



Weaponization of Outer Space

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It is a pleasure to be back in Europe among old friends to discuss an important subject which has the potential to either move us towards a new and constructive approach to international cooperation or to an unstable world in which security for all is threatened and the risk of nuclear conflict is increased. The choices we make in relation to outer space today could well be irreversible.

During World War II, railroad stations in the United States were full of posters asking the question "Is this trip necessary?" That's what we all should be asking ourselves as we look at the issue of the militarization of outer space. My own view is that weaponization of outer space will, if implemented, decrease American security, world security, destabilize international relations and trigger another arms race of monumental proportions that will cost us all trillions and bring us nothing more than destabilization and insecurity in return.

Space weaponization is purported to be the last step in a layered missile defense. Credible experts claim that even a system designed to defend against an attack from a small number of missiles could cost from between \$220 billion to a trillion dollars. This gives you a grasp of the massive amount of money involved. Moreover, a more elaborate system would cost trillions more and could be overwhelmed by relatively easy and less expensive means - for example, by building other more offensive weapons, or by spoofing the defensive systems.

Breaking the moratorium on space weaponization with such a grandiose and wasteful scheme makes no sense. Wouldn't diplomacy and patient negotiation of a treaty regulating space weaponization be a more practical and prudent way to move forward, rather than risking existing space assets through a new arms control race?

Arms control and outer space were on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament for many years. No progress was made because of the reluctance of the United States to take the issue seriously. Then suddenly in 1999 the United States refused to even allow the subject to be put on the CD's agenda. As the American Ambassador to the CD at the time, I was taken completely by surprise with this sudden shift. The line we took then was that there was no arms

race in outer space. In discussing the shift I said to my Washington colleagues what you really mean is that there is no arms race in outer space. No one to whom I spoke argued to the contrary.

When I returned to Washington for consultations, I met at the Pentagon to discuss this shift. The people whom I normally dealt with there had a real understanding that in an international forum one state can't arbitrarily pull a long-standing agenda item off the table and expect to make any progress on the issue of interest to us, which at the time was the negotiation of an FMCT. But there was a new participant in the meeting, a real zealot of the sky warrior mold. My Pentagon colleagues who outranked him were unwilling to overrule him – and neither would the leadership of the NSC or the State Department. Retrospectively, it appears that the then beleaguered Clinton administration may have decided to appease the neo-con star wars proponents by throwing them a small bone. After all, if you have no understanding of how negotiating in the international community works, why not conclude that it doesn't make much difference if an item is taken off the agenda or if it remains on the agenda under conditions where serious negotiations won't take place.

It is entirely possible that the CD's inability to do anything constructive for the last seven years was not a direct result of the American decision to pull the outer space issue off the agenda. But it certainly didn't help matters. The CD is a damnably difficult place to get things done in any event, but unilaterally playing games with the agenda without even the courtesy of prior consultations with allies makes matters even worse.

Today, of course, the Bush Administration has even pulled back from the long established US approach to a FMCT, and it is highly unlikely that anything will happen on arms control in the CD or elsewhere on arms control in the next 20 months. There may be procedural ploys, which like card tricks or illusionists suggest something real is about to happen but nothing will. Back home, we Americans who are serious about arms control as an important instrument in promoting sustainable national security policies have long concluded that regime change must begin at home.

Nothing illustrates the retreat from reality to radicalism more vividly than in the realm of outer space. Beginning in the Eisenhower Administration and concluded during the Kennedy Administration, the international community, with strong and positive American leadership, concluded the Outer Space Treaty, which calls for using space to promote the common interest of all mankind. The leaders and governments who negotiated this treaty were determined to

create a new international order in which multilateral cooperation and the peaceful resolution of disputes was to be the new order of the day.

While there have been tentative efforts over the years to test whether weaponization of outer space is feasible or practical, most were rejected. But the use of outer space for other purposes has grown. It is used not only for commercial services such as communications and for scientific exploration, but for military surveillance, navigational assistance, weather forecasting, and a host of other useful and necessary activities.

Weaponization of space would put all of these activities at risk. Defensive military deployments anywhere always run the risk of being overwhelmed by new or existing offensive capabilities that are frequently cheaper to develop. This is no less true in space than it is on land, or on or under the sea. Any sensible person would conclude that no nation could achieve space dominance – it is simply not possible. Slogans filched from the days of wooden ships and iron men are simply not relevant to outer space. Yet one nation acting alone is moving relentlessly forward. Every government in the world, except for the Bush Administration, is willing to negotiate drafting a regime that will ban weaponization of outer space and promote international cooperation.

One suggested approach is agreement on rules of the road - informal agreements to ban certain activities. This would be a promising start, but in the end, an internationally binding treaty supported by all is the best outcome - and its time to get on with it.

Let's be realistic. These are complex and difficult issues. Technology moves us forward, and we are not Luddites. We can't suppress scientific advancements, and we are aware that no treaty can guarantee that someone won't break out of a regime or cheat. A certain amount of R&D on space weaponization is inevitable and countries must always prepare for worst case scenarios, but our goal should be to move as rapidly as possible toward a regime to prevent the deployment of weapons in space. That having been said, Article 51 makes it clear that within certain limits, each state has the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense. We have the means to act alone or collectively in space if others begin to weaponize space. The Charter is not, as some conservatives maintain, a treaty trap.

That having been said, it is surprising that America's friends and allies with few exceptions seem willing to let us proceed to destabilize space in ways that threaten the entire international community. It is wonderful to have friends and allies when you are leading them in a positive direction. It is even more important to have friends and allies who will speak out

forcefully and with conviction when your government is headed in the wrong direction. The Suez affair was a painful experience when my country reluctantly parted company with three close allies. We were right to do so. The age of imperialism and gunboat diplomacy had to end, though some would argue it still exists.

But perhaps today is the time for our allies and friends to be telling us in no uncertain terms that radical, preemptive unilateralism, whether in outer space or going wild in the Middle East, or attempting to develop a new nuclear arsenal to insure that we retain nuclear weapons for the next 70 years, has neither their support nor their approval.

It would be very helpful if a group of states similar to the New Agenda Coalition, which has made such a valuable contribution to pointing the way forward on reasonable and practical steps to strengthen the NPT, is convened to come up with a series of suggestions on how to move forward towards a treaty-based regime to prevent weaponization of outer space. We need to work collectively on this now so that when the logjam in the CD is broken or negotiations begin elsewhere, we have a clear idea of what such a regime would look like.

Allied and friendly initiatives, individual or collective, can move individuals and governments. They do make a difference. Let me give you one example. Once many years ago, I was the junior member of a mission to Australia at the height of the Vietnam War. The then acting Prime Minister, a World War I veteran, a very conservative, self-made man who farmed the back blocks of that vast country, made a gracious toast at dinner. He recalled that in 1942 when several battered U.S. Destroyers pulled into Sydney Harbor for re-fitting, the entire Australian Cabinet went down from Canberra to greet them. He noted that at the time those destroyers and the thin line of Australians and Americans in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands were the only thing protecting Australia from invasion. He then concluded the toast with the following Delphic statement, "We will always be with you even when you are wrong." I wonder how many allied leaders would greet us like that today? I wonder how many of our friends would have the guts to tell us as politely but as pointedly as he did on Vietnam that the current course we are embarked on is if anything worse than when we were mired in the Vietnamese quagmire. That tough old bird changed my life. Within months, I resigned from the State Department and joined the staff of Senator Alan Cranston who pledged to get us out of Vietnam. Sometimes it takes a foreign friend and some tough love to put things in perspective.

Let's not forget that outer space is just one part of the whole issue of nuclear weapons themselves. Weaponization of outer space is a critical issue in and of itself. Weaponization of

outer space coupled with the indefinite retention of nuclear weapons is a cosmic security risk. Imagine a crisis in which nuclear weapons states on hair trigger alert were suddenly to lose their intelligence satellites, their communications facilities and their navigation systems. A first strike would be an immediate possibility.

Without respect for the rule of law and a commitment to the UN Charter and treaty obligations, especially those enshrined in the NPT, we undermine a system which has served us all imperfectly but on the whole very well. If the nuclear weapons states are unwilling to even acknowledge their obligations to work in good faith for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, we can't expect other states to accept new and needed restrictions on the transfer of nuclear technology. Without an effective NPT, the nuclear clock will eventually move closer to midnight. Weaponization of outer space would fatally weaken the NPT.

One final thought, the radical neoconservative approach to international affairs and the rule of law which characterize the present Administration is ending. Simply put, it is as dead as the dodo. It has been a moral and strategic disaster. It has eroded the US constitutional system, threatened our civil rights, plunged us into debt, debased our international reputation and raised legitimate questions about our capacity to manage ourselves much less lead the international community. It has cost thousands of lives and misery in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, to say nothing of the US and other forces who have been killed and maimed. It has weakened US national security and international security as well.

Now a new and more hopeful chapter in my country is beginning, but we need a little help from our friends in the next 20 months. Let's agree collectively not to continue moving along the wrong path. We must band together and renew our collective efforts to bring about positive change. A new generation is coming of age in my country, which among other things, has a decent respect for the opinions of others, which is as important for Americans today as when we signed our Declaration of Independence. This new generation understands that it is more important to lead people in positive directions than to frighten them into radical unilateralism. I hope you will welcome them. I know I will.

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