/430163/Opium-Wars>>.

<sup>vi</sup> Peter C. Perdue, "The First Opium War," MIT Visualizing Cultures, <[http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/opium\\_wars\\_01/ow1\\_essay01.html](http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/opium_wars_01/ow1_essay01.html)>.

<sup>vii</sup> The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, "Boxer Rebellion," The Encyclopædia Britannica, <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/76364/Boxer-Rebellion>>.

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viii “The Boxer Rebellion,” The History Channel, <<http://www.history.com/topics/boxer->

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rebellion>.

<sup>ix</sup> “Allied intervention in Russia, 1918-19,” Spotlights on History by the National Archives, <<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/firstworldwar/spotlights/allies.htm>>.

<sup>x</sup> James Callanan, “Covert Action in the Cold War: United States Policy, Intelligence and Central Intelligence Agency Operations,” published 2009.

<sup>xi</sup> “The Persian Gulf War,” The History Channel, <<http://www.history.com/topics/persian-gulf-war>>.

<sup>xii</sup> “The Gulf War,” Frontline by the Public Broadcasting Service, <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/gulf/>>.

<sup>xiii</sup> “Kosovo Profile,” *BBC News*, July 17 2014, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18331273>>.

<sup>xiv</sup> “NATO’s 1999 War against Serbia over Kosovo,” Frontline by the Public Broadcasting Service, <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kosovo/>>.

<sup>xv</sup> CNN Library, “Iraq Fast Facts,” *CNN News*, August 28 2014, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/10/30/world/meast/iraq-history-fast-facts/>>.

<sup>xvi</sup> “Seven Years in Iraq: An Iraq War Timeline,” *Time Magazine*, <<http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/0,28757,1967340,00.html>>

<sup>xvii</sup> “The Iran-Iraq War,” The History Channel, <<http://www.history.com/topics/iran-iraq-war>>.

<sup>xviii</sup> “Iraq Polls,” Gallup Foreign Affairs, <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/1633/Iraq.aspx>>.

<sup>xix</sup> “Events in Libya: A Chronology,” *The New York Times*, August 29 2011, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/29/timestopics/libyatimeline.html>>.

<sup>xx</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and James G. Stavridis, “NATO’s Victory in Libya,” Foreign Affairs by the Council on Foreign Relations, <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/137073/ivo-h-daalder-and-james-g-stavridis/natos-victory-in-libya>>.

<sup>xxi</sup> “Lessons from Libya: How Not to Intervene,” Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, September 2013, <[http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/23387/lessons\\_from\\_libya.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/23387/lessons_from_libya.html)>.

<sup>xxii</sup> “Peacekeeping Operations,” United Nations Peacekeeping, <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/>>.

<sup>xxiii</sup> “Peacekeeping Fact Sheet,” United Nations Peacekeeping, September 30 2014, <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml>>.

<sup>xxiv</sup> “Shias in Iraq Town under ISIS Siege Face Risk of ‘Massacre,’ UN Says,” *Fox News*, August 23 2014, <<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/08/23/residents-iraqi-town-seized-by-isis-reportedly-starving-to-death/>>.

<sup>xxv</sup> “Libya Parliament Votes for Foreign Intervention,” *BBC News*, August 13 2014, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-28774954>>.

<sup>xxvi</sup> John Holmes, “Does the UN’s Responsibility to Protect Necessitate an Intervention in Syria?,” *The Guardian*, August 23 2013, <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/28/syria-intervention-un-responsibility-to-protect>>.

<sup>xxvii</sup> “Should the U.N. Intervene in Syria?,” Debate.org, <<http://www.debate.org/opinions/should-the-u-n-intervene-in-syria>>.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Mick B. Krever, “Why won’t the UN Security Council intervene in Syria?,” *CNN News*, January 14 2012, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2012/01/13/world/meast/un-security-council-syria/index.html>>.

<sup>xxix</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Chapter VII, <<http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/chapter7.shtml>>.

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<sup>xxx</sup> “Americans Want to Pull Back From World Stage, Poll Says,” *The Wall Street Journal*, April 30 2014, <<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304163604579532050055966782?mg=reno64-wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Fonline.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB10001424052702304163604579532050055966782.html>>.

<sup>xxxi</sup> “Lessons from Libya: How Not to Intervene,” Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, September 2013, <[http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/23387/lessons\\_from\\_libya.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/23387/lessons_from_libya.html)>.

## Topic Two: Preventing an Arms Race in Space

### Introduction

As space exploration technologies advance, the possibility of an arms race in outer space has become a serious issue on the UN Disarmament agenda. An arms race is a competition between nations to develop and accumulate technology to be used as weapons. The weaponization of outer space means that it may become another front for war between nations. Space weapons are not like conventional weapons used on ground, and there may be severe consequences if the weapons are used.

PAROS (Prevention of Outer Space Arms Race) was a United Nations response to the fact that there was no multilateral treaty prohibiting the weaponization of outer space at the time. It also addresses the possible militarization of outer space, as many current technologies used for peaceful or commercial purposes may be abused in the future and used for military reasons (such as espionage or target support systems).<sup>xxxii</sup> This has provided basic framework, but more work needs to be done in order to have no conflicts between nations. Especially since many nations have started developing space technologies, other nations may feel compelled to develop their own weapons to protect their own interests against potential threats.

### History

From the time when the outer space was first explored, many treaties and agreements have since been signed pertaining to the arms race in space. One significant article is the Outer Space Treaty (Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies), which provided much guidance on the framework on international space law. This treaty, enforced in October 1967, provides only a basic framework, and since then has become outdated and in need of an update.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Many other treaties

followed, and successfully banned weapons of mass destruction in outer space, but never specified on the placement of other weapons.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

In 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution called the “Prevention of Outer Space Arms Race”, which was mentioned earlier in the introduction. This resolution further explored the legal framework of this issue. It was adopted with 163 in favor and none against, with three abstentions (US, Federated States of Micronesia, and Israel).

In 1981, the concern over the weaponization of outer space grew between nations, increasing discussions of a potential PAROS treaty in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), a UN disarmament-negotiating forum. This led to the Conference on Disarmament creating an Ad-Hoc Committee for PAROS-related issues, but lasted only until 1994 due to failure of negotiating, mostly because of blocks by Western states.<sup>xxxv</sup>

## Current Situation

As far as known to public knowledge, there are currently no weapons in space, and the situation is rather stable. However, outer space is far from being empty of technology. The militaries of many nations depend on multiple satellites and other outer space technology for communication, early warning, and the use of Global Positioning System (GPS).

The United States, China, India, Israel, and Russia all have been developing potential weapon or defense technologies. China’s President Xi Jinping has said the Chinese military should “speed up air and space integration and sharpen their offensive and defensive capabilities.” China is currently developing anti-satellite technology, which is capable of disabling or destroying satellites.<sup>xxxvi</sup> The current actions of China may be influenced by the technologies the United States have in space. The United States is developing a ballistic missile defense shield, if ever under attack by a missile. While on the surface defense technologies may be said to be a response to

potential missile threats, the developing of these technologies is gaining these countries advantages in dominance in outer space.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Because of these defense shields, many also worry about the debris that comes with it into space. If weapons are ever used in outer space, potential interceptors that can block missiles will create debris. The debris can disrupt other equipment and technology, such as satellites, or collide with spacecraft. Currently, there are no international laws or rules restricting or controlling space debris. The debris not only affects potential weapons, but also spacecraft and commercial and military satellites.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

## Possible Solutions

Even though resolutions and negotiations regarding PAROS may not always be fully agreed upon, a general consensus among many of the states has developed, voicing that weaponization, deployment of weapons, and militarization in outer space should be prevented. Even though there is shared sentiment, a treaty with a specific set of principles and guidelines that all states accept has not yet been made. This is due to the objection of a few states, namely the United States, on the objective of the treaty and also due to difference in opinions on the legal framework.

There have been many joint-efforts by nations that work for the prevention of weapons in space. One such example is the draft treaty called the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space (PPWT) introduced to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) by Russia and China. They emphasize the need of a weapon-free space, and further interpret the current legal framework of the weaponization of outer space. These treaties are only made by a few nations however, and in order to find a solution, all nations would need to come together and find a position they could realistically agree upon.<sup>xxxix</sup>

While the United States and Russia took the lead during the Space Race, many other countries, such as China, have since been trying to catch up. The United States under the Bush Administration has expressed interests in militarizing space. It would have capabilities superior to that of any other countries, as well as an upper hand in defense systems. Being one of the only countries to be able to achieve these technologies, the United States would gain significant dominance in outer space. China also shows capabilities, such as technology and money, to become a potential competitor to the United States, even though they have voiced their opinion of having the outer space be weapon free.<sup>x1</sup>

The public has also gotten involved with this issue, and there are valid arguments both for and against the use of weapons in space. Supporters say that even if an agreement is reached internationally, it would be difficult to keep nations in line and cheating would be likely. Others argue that not only would the development of these weapons cause tension between nations, but the cost of keeping these weapons in orbit would be significantly high. This would broaden the disparity between rich and poor nations.<sup>xli</sup>

## Conclusion

The weaponization and militarization of outer space is a serious concern and issue on the DISEC agenda. The duty of this committee is to maintain world peace and justice. For this current situation, there are no negotiations that ensure that outer space continues to be a safe place for all nations. Stances should be taken on whether the testing and development of not only space weapons but also defense technologies should continue or that measures should be taken to make outer space weapon-free. In any case, an arms race should be prevented. It is up to the delegates in this DISEC committee to present ideas and solutions while keeping in mind the goal of maintaining peace.

## Discussion Questions

1. How will your state insure that no arms race in space will occur between nations?
2. How will the states that have an already developed and elaborate technology in space be dealt with?
3. At what point will a defense system in space become an offense in itself, under the ruse of a defense?
4. What current rules and technologies are already in place to limit the technology allowed in space?
5. If an arms race does happen in space, what would be the consequences suffered by the world and especially by your nation?
6. What measures can be taken to maintain justice for all member countries but at the same time insure outer space to be safe from harmful technology?
7. What details in current regulations regarding this situation should be looked in further and expanded upon?

## References for Further Research

- = <http://www.globalissues.org/article/69/militarization-and-weaponization-of-outer-space>  
This is a good place to get started with background information
- = <http://www.un.org/disarmament/topics/outerspace/>  
This talks about the past and current efforts of the UN
- = <http://www.globalsecurity.org/space/world/china/asat.htm>  
Current information on Chinese space technology
- = <http://science.howstuffworks.com/space-war2.htm>  
This article gives background information on how space weapons work
- = [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2005\\_12/DEC-CVR](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2005_12/DEC-CVR)  
The current situation from a Chinese perspective
- = <http://freebeacon.com/national-security/u-s-opposes-new-draft-treaty-from-china-and-russia-banning-space-weapons/>  
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## Endnotes

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xxxii <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/resources/fact-sheets/critical-issues/5448-outer-space>

xxxiii <http://www.unoosa.org/oosa/SpaceLaw/outerspt.html>

xxxiv <http://cns.miis.edu/inventory/pdfs/paros.pdf>

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