### AC – Plan

#### Plan – states ought to ban the appropriation of outer space for mining activities by private entities.

#### Normal means is ratification of the Moon Treaty

**Mallick and Rajagopalan 19** [(Senjuti Mallick, graduated from ILS Law College, Pune, in 2016. She was a Law Researcher at the High Court of Delhi from 2016 to 2018 and is currently pursuing LL.M in International Law at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, USA. She has been doing research on Outer Space Law since she was a student at ILS. Presently, she is working on different aspects of Space Law, in particular, Space debris mitigation and removal, and the law of the commons. She has published articles on Space Law in the All India Reporter Law Journal and The Hindu.)( Dr Rajeswari (Raji) Pillai Rajagopalan is the Director of the Centre for Security, Strategy and Technology (CSST) at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi.  Dr Rajagopalan was the Technical Advisor to the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) (July 2018-July 2019).  She was also a Non-Resident Indo-Pacific Fellow at the Perth USAsia Centre from April-December 2020.  As a senior Asia defence writer for The Diplomat, she writes a weekly column on Asian strategic issues.) “If space is ‘the province of mankind’, who owns its resources?” Occasional Papers, January 24, 2019, https://www.orfonline.org/research/if-space-is-the-province-of-mankind-who-owns-its-resources-47561/] TDI   
A third possible option is to get a larger global endorsement of the Moon Treaty, which highlights the common heritage of mankind. The Moon Treaty is important as it addresses a “loophole” of the OST “by banning any ownership of any extraterrestrial property by any organization or private person, unless that organization is international and governmental.”[[lxiv]](https://www.orfonline.org/research/if-space-is-the-province-of-mankind-who-owns-its-resources-47561/#_edn64) But the fact that it has been endorsed only by a handful of countries makes it a “failure” from the international law perspective.[[lxv]](https://www.orfonline.org/research/if-space-is-the-province-of-mankind-who-owns-its-resources-47561/#_edn65) Nevertheless, efforts must be made to strengthen the support base for the Moon Agreement given the potential pitfalls of resource extraction and space mining activities in outer space. Signatories to the Moon Treaty can take the lead within multilateral platforms such as the UN to debate the usefulness of the treaty in the changed context of technological advancements and new geopolitical dynamics, and potentially find compromises where there are disagreements.

### AC – Debris Advantage

#### Private space mining and ownership allowed now

Williams 20 [(Matt Williams, Reporter) “Trump signs an executive order allowing mining the moon and asteroids,” Phys Org, April 13, 2020, <https://phys.org/news/2020-04-trump-moon-asteroids.html>] TDI

Trump signs an executive order allowing mining the moon and asteroids

In 2015, the Obama administration signed the [U.S. Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act](https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/2262/text) (CSLCA, or H.R. 2262) into law. This bill was intended to "facilitate a pro-growth environment for the developing commercial space industry" by making it legal for American companies and citizens to own and sell resources that they extract from asteroids and off-world locations (like the moon, Mars or beyond).

On April 6th, the Trump administration took things a step further by signing an [executive order](https://www.space.com/trump-moon-mining-space-resources-executive-order.html) that formally recognizes the rights of private interests to claim resources in [space](https://phys.org/tags/space/). This order, titled "[Encouraging International Support for the Recovery and Use of Space Resources](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-encouraging-international-support-recovery-use-space-resources/)," effectively ends the decades-long debate that began with the signing of [the Outer Space Treaty](https://www.universetoday.com/20590/moon-for-sale/) in 1967.

#### New investments coming and companies are launching – economic incentives make it alluring

Tosar 20 [(Borja Tosar, reporter) “Asteroid Mining: A New Space Race,” OpenMind BBVA, May 18, 2020, <https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/science/physics/asteroid-mining-a-new-space-race/>] TDI

This is not science fiction. There are now space mining companies, such as [Planetary Resources,](https://www.consensys.space/pr) which has already launched several mini-satellites to test several of its patents. Other companies like [Asteroid Mining Corporation](https://asteroidminingcorporation.co.uk/) or [Trans Astronautica Corporation,](https://www.transastracorp.com/) although still far from their goal, are already attracting millions of dollars of private investment interested in being on the front line of a possible future space business.

Is asteroid mining possible? This new space race already began back when the Hayabusa missions successfully returned a few grams of an asteroid’s regolith, so the technology to harvest asteroid material exists, we just have to change the scale. It is no longer a technological problem.

Is it economically viable? We are increasingly dependent on rare elements (such as those in the palladium group), which are expensive to exploit on Earth and come with a high environmental cost, so the sum of these two factors could make it profitable to travel to the asteroids to extract these raw materials. Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse argues that [the planet’s first trillionaire will undoubtedly be a space miner.](https://www.cnbc.com/2015/05/01/build-the-economy-here-on-earth-by-exploring-space-tyson.html)

#### Asteroid mining spikes the risk of satellite-dust collisions

Scoles 15 [(Sarah Scoles, freelance science writer, contributor at Wired and Popular Science, author of the books Making Contact and They Are Already Here) “Dust from asteroid mining spells danger for satellites,” New Scientist, May 27, 2015, <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg22630235-100-dust-from-asteroid-mining-spells-danger-for-satellites/>] TDI

* Study this is citing – Javier Roa, Space Dynamic Group, Applied Physics Department, Technical University of Madrid. Casey J Handmer, Theoretical Astrophysics, California Institute of Technology. Both PhD Candidates. “Quantifying hazards: asteroid disruption in lunar distant retrograde orbits,” arXiv, Cornell University, May 14, 2015, <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1505.03800.pdf>

NASA chose the second option for its [Asteroid Redirect Mission](http://www.nasa.gov/content/what-is-nasa-s-asteroid-redirect-mission/), which aims to [pluck a boulder from an asteroid’s surface](https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn27243-rock-grab-from-asteroid-will-aid-human-mission-to-mars) and relocate it to a stable orbit around the moon. But an asteroid’s gravity is so weak that it’s not hard for surface particles to escape into space. Now a new model warns that debris shed by such transplanted rocks could intrude where many defence and communication satellites live – in geosynchronous orbit.

According to [Casey Handmer](http://www.caseyhandmer.com/) of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena and Javier Roa of the Technical University of Madrid in Spain, 5 per cent of the escaped debris will end up in regions traversed by satellites. Over 10 years, it would cross geosynchronous orbit 63 times on average. A satellite in the wrong spot at the wrong time will suffer a damaging high-speed collision with that dust.

The study also looks at the “catastrophic disruption” of an asteroid 5 metres across or bigger. Its total break-up into a pile of rubble would increase the risk to satellites by more than 30 per cent ([arxiv.org/abs/1505.03800](http://arxiv.org/abs/1505.03800)).

#### Space dust wrecks satellites and debris exponentially spirals

Intagliata 17 [(Christopher Intagliata, MA Journalism from NYU, Editor for NPRs All Things Considered, Reporter/Host for Scientific American’s 60 Second Science) “The Sneaky Danger of Space Dust,” Scientific American, May 11, 2017, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/podcast/episode/the-sneaky-danger-of-space-dust/>] TDI

When tiny particles of space debris slam into satellites, the collision could cause the emission of hardware-frying radiation, Christopher Intagliata reports.

Aside from all the satellites, and the space station orbiting the Earth, there's a lot of trash circling the planet, too. Twenty-one thousand [baseball-sized chunks](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/orbital-debris-space-fence/) of debris, [according to NASA](https://www.orbitaldebris.jsc.nasa.gov/faq.html). But that number's dwarfed by the number of small particles. There's hundreds of millions of those.

"And those smaller particles tend to be going fast. Think of picking up a grain of sand at the beach, and that would be on the large side. But they're going 60 kilometers per second."

Sigrid Close, an applied physicist and astronautical engineer at Stanford University. Close says that whereas mechanical damage—like punctures—is the worry with the bigger chunks, the dust-sized stuff might leave more insidious, invisible marks on satellites—by causing electrical damage.

"We also think this phenomenon can be attributed to some of the failures and anomalies we see on orbit, that right now are basically tagged as 'unknown cause.'"

Close and her colleague Alex Fletcher modeled this phenomenon mathematically, based on plasma physics behavior. And here's what they think happens. First, the dust slams into the spacecraft. Incredibly fast. It vaporizes and ionizes a bit of the ship—and itself. Which generates a cloud of ions and electrons, traveling at different speeds. And then: "It's like a spring action, the electrons are pulled back to the ions, ions are being pushed ahead a little bit. And then the electrons overshoot the ions, so they oscillate, and then they go back out again.”

That movement of electrons creates a pulse of electromagnetic radiation, which Close says could be the culprit for some of that electrical damage to satellites. The study is in the journal Physics of Plasmas. [Alex C. Fletcher and Sigrid Close, [Particle-in-cell simulations of an RF emission mechanism associated with hypervelocity impact plasmas](http://aip.scitation.org/doi/full/10.1063/1.4980833)]

#### Scenario 1 is Climate

#### Earth observation satellites key to warming adaptation

* Monitoring deforestation/ice caps
* ECV essential climate variables

Alonso 18 [(Elisa Jiménez Alonso, communications consultant with Acclimatise, climate resilience organization) “Earth Observation of Increasing Importance for Climate Change Adaptation,” Acclimatise, May 2, 2018, <https://www.acclimatise.uk.com/2018/05/02/earth-observation-of-increasing-importance-for-climate-change-adaptation/>] TDI

Earth observation (EO) satellites are playing an increasingly important role in assessing climate change. By providing a constant and consistent stream of data about the state of the climate, EO is not just improving scientific outcomes but can also inform climate policy.

Managing climate-related risks effectively requires accurate, robust, sustained, and wide-ranging climate information. Reliable observational climate data can help scientists test the accuracy of their models and improve the science of attributing certain events to climate change. Information based on projections from models and historic data can help decision makers plan and implement adaptation actions.

Providing information in data-sparse regions

Ground-based weather and climate monitoring systems only cover about 30% of the Earth’s surface. In many parts of the world such data is incomplete and patchy due to poorly maintained weather stations and a general lack of such facilities.

EO satellites and rapidly improving satellite technology, especially data from open access programmes, offer a valuable source information for such data-sparse regions. This is especially important since countries and regions with a lack of climate data are often particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts.

International efforts for systematic observation

The importance of satellite-based observations is also recognised by the international community. Following the recommendations of the World Meteorological Organization’s (WMO) Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) programme, the UNFCCC strongly encourages countries that support space agencies with EO programmes to get involved in GCOS and support the programme’s implementation. The Paris Agreement highlights the need for and importance of effective and progressive responses to the threat of climate change based on the best available scientific knowledge. This implies that climate knowledge needs to be strengthened, which includes continuously improving systematic observations of the Earth’s climate.

To meet the need of such systematic climate observations, GCOS developed the concept of the Essential Climate Variable, or ECV. According to WMO, an ECV “is a physical, chemical or biological variable or a group of linked variables that critically contributes to the characterization of Earth’ s climate.” In 2010, 50 ECVs which would help the work of the UNFCCC and IPCC were defined by GCOS. The ECVs, which can be seen below, were identified due to their relevance for characterising the climate system and its changes, the technical feasibility of observing or deriving them on a global scale, and their cost effectiveness.

The 50 Essential Climate Variables as defined by GCOS.

One effort supporting the systemic observation of the climate is the European Space Agency’s (ESA) Climate Change Initiative (CCI). The programme taps into its own and its member countries’ EO archives that have been established in the last three decades in order to provide a timely and adequate contribution to the ECV databases required by the UNFCCC.

Robust evidence supporting climate risk management

Earth observation satellites can observe the entire Earth on a daily basis (polar orbiting satellites) or continuously monitor the disk of Earth below them (geostationary satellites) maintaining a constant watch of the entire globe. Sensors can target any point on Earth even the most remote and inhospitable areas which helps monitor deforestation in vast tropical forests and the melting of the ice caps.

Without insights offered by EO satellites there would not be enough evidence for decision makers to base their climate policies on, increasing the risk of maladaptation. Robust EO data is an invaluable resource for collecting climate information that can inform climate risk management and make it more effective.

#### Warming causes extinction

Klein 14[(Naomi Klein, award-winning journalist, syndicated columnist, former Miliband Fellow at the London School of Economics, member of the board of directors of 350.org), *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, pp. 12-14]

In a 2012 report, the World Bank laid out the gamble implied by that target. “As global warming approaches and exceeds 2-degrees Celsius, there is a risk of triggering nonlinear tipping elements. Examples include the disintegration of the West Antarctic ice sheet leading to more rapid sea-level rise, or large-scale Amazon dieback drastically affecting ecosystems, rivers, agriculture, energy production, and livelihoods. This would further add to 21st-century global warming and impact entire continents.” In other words, once we allow temperatures to climb past a certain point, where the mercury stops is not in our control.¶ But the bigger problem—and the reason Copenhagen caused such great despair—is that because governments did not agree to binding targets, they are free to pretty much ignore their commitments. Which is precisely what is happening. Indeed, emissions are rising so rapidly that unless something radical changes within our economic structure, 2 degrees now looks like a utopian dream. And it’s not just environmentalists who are raising the alarm. The World Bank also warned when it released its report that “we’re on track to a 4-C warmer world [by century’s end] marked by extreme heat waves, declining global food stocks, loss of ecosystems and biodiversity, and life-threatening sea level rise.” And the report cautioned that, “there is also no certainty that adaptation to a 4-C world is possible.” Kevin Anderson, former director (now deputy director) of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change, which has quickly established itself as one of the U.K’s premier climate research institutions, is even blunter; he says 4 degrees Celsius warming—7.2 degrees Fahrenheit—is “incompatible with an organized, equitable, and civilized global community.”¶ We don’t know exactly what a 4 degree Celsius world would look like, but even the best-case scenario is likely to be calamitous. Four degrees of warming could raise global sea levels by 1 or possibly even 2 meters by 2100 (and would lock in at least a few additional meters over future centuries). This would drown some island nations such as the Maldives and Tuvalu, and inundate many coastal areas from Ecuador and Brazil to the Netherlands to much of California and the northeastern United States as well as huge swaths of South and Southeast Asia. Major cities likely in jeopardy include Boston, New York, greater Los Angeles, Vancouver, London, Mumbai, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.¶ Meanwhile, brutal heat waves that can kill tens of thousands of people, even in wealthy countries, would become entirely unremarkable summer events on every continent but Antarctica. The heat would also cause staple crops to suffer dramatic yield losses across the globe (it is possible that Indian wheat and U.S. could plummet by as much as 60 percent), this at a time when demand will be surging due to population growth and a growing demand for meat. And since crops will be facing not just heat stress but also extreme events such as wide-ranging droughts, flooding, or pest outbreaks, the losses could easily turn out to be more severe than the models have predicted. When you add ruinous hurricanes, raging wildfires, fisheries collapses, widespread disruptions to water supplies, extinctions, and globe-trotting diseases to the mix, it indeed becomes difficult to imagine that a peaceful, ordered society could be sustained (that is, where such a thing exists in the first place).¶ And keep in mind that these are the optimistic scenarios in which warming is more or less stabilized at 4 degrees Celsius and does not trigger tipping points beyond which runaway warming would occur. Based on the latest modeling, it is becoming safer to assume that 4 degrees could bring about a number of extremely dangerous feedback loops—an Arctic that is regularly ice-free in September, for instance, or, according to one recent study, global vegetation that is too saturated to act as a reliable “sink”, leading to more carbon being emitted rather than stored. Once this happens, any hope of predicting impacts pretty much goes out the window. And this process may be starting sooner than anyone predicted. In May 2014, NASA and the University of California, Irvine scientists revealed that glacier melt in a section of West Antarctica roughly the size of France now “appears unstoppable.” This likely spells down for the entire West Antarctic ice sheet, which according to lead study author Eric Rignot “comes with a sea level rise between three and five metres. Such an event will displace millions of people worldwide.” The disintegration, however, could unfold over centuries and there is still time for emission reductions to slow down the process and prevent the worst. ¶ Much more frightening than any of this is the fact that plenty of mainstream analysts think that on our current emissions trajectory, we are headed for even more than 4 degrees of warming. In 2011, the usually staid International Energy Agency (IEA) issued a report predicting that we are actually on track for 6 degrees Celsius—10.8 degrees Fahrenheit—of warming. And as the IEA’s chief economist put it: “Everybody, even the school children, knows that this will have catastrophic implications for all of us.” (The evidence indicates that 6 degrees of warming is likely to set in motion several major tipping points—not only slower ones such as the aforementioned breakdown of the West Antarctic ice sheet, but possibly more abrupt ones, like massive releases of methane from Arctic permafrost.) The accounting giant PricewaterhouseCoopers as also published a report warning businesses that we are headed for “4-C , or even 6-C” of warming.¶ These various projections are the equivalent of every alarm in your house going off simultaneously. And then every alarm on your street going off as well, one by one by one. They mean, quite simply, that climate change has become an existential crisis for the human species. The only historical precedent for a crisis of this depth and scale was the Cold War fear that we were headed toward nuclear holocaust, which would have made much of the planet uninhabitable. But that was (and remains) a threat; a slim possibility, should geopolitics spiral out of control. The vast majority of nuclear scientists never told us that we were almost certainly going to put our civilization in peril if we kept going about our daily lives as usual, doing exactly what we were already going, which is what climate scientists have been telling us for years. ¶ As the Ohio State University climatologist Lonnie G. Thompson, a world-renowned specialist on glacier melt, explained in 2010, “Climatologists, like other scientists, tend to be a stolid group. We are not given to theatrical rantings about falling skies. Most of us are far more comfortable in our laboratories or gathering data in the field than we are giving interviews to journalists or speaking before Congressional committees. When then are climatologists speaking out about the dangers of global warming? The answer is that virtually all of us are now convinced that global warming poses a clear and present danger to civilization.”

#### Early warning satellites going dark signals attacks – causes miscalc and goes nuclear

Orwig 16 [(Jessica, MS in science and tech journalism from Texas A&M, BS in astronomy and physics from Ohio State) “Russia says a growing problem in space could be enough to spark a war,” Insider,’ January 26, 2016, <https://www.businessinsider.com/russia-says-space-junk-could-spark-war-2016-1>] TDI

NASA has already warned that the large amount of space junk around our planet is growing beyond our control, but now a team of Russian scientists has cited another potentially unforeseen consequence of that debris: War.

Scientists estimate that anywhere from 500,000 to 600,000 pieces of human-made space debris between 0.4 and 4 inches in size are currently orbiting the Earth and traveling at speeds over 17,000 miles per hour.

If one of those pieces smashed into a military satellite it "may provoke political or even armed conflict between space-faring nations," Vitaly Adushkin, a researcher for the Institute of Geosphere Dynamics at the Russian Academy of Sciences, reported in a paper set to be published in the peer-reviewed journal Acta Astronautica, which is sponsored by the International Academy of Astronautics.

Say, for example, that a satellite was destroyed or significantly damaged in orbit — something that a 4-inch hunk of space junk could easily do traveling at speeds of 17,500 miles per hour, Adushkin reported. (Even smaller pieces no bigger than size of a pea could cause enough damage to the satellite that it would no longer operate correctly, he notes.)

It would be difficult for anyone to determine whether the event was accidental or deliberate.

This lack of immediate proof could lead to false accusations, heated arguments and, eventually, war, according to Adushkin and his colleagues.

A politically dangerous dilemma

In the report, the Adushkin said that there have already been repeated "sudden failures" of military spacecraft in the last two decades that cannot be explained.

"So, there are two possible explanations," he wrote. The first is "unregistered collisions with space objects." The second is "machinations" [deliberate action] of the space adversary.

"This is a politically dangerous dilemma," he added.

But these mysterious failures in the past aren't what concerns Adushkin most.

It's a future threat of what experts call the cascade effect that has Adushkin and other scientists around the world extremely concerned.

The Kessler Syndrome

In 1978, American astrophysicist Donald Kessler predicted that the amount of space debris around Earth would begin to grow exponentially after the turn of the millennium.

Kessler 's predictions rely on the fact that over time, space junk accumulates. We leave most of our defunct satellites in space, and when meteors and other man-made space debris slam into them, you get a cascade of debris.

The cascade effect — also known as the Kessler Syndrome — refers to a critical point wherein the density of space junk grows so large that a single collision could set off a domino effect of increasingly more collisions.

For Kessler, this is a problem because it would "create small debris faster than it can be removed," Kessler said last year. And this cloud of junk could eventually make missions to space too dangerous.

For Adushkin, this would exacerbate the issue of identifying what, or who, could be behind broken satellites.

The future

So far, the US and Russian Space Surveillance Systems have catalogued 170,000 pieces of large space debris (between 4 and 8 inches wide) and are currently tracking them to prevent anymore dilemmas like the ones Adushkin and his colleagues cite in their paper.

But it's not just the large objects that concern Adushkin, who reported that even small objects (less than 1/3 of an inch) could damage satellites to the point they can't function properly.

Using mathematical models, Adushkin and his colleagues calculated what the situtation will be like in 200 years if we continue to leave satellites in space and make no effort to clean up the mess. They estimate we'll have:

1.5 times more fragments greater than 8 inches across

3.2 times more fragments between 4 and 8 inches across

13-20 times more smaller-sized fragments less than 4 inches across

"The number of small-size, non-catalogued objects will grow exponentially in mutual collisions," the researchers reported.

#### Nuke war causes extinction – it won’t stay limited

Edwards 17 [(Paul N. Edwards, CISAC’s William J. Perry Fellow in International Security at Stanford’s Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. Being interviewed by EarthSky/card is only parts of the interview directly from Paul Edwards.) “How nuclear war would affect Earth’s climate,” EarthSky, September 8, 2017, earthsky.org/human-world/how-nuclear-war-would-affect-earths-climate] TDI

We are not talking enough about the climatic effects of nuclear war.

The “nuclear winter” theory of the mid-1980s played a significant role in the arms reductions of that period. But with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reduction of U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals, this aspect of nuclear war has faded from view. That’s not good. In the mid-2000s, climate scientists such as Alan Robock (Rutgers) took another look at nuclear winter theory. This time around, they used much-improved and much more detailed climate models than those available 20 years earlier. They also tested the potential effects of smaller nuclear exchanges.

The result: an exchange involving just 50 nuclear weapons — the kind of thing we might see in an India-Pakistan war, for example — could loft 5 billion kilograms of smoke, soot and dust high into the stratosphere. That’s enough to cool the entire planet by about 2 degrees Fahrenheit (1.25 degrees Celsius) — about where we were during the Little Ice Age of the 17th century. Growing seasons could be shortened enough to create really significant food shortages. So the climatic effects of even a relatively small nuclear war would be planet-wide.

What about a larger-scale conflict?

A U.S.-Russia war currently seems unlikely, but if it were to occur, hundreds or even thousands of nuclear weapons might be launched. The climatic consequences would be catastrophic: global average temperatures would drop as much as 12 degrees Fahrenheit (7 degrees Celsius) for up to several years — temperatures last seen during the great ice ages. Meanwhile, smoke and dust circulating in the stratosphere would darken the atmosphere enough to inhibit photosynthesis, causing disastrous crop failures, widespread famine and massive ecological disruption.

The effect would be similar to that of the giant meteor believed to be responsible for the extinction of the dinosaurs. This time, we would be the dinosaurs.

Many people are concerned about North Korea’s advancing missile capabilities. Is nuclear war likely in your opinion?

At this writing, I think we are closer to a nuclear war than we have been since the early 1960s. In the North Korea case, both Kim Jong-un and President Trump are bullies inclined to escalate confrontations. President Trump lacks impulse control, and there are precious few checks on his ability to initiate a nuclear strike. We have to hope that our generals, both inside and outside the White House, can rein him in.

North Korea would most certainly “lose” a nuclear war with the United States. But many millions would die, including hundreds of thousands of Americans currently living in South Korea and Japan (probable North Korean targets). Such vast damage would be wrought in Korea, Japan and Pacific island territories (such as Guam) that any “victory” wouldn’t deserve the name. Not only would that region be left with horrible suffering amongst the survivors; it would also immediately face famine and rampant disease. Radioactive fallout from such a war would spread around the world, including to the U.S.

It has been more than 70 years since the last time a nuclear bomb was used in warfare. What would be the effects on the environment and on human health today?

To my knowledge, most of the changes in nuclear weapons technology since the 1950s have focused on making them smaller and lighter, and making delivery systems more accurate, rather than on changing their effects on the environment or on human health. So-called “battlefield” weapons with lower explosive yields are part of some arsenals now — but it’s quite unlikely that any exchange between two nuclear powers would stay limited to these smaller, less destructive bombs.

### AC – Africa Mining Advantage

#### Space mining destroys the African economy

Oni 19 [(David, a space industry and technology analyst at Space in Africa. He’s a graduate of Mining Engineering from the Federal University of Technology Akure.) “The Effect of Asteroid Mining on Mining Activities in Africa,” Africa News, 9/24/19, <https://africanews.space/the-effect-of-asteroid-mining-on-mining-activities-in-africa/>]

At the moment, Asteroid mining poses no threat to terrestrial mining; however, this will not hold for long. The space industry is progressing at such a rapid pace, and the prospects are unequivocally mouth-watering. The big question is, will asteroid mining lure away investors in Africa? The planetary resources company estimates that a single 30-m asteroid may contain 30 billion dollars in platinum alone and a 500m rock could contain half the entire world resources of PGM. Considering the abundance of minerals in asteroids, once asteroid mining materialises, it will severely affect the precious metals market, usurp the prices of rare earth minerals, and a whole lot more because minerals that are usually somewhat scarce on earth will be easily accessible on asteroids. While foreign investors run the majority of the large-scale mining activities in the region, reports say that many African countries are dangerously dependent on mining activities. For some African countries, despite massive mineral wealth, their mining sectors are underdeveloped, and this is as a result of much focus on oil resources and a couple of other challenges. The million-dollar question is, what will become of the mining activities in Africa?

#### Economic decline causes Africa war

Tollefsen 17 [(Andreas Forø, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and Ph.D. in Human Geography from the University of Oslo) “Experienced poverty and local conflict violence," Conflict Management and Peace Science, 12/21/17, <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320740608_Experienced_poverty_and_local_conflict_violence>]

Civil wars are more frequent than any other type of conflict in the modern era, with the majority occurring in low-income countries (Hegre and Sambanis, 2006; Jakobsen et al., 2013). While most country-level studies find that poverty and inadequate economic development increase the risk of conflict—a relationship that appears to be causal (Braithwaite et al., 2016)—we lack consensus on the precise mechanisms driving this phenomenon (Justino, 2009). Researchers have explained a correlation between low GDP per capita and conflict using diverse hypotheses, including lowered opportunity costs for individuals to rebel (Collier et al., 2009) and responses to a state’s weak capacity (Fearon and Laitin, 2003).

However, as argued by Hegre (2016), development’s highly correlated indicators make it difficult to distinguish between the theoretical mechanisms underlying the development– conflict nexus. Moreover, previously proposed models often represent processes operating on various geographical scales at individual, group, and state levels. Few researchers have backed up theoretical expectations with data at scientifically fitting levels of analysis, consequently ignoring intra-country variations of explanatory variables and outcomes. Furthermore, aggregated measures are incapable of capturing significant variations in economic conditions (Elbers et al., 2003) and conflict intensity (Rustad et al., 2011) within countries. In addition, conflict areas are, in general, atypical of a nation as a whole (Buhaug and Lujala, 2005), which calls for a subnational level analysis.

Addressing these disconnects—and the fact that most conflict operates at a local level (Rustad et al., 2011)—a recent body of studies has focused on how subnational variations in poverty determine the locations within a country where conflicts break out (Buhaug et al., 2011; Hegre et al., 2009; Østby et al., 2009). To date, their findings are largely mixed, with no consensus yet on strength, direction, or mechanisms behind the relationship. The problem here may be the use of varying proxies for poverty that are only loosely linked to the rationale for conflict and/or insufficient attention on the local sociopolitical context.

The present study’s empirical contributions seek to help rectify the inadequate measures of poverty that have come to characterize the literature. To begin with, the article improves our understanding of whether and where a local poverty–conflict nexus exists by deploying experiential data on individuals’ actual wellbeing—which I argue is more closely connected to people’s motives and rationale for taking up arms. Second, the article examines the sociopolitical context’s conditioning effect on the poverty–conflict nexus. This is achieved by including data on individuals’ perceptions surrounding the quality of their local institutions, the presence of group grievances, and local unemployment rates. These factors, I argue, are more closely linked to reasons for fighting than are common proxies such as night-time luminosity and estimates of economic activity, both of which are often derived from dividing GDP per capita by local population counts.

Poverty—a state in which individuals’ basic needs go unmet—has been shown to motivate people to join rebellions. Humphreys and Weinstein (2008), for instance, found that poverty predicted inscription in the Revolutionary United Front during Sierra Leone’s civil war. Barrett (2011) similarly saw how promises of loot lured the poor to enlist in the 1997– 1998 dispute in Nigeria’s local government area known as Toto. Combatants of the Toto conflict were also more likely to join the rebellion if they stood to gain personal protection, food, and shelter.

For the present study, I developed a dataset by aggregating survey responses from the pan-African Afrobarometer survey to subnational districts and combining the results with information on post-survey violent conflicts. The dataset consists of 4008 subnational districts, spanning 35 African countries. As most districts were only assessed once, thus restricting study of within-unit variation, survey responses were also aggregated to higher-order subnational regions, resulting in a dataset of 111 regions that were surveyed at least twice; this permitted a region-level fixed-effects model design.

Using a pooled cross-sectional dataset of districts, I found that high levels of poverty were linked to increases in local conflict-based violence. Districts with a large share of poor individuals, both in absolute terms and relative to country average, had a higher risk ofconflict than more affluent areas. This relationship held in a coarsened exact matching setup, as well as in a region-level fixed effects design with repeated measurements across time. While the results reveal a local poverty–conflict link, they do not aid in uncovering underlying mechanisms.

Using interactions models, I found that poverty increased the risk of conflict, although only where local institutions are weak. The results also show that poverty-stricken areas in which individuals strongly perceive group injustice have a greater risk of conflict than similarly impoverished regions with no aggrieved population. A departure from the local individual opportunity cost explanation, local economic opportunities do not seem to condition the poverty–conflict nexus. In sum, the results suggest that while poverty is significantly connected to conflict, high-quality institutions and inclusiveness of ethnic groups can prevent violence. Although a wide range of robustness checks and alternative model specifications were implemented, including matching and fixed-effects models, the issue of endogeneity could not be ruled out; doing so would require some kind of exogenous instrument, which I have been unable to identify.

The remainder of this article elaborates on the theoretical framework linking subnational poverty to local conflict-based violence. This is followed by a discussion of existing methods for measuring local poverty and their potential shortcomings. Next presented is the study’s research design and modeling strategy, followed by a discussion of empirical results. The conclusion considers the study’s limitations and proposes avenues for future research on poverty in locations that support rebel groups.

Poverty and conflict

A direct link

A connection between low income and risk of conflict is among the most robust findings in the literature on civil wars (Hegre and Sambanis, 2006). However, there is little consensus on the mechanisms through which poverty may produce conflict. Collier and Hoeffler (1998) claimed that low per-capita income lowers the opportunity cost of rebellion because when they have less to lose from taking up arms, poorer individuals become more inclined to rebel. Fearon and Laitin (2003) observed that poorer countries experience more conflict because they are unable to monitor and control all of their territory, thereby creating pockets of hospitable conditions for insurgents; Tollefsen and Buhaug (2015) identified a similar scenario at the local level.

#### Great power war

Yeisley 11 [(USAF Lieutenant Colonel Mark O. Yeisley, assistant professor of international relations at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell AFB, Alabama. MA Colorado State, PhD in international relations from Duke University) “Bipolarity, Proxy Wars, and the Rise of China,” Strategic Studies Quarterly, Winter 2011, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26270538?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents>] TDI

Bipolarity, Nuclear Weapons, and Sino-US Proxy Conflict in Africa

It is likely China will achieve economic and then military parity with the United States in the next two decades. China currently possesses 240 nuclear warheads and 135 ballistic missiles capable of reaching the United States or its allies; that number of nuclear warheads is estimated to double by the mid 2020s.43 As during the Cold War, a bipolar system in which war between the United States and China is too costly will lead to policy decisions that seek conflict resolution elsewhere.44 But why would China’s rising necessarily lead to geostrategic competition with the United States, and where would this most likely occur? Unlike the Cold War, access to strategic resources rather than ideology would lie at the heart of future US-Sino competition, and the new “great game” will most likely be played in Africa.

Despite Communist Party control of its government, China is not interested in spreading its version of communism and is much more pragmatic in its objectives—securing resources to meet the needs of its citizens and improve their standard of living.45 Some estimates show that China will overtake the United States to become the world’s largest economy by 2015, and rising powers usually take the necessary steps to “ensure markets, materials, and transportation routes.”46 China is the leading global consumer of aluminum, copper, lead, nickel, zinc, tin, and iron ore, and its metal needs now represent more than 25 percent of the world’s total.47 In contrast, from 1970 to 1995, US consumption of all materials, including metals, accounted for one-third of the global total despite representing only 5 percent of the world’s population.48 China is the largest energy consumer, according to the International Energy Agency, surpassing the United States in consumption of oil, coal, and natural gas in 2009.49 As the two largest consumers of both global energy and materials, the United States and China must seek foreign policy prescriptions to fulfill future resource needs. While the United States can alleviate some of its energy needs via bio- or coal-based fuels, hydrogen, or natural gas alternatives, China currently lacks the technological know-how to do so and remains tied to a mainly nonrenewable energy resource base. Since the majority of these needs are nonrenewable, competition of necessity will be zero-sum and will be conducted via all instruments of power.50

Africa is home to a wealth of mineral and energy resources, much of which still remains largely unexploited. Seven African states possess huge endowments of oil, and four of these have equally substantial amounts of natural gas.51 Africa also enjoys large deposits of bauxite (used to make aluminum), copper, lead, nickel, zinc, and iron ore, all of which are imported and highly desired by China. Recent activity serves to prove that China seeks greater access to natural resources in Africa by avidly promoting Chinese development in a large number of African nations. South Africa, the continent’s largest economy, has recently allowed China to help develop its vast mineral wealth; it is China’s number one African source of manganese, iron, and copper.52 Chinese involvement in Africa is not wholly extractive; the continent provides a booming export market for China’s goods and a forum to augment its soft power in the region by offering alternatives to the political and economic baggage that accompanies US foreign aid.53

Of primary interest is open access to Africa’s significant deposits of oil and other energy resources. For example, China has 4,000 military personnel in Sudan to protect its interests in energy and mineral investments there; it also owns 40 percent of the Greater Nile Oil Production Company.54 Estimates indicate that within the next few decades China will obtain 40 percent of its oil and gas supplies from Africa.55 Trade and investment in Africa have also been on the rise; trade has grown more than 10 percent annually in the past decade. Between 2002 and 2004, African exports to China doubled, ranking it third behind the United States and France in trade with the continent. Chinese investment is also growing; more than 700 Chinese business operations across Africa total over $1 billion. Aid and direct economic assistance are increasing as well, and China has forgiven the debt of some 31 African nations.56

Africa is thus a vital foreign interest for the Chinese and must be for the United States; access to its mineral and petroleum wealth is crucial to the survival of each.57 Although the US and Chinese economies are tightly interconnected, the nonrenewable nature of these assets means competition will remain a zero-sum game. Nearly all African states have been independent entities for less than 50 years; consolidating robust domestic state institutions and stable governments remains problematic.58 Studies have shown that weak governments are often prime targets for civil conflicts that prove costly to control.59 Many African nations possess both strategic resources and weak regimes, making them vulnerable to internal conflict and thus valuable candidates for assistance from China or the United States to help settle their domestic grievances. With access to African resources of vital strategic interest to each side, competition could likely occur by proxy via diplomatic, economic, or military assistance to one (or both) of the parties involved.

Realist claims that focusing on third-world issues is misplaced are thus fallacious; war in a future US-China bipolar system remains as costly as it was during the Cold War. Because of the fragile nature of many African regimes, domestic grievances are more prone to result in conflict; US and Chinese strategic interests will dictate an intrusive foreign policy to be both prudent and vital. US-Sino proxy conflicts over control of African resources will likely become necessary if these great powers are to sustain their national security postures, especially in terms of strategic defense.60

### 1AC – Framing

***Only* pleasure and pain are intrinsically valuable.**

**Moen 16** [Ole Martin Moen, Research Fellow in Philosophy at University of Oslo “An Argument for Hedonism” Journal of Value Inquiry (Springer), 50 (2) 2016: 267–281] SJDI

Let us start by observing, empirically, that **a widely shared judgment about intrinsic value and disvalue is that pleasure is intrinsically valuable and pain is intrinsically disvaluable.** **On virtually any proposed list of intrinsic values and disvalues (we will look at some of them below), pleasure is included among the intrinsic values and pain among the intrinsic disvalues.** This inclusion makes intuitive sense, moreover, for **there is something undeniably good about the way pleasure feels and something undeniably bad about the way pain feels, and neither the goodness of pleasure nor the badness of pain seems to be exhausted by the further effects that these experiences might have.** “Pleasure” and “pain” are here understood inclusively, as encompassing anything hedonically positive and anything hedonically negative.2 **The special value statuses of pleasure and pain are manifested in how we treat these experiences in our everyday reasoning about values.** If you tell me that you are heading for the convenience store, **I might ask: “What for?” This is a reasonable question, for when you go to the convenience store you usually do so**, not merely for the sake of going to the convenience store, but **for the sake of achieving something further that you deem to be valuable.** You might answer, for example: “To buy soda.” This answer makes sense, for soda is a nice thing and you can get it at the convenience store. I might further inquire, however: “What is buying the soda good for?” This further question can also be a reasonable one, for it need not be obvious why you want the soda. You might answer: “Well, I want it for the pleasure of drinking it.” **If I then proceed by asking “But what is the pleasure of drinking the soda good for?” the discussion is likely to reach an awkward end. The reason is that the pleasure is not good for anything further; it is simply that for which going to the convenience store and buying the soda is good.**3 As Aristotle observes**: “We never ask [a man] what his end is in being pleased, because we assume that pleasure is choice worthy in itself.**”4 Presumably, a similar story can be told in the case of pains, for if someone says “This is painful!” we never respond by asking: “And why is that a problem?” We take for granted that if something is painful, we have a sufficient explanation of why it is bad. If we are onto something in our everyday reasoning about values, it seems that **pleasure and pain are both places where we reach the end of the line in matters of value.**

#### Thus, the standard is maximizing expected well-being – prefer:

#### 1] Actor specificity

#### A] Governments must aggregate since every policy benefits some and harms others, which also means side constraints freeze action.

#### B] States lack wills or intentions since policies are collective actions. Actor-specificity comes first since different agents have different ethical standings. Link turns calc indites because the alt would be *no* action.

#### 2] No act-omission distinction—governments are responsible for everything in the public sphere so inaction is implicit authorization of action: they have to yes/no bills, which means everything collapse to aggregation.

#### 3] Only consequentialism explains degrees of wrongness—if I break a promise to meet up for lunch, that is not as bad as breaking a promise to take a dying person to the hospital via intuitions. Intuitions outweigh—they’re the foundational basis for any argument and theories that contradict our intuitions are most likely false even if we can’t deductively determine why.

#### Existential risks outweigh.

Farquhar et al. 17 – Sebastian Farquhar, Computer Science DPhil Student at the University of Oxford. John Halstead, Political Philosophy DPhil at the University of Oxford. Dr. Owen Cotton-Barratt, Pure Math DPhil at the University of Oxford. Dr. Stefan Schubert, Philosophy PhD at Lund University. Haydn Belfield, a BA. Andrew Snyder-Beattie, Philosophy PhD Student at the University of Oxford. [Existential Risk: Diplomacy and Governance, Global Priorities Project, 1-23-17, [https://www.fhi.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Existential-Risks-2017-01-23.pdf]//BPS](https://www.fhi.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Existential-Risks-2017-01-23.pdf%5d//BPS)

In this argument, it seems that Parfit is assuming that the survivors of a nuclear war that kills 99% of the population would eventually be able to recover civilisation without long-term effect. As we have seen, this may not be a safe assumption – but for the purposes of this thought experiment, the point stands. What makes existential catastrophes especially bad is that they would “destroy the future,” as another Oxford philosopher, Nick Bostrom, puts it.66 This future could potentially be extremely long and full of flourishing, and would therefore have extremely large value. In standard risk analysis, when working out how to respond to risk, we work out the expected value of risk reduction, by weighing the probability that an action will prevent an adverse event against the severity of the event. Because the value of preventing existential catastrophe is so vast, even a tiny probability of prevention has huge expected value.67 Of course, there is persisting reasonable disagreement about ethics and there are a number of ways one might resist this conclusion.68 Therefore, it would be unjustified to be overconfident in Parfit and Bostrom’s argument. In some areas, government policy does give significant weight to future generations. For example, in assessing the risks of nuclear waste storage, governments have considered timeframes of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and even a million years.69 Justifications for this policy usually appeal to principles of *intergenerational equity* according to which future generations ought to get as much protection as current generations.70 Similarly, widely accepted norms of sustainable development require development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.71 However, when it comes to existential risk, it would seem that we fail to live up to principles of intergenerational equity. Existential catastrophe would not only give future generations less than the current generations; it would give them *nothing*. Indeed, reducing existential risk plausibly has a quite low cost for us in comparison with the huge expected value it has for future generations. In spite of this, relatively little is done to reduce existential risk. Unless we give up on norms of intergenerational equity, they give us a strong case for significantly increasing our efforts to reduce existential risks. 1.3. WHY EXISTENTIAL RISKS MAY BE SYSTEMATICALLY UNDERINVESTED IN, AND THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY In spite of the importance of existential risk reduction, it probably receives less attention than is warranted. As a result, concerted international cooperation is required if we are to receive adequate protection from existential risks. 1.3.1. Why existential risks are likely to be underinvested in There are several reasons why existential risk reduction is likely to be underinvested in. Firstly, it is *a global public good*. Economic theory predicts that such goods tend to be underprovided. The benefits of existential risk reduction are widely and indivisibly dispersed around the globe from the countries responsible for taking action. Consequently, a country which reduces existential risk gains only a small portion of the benefits but bears the full brunt of the costs. Countries thus have strong incentives to free ride, receiving the benefits of risk reduction without contributing. As a result, too few do what is in the common interest. Secondly, as already suggested above, existential risk reduction is an *intergenerational* public good: most of the benefits are enjoyed by future generations who have no say in the political process. For these goods, the problem is *temporal* free riding: the current generation enjoys the benefits of inaction while future generations bear the costs. Thirdly, many existential risks, such as machine superintelligence, engineered pandemics, and solar geoengineering, pose an unprecedented and uncertain future threat. Consequently, it is hard to develop a satisfactory governance regime for them: there are few existing governance instruments which can be applied to these risks, and it is unclear what shape new instruments should take. In this way, our position with regard to these emerging risks is comparable to the one we faced when nuclear weapons first became available. Cognitive biases also lead people to underestimate existential risks. Since there have not been any catastrophes of this magnitude, these risks are not salient to politicians and the public.72 This is an example of the misapplication of the *availability heuristic*, a mental shortcut which assumes that something is important only if it can be readily recalled. Another cognitive bias affecting perceptions of existential risk is scope neglect. In a seminal 1992 study, three groups were asked how much they would be willing to pay to save 2,000, 20,000 or 200,000 birds from drowning in uncovered oil ponds. The groups answered $80, $78, and $88, respectively.73 In this case, the size of the benefits had little effect on the scale of the preferred response. People become numbed to the effect of saving lives when the numbers get too large. 74 Scope neglect is a particularly acute problem for existential risk because the numbers at stake are so large. Due to scope neglect, decision-makers are prone to treat existential risks in a similar way to problems which are less severe by many orders of magnitude. A wide range of other cognitive biases are likely to affect the evaluation of existential risks.75

#### Util is good – existential threats outweigh

**GPP 17** (Global Priorities Project, Future of Humanity Institute at the University of Oxford, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, “Existential Risk: Diplomacy and Governance,” Global Priorities Project, 2017, <https://www.fhi.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Existential-Risks-2017-01-23.pdf>

1.2. THE ETHICS OF EXISTENTIAL RISK In his book Reasons and Persons, Oxford philosopher Derek Parfit advanced an influential argument about the importance of avoiding extinction: I believe that if we destroy mankind, as we now can, this outcome will be much worse than most people think. Compare three outcomes: (1) Peace. (2) A nuclear war that kills 99% of the world’s existing population. (3) A nuclear war that kills 100%. (2) would be worse than (1), and (3) would be worse than (2). Which is the greater of these two differences? Most people believe that the greater difference is between (1) and (2). I believe that the difference between (2) and (3) is very much greater. ... The Earth will remain habitable for **at least another billion years**. Civilization began only a few thousand years ago. If we do not destroy mankind, these few thousand years may be only **a tiny fraction** of the whole of civilized human history. The difference between (2) and (3) may thus be the difference between this tiny fraction and all of the rest of this history. If we compare this possible history to a day, what has occurred so far is only a **fraction of a second**.65 In this argument, it seems that Parfit is assuming that the survivors of a nuclear war that kills 99% of the population would eventually be able to recover civilisation without long-term effect. As we have seen, this may not be a safe assumption – but for the purposes of this thought experiment, the point stands. What makes existential catastrophes especially bad is that they would “**destroy the future**,” as another Oxford philosopher, Nick Bostrom, puts it.66 This future could potentially be extremely long and full of flourishing, and would therefore have extremely large value. In standard risk analysis, when working out how to respond to risk, we work out the expected value of risk reduction, by weighing the probability that an action will prevent an adverse event against the severity of the event. Because the value of preventing existential catastrophe is so vast, even a tiny probability of prevention has huge expected value.67 Of course, there is persisting reasonable disagreement about ethics and there are a number of ways one might resist this conclusion.68 Therefore, it would be unjustified to be overconfident in Parfit and Bostrom’s argument. In some areas, government policy does give significant weight to future generations. For example, in assessing the risks of nuclear waste storage, governments have considered timeframes of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and even a million years.69 Justifications for this policy usually appeal to principles of intergenerational equity according to which future generations ought to get as much protection as current generations.70 Similarly, widely accepted norms of sustainable development require development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.71 However, when it comes to existential risk, it would seem that we fail to live up to principles of intergenerational equity. Existential catastrophe would not only give future generations less than the current generations; **it would give them nothing**. Indeed, reducing existential risk plausibly has a quite low cost for us in comparison with the huge expected value it has for future generations. In spite of this, relatively little is done to reduce existential risk. Unless we give up on norms of intergenerational equity, they give us a strong case for significantly increasing our efforts to reduce existential risks. 1.3. 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adopting a securitisation discourse around orbital debris (Bowen, 2014: 47), which may cause concerns as to whether policymakers may react to future American satellite collisions in a militarised manner.

A number of NewSpace actors are likely to complicate these worries even further through recent satellite proposals. Whilst Boeing is proposing a constellation of up to 3,000 satellites, SpaceX has even grander goals of creating a constellation consisting of 4,425 satellites, eventually expanding to 12,000 satellites in the near-future (Kosiak, 2019: 7). Putting this into context, there are currently just around 1,400 active satellites in orbit around the Earth, highlighting the scale of these projects. The collision between a single US privately-owned Iridium satellite and state-owned Russian Cosmos satellite in 2009 underscored not only the sheer amount of debris caused by these collisions – over 1,500 pieces – but also foreshadowed the possible geopolitical tensions that may arise from them (Wang, 2010: 87-88). Given the number of various commercial satellite constellations possibly going into orbit in the near-future, this raises questions over the possibly devastating security hazards they could pose once in orbit or when they eventually become defunct.

Yet the proliferation of these commercial satellite plans also pose significant environmental issues. Article IX of the OST asserts that: “States shall pursue activities of outer space in a manner that avoids any harmful contamination or adverse environmental changes on Earth” (UN, 1967). However, the use of terms like ‘harmful’ or ‘adverse change’ underscores the lack of specificity over what exactly constitutes environmental damage, or for whom it must refrain from harming. There is also a failure to address the explicit problem of space debris since the discourse is primarily concentrated on chemical effluent pollution, undermining attempts to facilitate the removal of floating wreckage(Gupta, 2016: 26).

The inability of the OST to properly promote environmental considerations in space has been mirrored in the NewSpace community, where there has been a woeful lack of ecological consideration: “The hundreds of articles and books on outer space resource development seldom mention that such actions may adversely affect the environment in ways that will potentially disadvantage their enterprises and the humans that will be required to implement them” (Kramer, 2017: 136). Such images evoke the types of difficulties that private firms have encountered on Earth reconciling capital with the environment in a way that doesn’t damage profit margins (Magdoff & Foster, 2011: 61-66). Yet in doing so, this neglect is only likely to result in the proliferation of extra-terrestrial debris that the UN OST failed to address. Indeed, despite its vastness there is only a narrow region of orbital space that is either useable or beneficial for prolonged human missions (Brearley, 2005: 2), meaning that the increase in space debris from these massive commercial satellite constellations will likely be at the detriment of developing nations who have yet fostered spacefaring capabilities.

Elon Musk’s SpaceX company has already caused complications for Earth-bound astrologists. The brightness of his recent ‘Starlink’ satellite constellation system in comparison to other satellites has been obscuring telescopic images (see Grush, 2020). More concerningly, Starlink may be much more visible during twilight hours which could be problematic in identifying potentially hazardous asteroids in a timely manner (The Verge, 2020). In this sense, whilst private space entrepreneurs are able to increase their profitability from being able to establish constellations, such endeavours are spoiling the scientific work of researchers on Earth that may complicate the monitoring of Earth-based asteroid impacts.

Conclusion: Space as a Global Commodity

Ultimately, this essay has revealed how the UN OST fails to adequately regulate private space enterprises in outer space within an array of activities. Predominately designed from a state-centric perspective, the increasing entanglement of the state apparatus with the private sector is enabling both actors to satisfy their extra-terrestrial interests through legal ambiguities in a way that the treaty never envisaged possible.

Yet, these processes also expose the ways in which the conceptualisation of outer space by both the drafters of the OST and NewSpace actors is intimately connected to Earth-bound social relations and power structures. Whether it be contestations over resources, surveillance or the environment, the concerns raised mirror those taking place on Earth. A product of its time, the OST was broadly concerned with protecting states from damage caused by one another in a tense international terrestrial atmosphere of possible nuclear annihilation, rather than seeking to protect the space environment as an aspiration “in its own right” (Brearley, 2005: 19). Despite framing themselves as the saviours of an anthropogenic extinction, the emphasis of NewSpace entrepreneurs on profit accumulation in space also emulates the types of criticisms private enterprises have faced on Earth, and risk the extension of existing wealth inequalities into the cosmos. The precedent set by NASA in April 2020 that will likely lead to the further involvement of private firms such as SpaceX in space endeavours will therefore serve to restrict public access to the extra-terrestrial domain – and the benefits that may arise from this. Indeed, the notion of outer space as a ‘global commons’ is slowly turning into one of a ‘global commodity’.