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"Geopolitics, Governance, Security and Sustainability in Outer Space"

By

Prof. Nayef A-Rodhan

St. Antony's college, Oxford University, UK

Geneva Center for Security Policy, Switzerland

www.sustainablehistory.com

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Co-Chairman for the opportunity to address this esteemed panel of the combined first and Fourth Committees, on such a critical and consequential topic.

Why is Outer space important?

- Outer space is an inspirational, critical and consequential domain for humanity's collective futures,
- Outer space is critical for cooperative geopolitical realities and geostrategic imperatives of all States,
- Humanity is becoming increasingly and irreversibly overdependent on outer space for our daily needs in peace and war. This includes issues such as economic prosperity, security, navigation, communications, diplomacy, sustainable development goals, supply chains, cybersecurity, arms control, climate change, internet, financial markets, etc.
- Outer space is a "*Frontier Risk*" and an "*innovation Frontier*" that is pivotal for our current and future collective peace and prosperity.
- Outer space is a "*Global Commons*" and thus everyone's responsibility, opportunity and potential problem without exception. This includes major, minor space powers and states without any space presence.
- Outer space is becoming increasingly congested, contested, competitive, invested and hostile.
- Any disruption in outer space (accidental or intentional) will impact space assets of all states and non-state actors without exception.
- There is an intimate interplay between space security and terrestrial security.
- There is also an intimate interplay between space sustainability and disruptive technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Cyber.
- Therefore, if outer space becomes critically unsafe, it will not be selectively unsafe but unsafe for everyone

What are the Big Challenges in Outer Space?

- Space debris and ASAT tests especially in LEO
- Critical and dangerous militarization of outer space..A serious space arms race is underway
- Absence of adequate and accountable space traffic management/coordination
- Gaps in space law
- Lack of trust, transparency and cooperation in outer space
- Outdated space treaties, and lack of codes of conduct and binding and non-binding treaties.
- Exponential increase in space assets, especially by the private sector
- Occasional malignant activities in space, including kinetic and non-kinetic, jamming, hacking, and spoofing.
- Growing economic competition for space resources.

Are there any Positive Developments in Outer Space?

- The UN is to be commended for its relentless efforts over the past few decades through its UNHQ, UNGA, UNOOSA, COPOUS, CD, PAROS and UNODA, in addition to existing intergovernmental instruments and mandates. The recent inclusion by the UN of Outer space in the OCA (our common agenda) and SOF (summit of the future) is also admirable and very important.
- The efforts of Russia, China and the EU over the past two decades are also to be commended in seeking a consensus on codes of conduct and prevention of a space arms race.
- The US is to be commended for unilaterally banning ASAT tests. Several countries have joined this ban since
- The UK is to be commended for inspiring UNGA resolution 75/36 in initiating the OWEG (Open Ended Working Group), on the need for all states to work together to reduce threats to space systems through the further development and implementation of norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviors, which might contribute to further consideration of legally binding instruments
- The US FCC(Federal Communications Commission) is to set five-year deadline for deorbiting LEO satellites . An important effort to help declutter space debris.

What Geopolitical imperatives are Needed Going Forward?

- An urgent need to develop adequate and cooperative space traffic management/coordination rules.
- Urgent collective efforts are needed to de-clutter space orbits , especially LEO through political, financial and technological means. This should include all states, international organizations and private space actors.
- Urgent TCBM's (Transparency and confidence building measures) are needed between states in outer space.
- Continued efforts to develop codes of conduct and the de-militarization of outer space.
- Increased engagement by all states including small states, even if they do not have any space assets. This is critical for SDG's (Sustainable Development Goals) and responsible behaviour in outer space.
- A change in the geopolitical mindset is urgently needed. From zero-sum and security dilemma paradigms that do not work, to a "*Multi-Sum security*" approach to security for all, and a "*Symbiotic Realism*" approach to international relations. This will guarantee win-win solution, absolute (rather than relative gains) and non-conflictual competition. These paradigms are useful on earth but absolutely critical in outer space given its global commons nature and importance for humanity's collective security and prosperity.

Final Words and Call for Action:

Our current global order remains an anarchic, self-help system with no over-arching global authority which arbitrates and enforces mandates in a just, equitable and impartial way. It is therefore, understandable that safeguarding the " National Interest " governs states' behavior above all else. However, in a connected and deeply interdependent world, one of the most certain ways of achieving the national interest in a sustainable way is (where possible) through reconciliation with other national, global and planetary interests in a fair and acceptable way.

If Outer Space becomes Critically Unsafe, it will not be Selectively Unsafe, but Unsafe for Everyone. Outer Space is a Global Commons that belongs to everyone and it is everyone's Responsibility, Opportunity and Potential Problem.

If we are to achieve Sustainable Peace and Security in Outer Space and on Earth, we will need to change our Geopolitical Paradigms from Zero-Sum to Multi-Sum security and adopt a Symbiotic-Realist Paradigm that allows Win-Win scenarios, Absolute Gains and Non-Conflictual Competition.

Outer Space Security and Terrestrial Security are Intertwined and cannot be achieved without Reconciling the National Interests of States with Transnational, Global and Planetary Interests.

We owe this to our collective selves and future generations in order to have a safe, secure and prosperous global future for humanity and an inspired adventure into the Cosmos and our innovative, resilient, responsible and sustainable place in it.