# 1AC

#### I affirm the resolution – The appropriation of outer space by private entities is unjust

### 1AC – Framing

#### The value is morality

#### The value criterion is maximizing expected well-being. Also known as hedonistic act utilitarianism.

#### Prefer our value criterion:

#### 1] Maximizing expected well-being is intrinsic to every action we take -- for example, if you put your hand on a hot stove, you’d pull it back before your brain sends a signal to pull it back. Neuroscience proves.

Blum et al. 18 [Kenneth Blum, 1Department of Psychiatry, Boonshoft School of Medicine, Dayton VA Medical Center, Wright State University, Dayton, OH, USA 2Department of Psychiatry, McKnight Brain Institute, University of Florida College of Medicine, Gainesville, FL, USA 3Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Keck Medicine University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA 4Division of Applied Clinical Research & Education, Dominion Diagnostics, LLC, North Kingstown, RI, USA 5Department of Precision Medicine, Geneus Health LLC, San Antonio, TX, USA 6Department of Addiction Research & Therapy, Nupathways Inc., Innsbrook, MO, USA 7Department of Clinical Neurology, Path Foundation, New York, NY, USA 8Division of Neuroscience-Based Addiction Therapy, The Shores Treatment & Recovery Center, Port Saint Lucie, FL, USA 9Institute of Psychology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary 10Division of Addiction Research, Dominion Diagnostics, LLC. North Kingston, RI, USA 11Victory Nutrition International, Lederach, PA., USA 12National Human Genome Center at Howard University, Washington, DC., USA, Marjorie Gondré-Lewis, 12National Human Genome Center at Howard University, Washington, DC., USA 13Departments of Anatomy and Psychiatry, Howard University College of Medicine, Washington, DC US, Bruce Steinberg, 4Division of Applied Clinical Research & Education, Dominion Diagnostics, LLC, North Kingstown, RI, USA, Igor Elman, 15Department Psychiatry, Cooper University School of Medicine, Camden, NJ, USA, David Baron, 3Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Keck Medicine University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA, Edward J Modestino, 14Department of Psychology, Curry College, Milton, MA, USA, Rajendra D Badgaiyan, 15Department Psychiatry, Cooper University School of Medicine, Camden, NJ, USA, Mark S Gold 16Department of Psychiatry, Washington University, St. Louis, MO, USA, “Our evolved unique pleasure circuit makes humans different from apes: Reconsideration of data derived from animal studies”, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 28 February 2018, accessed: 19 August 2020, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6446569/>] R.S.

**Pleasure** is not only one of the three primary reward functions but it also **defines reward.** As homeostasis explains the functions of only a limited number of rewards, the principal reason why particular stimuli, objects, events, situations, and activities are rewarding may be due to pleasure. This applies first of all to sex and to the primary homeostatic rewards of food and liquid and extends to money, taste, beauty, social encounters and nonmaterial, internally set, and intrinsic rewards. Pleasure, as the primary effect of rewards, drives the prime reward functions of learning, approach behavior, and decision making and provides the **basis for hedonic theories** of reward function. We are attracted by most rewards and exert intense efforts to obtain them, just because they are enjoyable [10].

Pleasure is a passive reaction that derives from the experience or prediction of reward and may lead to a long-lasting state of happiness. The word happiness is difficult to define. In fact, just obtaining physical pleasure may not be enough. One key to happiness involves a network of good friends. However, it is not obvious how the higher forms of satisfaction and pleasure are related to an ice cream cone, or to your team winning a sporting event. Recent multidisciplinary research, using both humans and detailed invasive brain analysis of animals has discovered some critical ways that the brain processes pleasure [14].

Pleasure as a hallmark of reward is sufficient for defining a reward, but it may not be necessary. A reward may generate positive learning and approach behavior simply because it contains substances that are essential for body function. When we are hungry, we may eat bad and unpleasant meals. A monkey who receives hundreds of small drops of water every morning in the laboratory is unlikely to feel a rush of pleasure every time it gets the 0.1 ml. Nevertheless, with these precautions in mind, we may define any stimulus, object, event, activity, or situation that has the potential to produce pleasure as a reward. In the context of reward deficiency or for disorders of addiction, homeostasis pursues pharmacological treatments: drugs to treat drug addiction, obesity, and other compulsive behaviors. The theory of allostasis suggests broader approaches - such as re-expanding the range of possible pleasures and providing opportunities to expend effort in their pursuit. [15]. It is noteworthy, the first animal studies eliciting approach behavior by electrical brain stimulation interpreted their findings as a discovery of the brain’s pleasure centers [16] which were later partly associated with midbrain dopamine neurons [17–19] despite the notorious difficulties of identifying emotions in animals.

Evolutionary theories of pleasure: The love connection BO:D

Charles Darwin and other biological scientists that have examined the biological evolution and its basic principles found various mechanisms that steer behavior and biological development. Besides their theory on natural selection, it was particularly the sexual selection process that gained significance in the latter context over the last century, especially when it comes to the question of what makes us “what we are,” i.e., human. However, the capacity to sexually select and evolve is not at all a human accomplishment alone or a sign of our uniqueness; yet, we humans, as it seems, are ingenious in fooling ourselves and others–when we are in love or desperately search for it.

It is well established that modern biological theory conjectures that **organisms are** the **result of evolutionary competition.** In fact, Richard Dawkins stresses gene survival and propagation as the basic mechanism of life [20]. Only genes that lead to the fittest phenotype will make it. It is noteworthy that the phenotype is selected based on behavior that maximizes gene propagation. To do so, the phenotype must survive and generate offspring, and be bettear at it than its competitors. Thus, the ultimate, distal function of rewards is to increase evolutionary fitness by ensuring the survival of the organism and reproduction. It is agreed that learning, approach, economic decisions, and positive emotions are the proximal functions through which phenotypes obtain other necessary nutrients for survival, mating, and care for offspring.

Behavioral reward functions have evolved to help individuals to survive and propagate their genes. Apparently, people need to live well and long enough to reproduce. Most would agree that homo-sapiens do so by ingesting the substances that make their bodies function properly. For this reason, foods and drinks are rewards. Additional rewards, including those used for economic exchanges, ensure sufficient palatable food and drink supply. Mating and gene propagation is supported by powerful sexual attraction. Additional properties, like body form, augment the chance to mate and nourish and defend offspring and are therefore also rewards. Care for offspring until they can reproduce themselves helps gene propagation and is rewarding; otherwise, many believe mating is useless. According to David E Comings, as any small edge will ultimately result in evolutionary advantage [21], additional reward mechanisms like novelty seeking and exploration widen the spectrum of available rewards and thus enhance the chance for survival, reproduction, and ultimate gene propagation. These functions may help us to obtain the benefits of distant rewards that are determined by our own interests and not immediately available in the environment. Thus the distal reward function in gene propagation and evolutionary fitness defines the proximal reward functions that we see in everyday behavior. That is why foods, drinks, mates, and offspring are rewarding.

There have been theories linking pleasure as a required component of health benefits salutogenesis, (salugenesis). In essence, under these terms, pleasure is described as a state or feeling of happiness and satisfaction resulting from an experience that one enjoys. Regarding pleasure, it is a double-edged sword, on the one hand, it promotes positive feelings (like mindfulness) and even better cognition, possibly through the release of dopamine [22]. But on the other hand, pleasure simultaneously encourages addiction and other negative behaviors, i.e., motivational toxicity. It is a complex neurobiological phenomenon, relying on reward circuitry or limbic activity. It is important to realize that through the “Brain Reward Cascade” (BRC) endorphin and endogenous morphinergic mechanisms may play a role [23]. While natural rewards are essential for survival and appetitive motivation leading to beneficial biological behaviors like eating, sex, and reproduction, crucial social interactions seem to further facilitate the positive effects exerted by pleasurable experiences. Indeed, experimentation with addictive drugs is capable of directly acting on reward pathways and causing deterioration of these systems promoting hypodopaminergia [24]. Most would agree that pleasurable activities can stimulate personal growth and may help to induce healthy behavioral changes, including stress management [25]. The work of Esch and Stefano [26] concerning the link between compassion and love implicate the brain reward system, and pleasure induction suggests that social contact in general, i.e., love, attachment, and compassion, can be highly effective in stress reduction, survival, and overall health.

Understanding the role of neurotransmission and pleasurable states both positive and negative have been adequately studied over many decades [26–37], but comparative anatomical and neurobiological function between animals and homo sapiens appear to be required and seem to be in an infancy stage.

Finding happiness is different between apes and humans

As stated earlier in this expert opinion one key to happiness involves a network of good friends [38]. However, it is not entirely clear exactly how the higher forms of satisfaction and pleasure are related to a sugar rush, winning a sports event or even sky diving, all of which augment dopamine release at the reward brain site. Recent multidisciplinary research, using both humans and detailed invasive brain analysis of animals has discovered some critical ways that the brain processes pleasure.

Remarkably, there are pathways for ordinary liking and pleasure, which are limited in scope as described above in this commentary. However, there are **many brain regions**, often termed hot and cold spots, that significantly **modulate** (increase or decrease) our **pleasure or** even produce **the opposite** of pleasure— that is disgust and fear [39]. One specific region of the nucleus accumbens is organized like a computer keyboard, with particular stimulus triggers in rows— producing an increase and decrease of pleasure and disgust. Moreover, the cortex has unique roles in the cognitive evaluation of our feelings of pleasure [40]. Importantly, the interplay of these multiple triggers and the higher brain centers in the prefrontal cortex are very intricate and are just being uncovered.

Desire and reward centers

It is surprising that many different sources of pleasure activate the same circuits between the mesocorticolimbic regions (Figure 1). Reward and desire are two aspects pleasure induction and have a very widespread, large circuit. Some part of this circuit distinguishes between desire and dread. The so-called pleasure circuitry called “REWARD” involves a well-known dopamine pathway in the mesolimbic system that can influence both pleasure and motivation.

In simplest terms, the well-established mesolimbic system is a dopamine circuit for reward. It starts in the ventral tegmental area (VTA) of the midbrain and travels to the nucleus accumbens (Figure 2). It is the cornerstone target to all addictions. The VTA is encompassed with neurons using glutamate, GABA, and dopamine. The nucleus accumbens (NAc) is located within the ventral striatum and is divided into two sub-regions—the motor and limbic regions associated with its core and shell, respectively. The NAc has spiny neurons that receive dopamine from the VTA and glutamate (a dopamine driver) from the hippocampus, amygdala and medial prefrontal cortex. Subsequently, the NAc projects GABA signals to an area termed the ventral pallidum (VP). The region is a relay station in the limbic loop of the basal ganglia, critical for motivation, behavior, emotions and the “Feel Good” response. This defined system of the brain is involved in all addictions –substance, and non –substance related. In 1995, our laboratory coined the term “Reward Deficiency Syndrome” (RDS) to describe genetic and epigenetic induced hypodopaminergia in the “Brain Reward Cascade” that contribute to addiction and compulsive behaviors [3,6,41].

Furthermore, ordinary “liking” of something, or pure pleasure, is represented by small regions mainly in the limbic system (old reptilian part of the brain). These may be part of larger neural circuits. In Latin, hedus is the term for “sweet”; and in Greek, hodone is the term for “pleasure.” Thus, the word Hedonic is now referring to various subcomponents of pleasure: some associated with purely sensory and others with more complex emotions involving morals, aesthetics, and social interactions. The capacity to have pleasure is part of being healthy and may even extend life, especially if linked to optimism as a dopaminergic response [42].

Psychiatric illness often includes symptoms of an abnormal inability to experience pleasure, referred to as anhedonia. A negative feeling state is called dysphoria, which can consist of many emotions such as pain, depression, anxiety, fear, and disgust. Previously many scientists used animal research to uncover the complex mechanisms of pleasure, liking, motivation and even emotions like panic and fear, as discussed above [43]. However, as a significant amount of related research about the specific brain regions of pleasure/reward circuitry has been derived from invasive studies of animals, these cannot be directly compared with subjective states experienced by humans.

In an attempt to resolve the controversy regarding the causal contributions of mesolimbic dopamine systems to reward, we have previously evaluated the three-main competing explanatory categories: “liking,” “learning,” and “wanting” [3]. That is, dopamine may mediate (a) liking: the hedonic impact of reward, (b) learning: learned predictions about rewarding effects, or (c) wanting: the pursuit of rewards by attributing incentive salience to reward-related stimuli [44]. We have evaluated these hypotheses, especially as they relate to the RDS, and we find that the incentive salience or “wanting” hypothesis of dopaminergic functioning is supported by a majority of the scientific evidence. Various neuroimaging studies have shown that anticipated behaviors such as sex and gaming, delicious foods and drugs of abuse all affect brain regions associated with reward networks, and may not be unidirectional. Drugs of abuse enhance dopamine signaling which sensitizes mesolimbic brain mechanisms that apparently evolved explicitly to attribute incentive salience to various rewards [45].

Addictive substances are voluntarily self-administered, and they enhance (directly or indirectly) dopaminergic synaptic function in the NAc. This activation of the brain reward networks (producing the ecstatic “high” that users seek). Although these circuits were initially thought to encode a set point of hedonic tone, it is now being considered to be far more complicated in function, also encoding attention, reward expectancy, disconfirmation of reward expectancy, and incentive motivation [46]. The argument about addiction as a disease may be confused with a predisposition to substance and nonsubstance rewards relative to the extreme effect of drugs of abuse on brain neurochemistry. The former sets up an individual to be at high risk through both genetic polymorphisms in reward genes as well as harmful epigenetic insult. Some Psychologists, even with all the data, still infer that addiction is not a disease [47]. Elevated stress levels, together with polymorphisms (genetic variations) of various dopaminergic genes and the genes related to other neurotransmitters (and their genetic variants), and may have an additive effect on vulnerability to various addictions [48]. In this regard, Vanyukov, et al. [48] suggested based on review that whereas the gateway hypothesis does not specify mechanistic connections between “stages,” and does not extend to the risks for addictions the concept of common liability to addictions may be more parsimonious. The latter theory is grounded in genetic theory and supported by data identifying common sources of variation in the risk for specific addictions (e.g., RDS). This commonality has identifiable neurobiological substrate and plausible evolutionary explanations.

Over many years the controversy of dopamine involvement in especially “pleasure” has led to confusion concerning separating motivation from actual pleasure (wanting versus liking) [49]. We take the position that animal studies cannot provide real clinical information as described by self-reports in humans. As mentioned earlier and in the abstract, on November 23rd, 2017, evidence for our concerns was discovered [50]

In essence, although nonhuman primate brains are similar to our own, the disparity between other primates and those of human cognitive abilities tells us that surface similarity is not the whole story. Sousa et al. [50] small case found various differentially expressed genes, to associate with pleasure related systems. Furthermore, the dopaminergic interneurons located in the human neocortex were absent from the neocortex of nonhuman African apes. Such differences in neuronal transcriptional programs may underlie a variety of neurodevelopmental disorders.

In simpler terms, the system controls the production of dopamine, a chemical messenger that plays a significant role in pleasure and rewards. The senior author, Dr. Nenad Sestan from Yale, stated: “Humans have evolved a dopamine system that is different than the one in chimpanzees.” This may explain why the behavior of humans is so unique from that of non-human primates, even though our brains are so surprisingly similar, Sestan said: “It might also shed light on why people are vulnerable to mental disorders such as autism (possibly even addiction).” Remarkably, this research finding emerged from an extensive, multicenter collaboration to compare the brains across several species. These researchers examined 247 specimens of neural tissue from six humans, five chimpanzees, and five macaque monkeys. Moreover, these investigators analyzed which genes were turned on or off in 16 regions of the brain. While the differences among species were subtle, **there was** a **remarkable contrast in** the **neocortices**, specifically in an area of the brain that is much more developed in humans than in chimpanzees. In fact, these researchers found that a gene called tyrosine hydroxylase (TH) for the enzyme, responsible for the production of dopamine, was expressed in the neocortex of humans, but not chimpanzees. As discussed earlier, dopamine is best known for its essential role within the brain’s reward system; the very system that responds to everything from sex, to gambling, to food, and to addictive drugs. However, dopamine also assists in regulating emotional responses, memory, and movement. Notably, abnormal dopamine levels have been linked to disorders including Parkinson’s, schizophrenia and spectrum disorders such as autism and addiction or RDS.

Nora Volkow, the director of NIDA, pointed out that one alluring possibility is that the neurotransmitter dopamine plays a substantial role in humans’ ability to pursue various rewards that are perhaps months or even years away in the future. This same idea has been suggested by Dr. Robert Sapolsky, a professor of biology and neurology at Stanford University. Dr. Sapolsky cited evidence that dopamine levels rise dramatically in humans when we anticipate potential rewards that are uncertain and even far off in our futures, such as retirement or even the possible alterlife. This may explain what often motivates people to work for things that have no apparent short-term benefit [51]. In similar work, Volkow and Bale [52] proposed a model in which dopamine can favor NOW processes through phasic signaling in reward circuits or LATER processes through tonic signaling in control circuits. Specifically, they suggest that through its modulation of the orbitofrontal cortex, which processes salience attribution, dopamine also enables shilting from NOW to LATER, while its modulation of the insula, which processes interoceptive information, influences the probability of selecting NOW versus LATER actions based on an individual’s physiological state. This hypothesis further supports the concept that disruptions along these circuits contribute to diverse pathologies, including obesity and addiction or RDS.

#### 2] Actor specificity:

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

#### 3] Extinction first under any framework

#### A] Future lives -- trillions of future lives are lost. They are just as valuable as current ones – anything else says some lives are worth less than others which is genocidal rhetoric

#### B] Reversibility -- extinction forecloses future improvement; prefer -- if we’re unsure about which interpretation of the world is true, we should preserve it to figure things out.

### Contention 1 is – mega constellations

#### Private entities are appropriating outerspace through mega-constellations of satellites, which create a unmanageable debris problem.

Johnson 20 [Chris, Space Law Advisor for Secure World Foundation, 9 years of professional experience in international space law and policy. J.D. from New York Law School; 2020; “The Legal Status of MegaLEO Constellations and Concerns About Appropriation of Large Swaths of Earth Orbit,” <https://swfound.org/media/206951/johnson2020_referenceworkentry_thelegalstatusofmegaleoconstel.pdf>] brett

Yes, This Is Impermissible Appropriation

Article II of the Outer Space Treaty, discussed above, is clear on the point that the appropriation of outer space, including the appropriation of either void space or of celestial bodies, is an impermissible and prohibited action under international law. No means or methods of possession of outer space will legitimize the appropriation or ownership of outer space, or subsections thereof.

Excludes Others

The constellations above, because they seem to so overwhelmingly possess particular orbits through the use of multiple satellites to occupy orbital planes, and in a manner that precludes other actors from using those exact planes, constitute an appropriation of those orbits. While the access to outer space is nonrivalrous – in the sense that anyone with the technological capacity to launch space objects can therefore explore space – it is also true that orbits closer to Earth are unique, and when any actor utilizes that orbit to such an extent to these proposed constellations will, it means that other actors simply cannot go there.

To allow SpaceX, for example, to so overwhelmingly occupy a number of altitudes with so many of their spacecraft, essentially means that SpaceX will henceforth be the sole owner and user of that orbit (at least until their satellites are removed). No other actors can realistically expect to operate there until that time. No other operator would dare run the risk of possible collision with so many other spacecraft in that orbit. Consequently, the sole occupant will be SpaceX, and if “possession is 9/10th of the law,” then SpaceX appears to be the owner of that orbit.

Done Without Coordination

Additionally, SpaceX and other operators of megaconstellations are doing so without any real international conversation or agreement, which is especially egregious and transgressive of the norms of outer space. Compared to the regime for GSO, as administered by the ITU and national frequency administrators, Low Earth Orbit is essentially ungoverned, and SpaceX and others are attempting to seize this lack of authority to claim entire portions of LEO for itself; and before any international agreement, consensus, or even discussion is had. They are operating on a purely “first come, first served” basis that smacks of unilateralism, if not colonialism.

Governments Are Ultimately Implicated

As we know, under international space law, what a nongovernmental entity does, a State is responsible for. Article VI of the Outer Space Treaty requires that at least one State authorize and supervise its nongovernmental entities and assure their continuing compliance with international law. As such, the prohibition on nonappropriation imposed upon States under Article II of the Outer Space Treaty applies equally to nongovernmental private entities such as SpaceX.

Nevertheless, through the launching and bringing into use of the Starlink constellation, SpaceX will be the sole occupant, and thereby, possessor, both fact and in law, of 550 km, 1100 km, 1130 km, 1275 km, and 1325 km above our planet (or whatever orbits they finally come to occupy). The same is true for the other operators of these large constellations which will be solely occupying entire orbits.

Long-Term Occupation Constitutes Appropriation

These altitudes are additionally significant, as nonfunctional spacecraft in orbits lower than around 500 km will re-enter the Earth’s atmosphere in months or a few years, but the altitudes selected for the Starlink constellation, while technologically desirable for their purposes, also mean that any spacecraft which are not de-orbited from these regions may be there for decades, or possibly even hundreds of years. By comparison, the granting of rights for orbital slots at GSO is in 15-year increments, a length of time much less than what the altitudes of the megaconstellations threaten. Such long spans of time at these altitudes by these megaconstellations further bolster the contention that this occupation rises to the level of appropriation of these orbits.

Prevents Others from Using Space

Article I of the Outer Space Treaty establishes that the exploration and use of outer space is “the province of all mankind.” It further requires that this exploration and use shall be by all States “without discrimination of any kind, on a basis of equality and in accordance with international law...” However, when one private corporation so overwhelmingly possesses entire portions of outer space, their use is discriminatory to other potential users and interferes with their freedom to access, explore, and use outer space. So long as these actors are so dominantly possessing and occupying those orbits, their actions exclude others from using them. What other operator would dare use orbits where there are already hundreds of satellites operating as part of a constellation? It would be an extremely unwise and risky decision to try to share these orbits with a mega constellation, so they will likely choose other altitudes and orbits. This massive occupation of particular orbits effectively defeats others from enjoying the use of outer space. While a State can issue permits for one of its corporations allowing them to launch and operate satellites to this extent, that does not automatically mean that their activities in outer space, an area beyond national sovereignty, are therefore in perfect accordance with the strictures of international law. Indeed, national permissions offer no such guarantee.

No Due Regard for Others

That these megaconstellations violate the prohibition on appropriation in Article II is additionally supported by Article IX of the Outer Space Treaty. Article IX requires that in the exploration and use of outer space, States “shall be guided by the principle of cooperation and mutual assistance and shall conduct all their activities in outer space... with due regard to the corresponding interests of other States...” There is hardly any way to view this deployment of megaconstellations as showing any type of due regard to the corresponding interests of others. This lack of regard further supports the notion of their unilateral transgressive violations of the purposes of space law norms.

Harmful Contamination

The impacts of the spacecraft on the pressing issue of space debris need not be gone into detail here. Suffice it to say, megaconstellations threaten mega-debris. The failure rate of these comparatively cheap satellites should give pause, because if 5% of a constellation of 100 satellites fails, this is 5 guaranteed new pieces of debris intentionally introduced to the fragile space domain. Article IX of the Outer Space Treaty warns of harmful contamination of the space environment and requires States to take appropriate measures to prevent this harmful contamination. A responsible government could not, in all seriousness, permit the intentional release of such amounts of space debris, especially in the already fraught orbits that many megaconstellations are headed towards. While the threat of space debris is not directly relevant to the accusation of appropriation of outer space, it goes towards the argument that these actors are conducting activities in a manner lacking in regard to others, and in fact, amounts to excluding others from using the space domain. By excluding others, this has the effect of taking orbits for themselves, which IS occupation.

If This Isn’t Appropriation, Then What Is?

Arguing in the alternative, if these megaconstellations — in their dominant occupation of entire orbits in orbital planes with numerous satellites — could be considered (merely for the sake of argument) to not be appropriation, we must therefore ask: what would be appropriation? What use of void space, including orbits of the Earth, would constitute actual appropriation? What further, additional fact of these uses of space, if added to the scenario, would cause that constellation to cross over the line into clearly prohibited appropriation? Perhaps the exact same scenario, but supplemented with an actual, formal claim of sovereignty, issued by a government, is the only element which could be added to megaconstellations which would then cross the threshold into appropriation. However, a formal claim of sovereignty would be merely an act occurring on Earth and would not change any actual facts in the space domain. Consequently, the lack of a formal claim of sovereignty should not be the deciding criteria in arriving at the conclusion that megaconstellations constitute appropriation of orbits.

Conclusion

In conclusion, these megaconstellations effectively occupy entire orbital regions with their vast fleet of spacecraft and in so doing effectively preclude other actors from sharing those domains. They have done so, or are attempting to do so, without any international consensus or discussion, which is most egregious for a domain outside of State sovereignty and which no State can own. Governments will ultimately be responsible for this appropriation, and both are prohibited from appropriating space. In distinction to GSO, their permission to go there means that they could occupy these regions for incredibly long periods — which again shows their appropriation. These constellations significantly prevent others from using those regions, which therefore interferes with others’ right to explore and use space. And ultimately, this reckless ambition shows absolutely no due regard (as per Article IX) for the corresponding rights of others. As such, these megaconstellations constitute an impermissible appropriation of particular regions of outer space, regardless of any formal, official claim of such by a responsible, authorizing government.

#### **The major impact is Kessler syndrome**, a phenomenon where increasing collisions of satellites and existing debris in space, produces a critical mass of debris that makes space next to impossible to navigate.

Boley & Byers 21 [Aaron C., Department of Physics and Astronomy @ The University of British Columbia\*, and Michael, Department of Political Science @ The University of British Columbia; Published: 20 May 2021; Scientific Reports; “Satellite mega-constellations create risks in Low Earth Orbit, the atmosphere and on Earth,” <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-021-89909-7>] brett

Companies are placing satellites into orbit at an unprecedented frequency to build ‘mega-constellations’ of communications satellites in Low Earth Orbit (LEO). In two years, the number of active and defunct satellites in LEO has increased by over 50%, to about 5000 (as of 30 March 2021). SpaceX alone is on track to add 11,000 more as it builds its Starlink mega-constellation and has already filed for permission for another 30,000 satellites with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)1. Others have similar plans, including OneWeb, Amazon, Telesat, and GW, which is a Chinese state-owned company2. The current governance system for LEO, while slowly changing, is ill-equipped to handle large satellite systems. Here, we outline how applying the consumer electronic model to satellites could lead to multiple tragedies of the commons. Some of these are well known, such as impediments to astronomy and an increased risk of space debris, while others have received insufficient attention, including changes to the chemistry of Earth’s upper atmosphere and increased dangers on Earth’s surface from re-entered debris. The heavy use of certain orbital regions might also result in a de facto exclusion of other actors from them, violating the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. All of these challenges could be addressed in a coordinated manner through multilateral law-making, whether in the United Nations, the Inter-Agency Debris Committee (IADC), or an ad hoc process, rather than in an uncoordinated manner through different national laws. Regardless of the law-making forum, mega-constellations require a shift in perspectives and policies: from looking at single satellites, to evaluating systems of thousands of satellites, and doing so within an understanding of the limitations of Earth’s environment, including its orbits.

Thousands of satellites and 1500 rocket bodies provide considerable mass in LEO, which can break into debris upon collisions, explosions, or degradation in the harsh space environment. Fragmentations increase the cross-section of orbiting material, and with it, the collision probability per time. Eventually, collisions could dominate on-orbit evolution, a situation called the Kessler Syndrome3. There are already over 12,000 trackable debris pieces in LEO, with these being typically 10 cm in diameter or larger. Including sizes down to 1 cm, there are about a million inferred debris pieces, all of which threaten satellites, spacecraft and astronauts due to their orbits crisscrossing at high relative speeds. Simulations of the long-term evolution of debris suggest that LEO is already in the protracted initial stages of the Kessler Syndrome, but that this could be managed through active debris removal4. The addition of satellite mega-constellations and the general proliferation of low-cost satellites in LEO stresses the environment further5,6,7,8.

Results

The overall setting

The rapid development of the space environment through mega-constellations, predominately by the ongoing construction of Starlink, is shown by the cumulative payload distribution function (Fig. 1). From an environmental perspective, the slope change in the distribution function defines NewSpace, an era of dominance by commercial actors. Before 2015, changes in the total on-orbit objects came principally from fragmentations, with effects of the 2007 Chinese anti-satellite test and the 2009 Kosmos-2251/Iridium-33 collisions being evident on the graph.

Figure 1

[Figure 1 omitted]

Cumulative on-orbit distribution functions (all orbits). Deorbited objects are not included. The 2007 and 2009 spikes are a Chinese anti-satellite test and the Iridium 33-Kosmos 2251 collision, respectively. The recent, rapid rise of the orange curve represents NewSpace (see "Methods").

Full size image

Although the volume of space is large, individual satellites and satellite systems have specific functions, with associated altitudes and inclinations (Fig. 2). This increases congestion and requires active management for station keeping and collision avoidance9, with automatic collision-avoidance technology still under development. Improved space situational awareness is required, with data from operators as well as ground- and space-based sensors being widely and freely shared10. Improved communications between satellite operators are also necessary: in 2019, the European Space Agency moved an Earth observation satellite to avoid colliding with a Starlink satellite, after failing to reach SpaceX by e-mail. Internationally adopted ‘right of way’ rules are needed10 to prevent games of ‘chicken’, as companies seek to preserve thruster fuel and avoid service interruptions. SpaceX and NASA recently announced11 a cooperative agreement to help reduce the risk of collisions, but this is only one operator and one agency.

Figure 2

[Figure 2 omitted]

Orbital distribution and density information for objects in Low Earth Orbit (LEO). (Left) Distribution of payloads (active and defunct satellites), binned to the nearest 1 km in altitude and 1° in orbital inclination. The centre of each circle represents the position on the diagram, and the size of the circle is proportional to the number of satellites within the given parameter space. (Right) Number density of different space resident objects (SROs) based on 1 km radial bins, averaged over the entire sky. Because SRO objects are on elliptical orbits, the contribution of a given object to an orbital shell is weighted by the time that object spends in the shell. Despite significant parameter space, satellites are clustered in their orbits due to mission requirements. The emerging Starlink cluster at 550 km and 55° inclination is already evident in both plots (Left and Right).

Full size image

When completed, Starlink will include about as many satellites as there are trackable debris pieces today, while its total mass will equal all the mass currently in LEO—over 3000 tonnes. The satellites will be placed in narrow orbital shells, creating unprecedented congestion, with 1258 already in orbit (as of 30 March 2021). OneWeb has already placed an initial 146 satellites, and Amazon, Telesat, GW and other companies, operating under different national regulatory regimes, are soon likely to follow.

Enhanced collision risk

Mega-constellations are composed of mass-produced satellites with few backup systems. This consumer electronic model allows for short upgrade cycles and rapid expansions of capabilities, but also considerable discarded equipment. SpaceX will actively de-orbit its satellites at the end of their 5–6-year operational lives. However, this process takes 6 months, so roughly 10% will be de-orbiting at any time. If other companies do likewise, thousands of de-orbiting satellites will be slowly passing through the same congested space, posing collision risks. Failures will increase these numbers, although the long-term failure rate is difficult to project. Figure 3 is similar to the righthand portion of Fig. 2 but includes the Starlink and OneWeb mega-constellations as filed (and amended) with the FCC (see “Methods”). The large density spikes show that some shells will have satellite number densities in excess of n=10−6 km−3.

Figure 3

[Figure 3 omitted]

Satellite density distribution in LEO with the Starlink and OneWeb mega-constellations as filed (and amended) with the FCC. Provided that the orbits are nearly circular, the number densities in those shells will exceed 10–6 km−3. Because the collisional cross-section in those shells is also high, they represent regions that have a high collision risk whenever debris is too small to be tracked or collision avoidance manoeuvres are impossible for other reasons.

Full size image

Deorbiting satellites will be tracked and operational satellites can manoeuvre to avoid close conjunctions. However, this depends on ongoing communication and cooperation between operators, which at present is ad hoc and voluntary. A recent letter12 to the FCC from SpaceX suggests that some companies might be less-than-fully transparent about events13 in LEO.

Despite the congestion and traffic management challenges, FCC filings by SpaceX suggest that collision avoidance manoeuvres can in fact maintain collision-free operations in orbital shells and that the probability of a collision between a non-responsive satellite and tracked debris is negligible. However, the filings do not account for untracked debris6, including untracked debris decaying through the shells used by Starlink. Using simple estimates (see “Methods”), the probability that a single piece of untracked debris will hit any satellite in the Starlink 550 km shell is about 0.003 after one year. Thus, if at any time there are 230 pieces of untracked debris decaying through the 550 km orbital shell, there is a 50% chance that there will be one or more collisions between satellites in the shell and the debris. As discussed further in “Methods”, such a situation is plausible. Depending on the balance between the de-orbit and the collision rates, if subsequent fragmentation events lead to similar amounts of debris within that orbital shell, a runaway cascade of collisions could occur.

Fragmentation events are not confined to their local orbits, either. The India 2019 ASAT test was conducted at an altitude below 300 km in an effort to minimize long-lived debris. Nevertheless, debris was placed on orbits with apogees in excess of 1000 km. As of 30 March 2021, three tracked debris pieces remain in orbit14. Such long-lived debris has high eccentricities, and thus can cross multiple orbital shells twice per orbit. A major fragmentation event from a single satellite could affect all operators in LEO.

Even if debris collisions were avoidable, meteoroids are always a threat. The cumulative meteoroid flux15 for masses m > 10–2 g is about 1.2 × 10–4 meteoroids m−2 year−1 (see “Methods”). Such masses could cause non-negligible damage to satellites16. Assuming a Starlink constellation of 12,000 satellites (i.e. the initial phase), there is about a 50% chance of 15 or more meteoroid impacts per year at m > 10–2 g. Satellites will have shielding, but events that might be rare to a single satellite could become common across the constellation.

One partial response to these congestion and collision concerns is for operators to construct mega-constellations out of a smaller number of satellites. But this does not, individually or collectively, eliminate the need for an all-of-LEO approach to evaluating the effects of the construction and maintenance of any one constellation.

#### In fact – we’ve gotten close to major collisions as of 2 weeks ago. The situation will only get worse as private companies put more mega constellations into the LEO.

**In an article written by the global times from yesterday concludes that** [Huang Lanlan and Lin Xiaoyi, 1-6-2022, "After Starlink satellites’ irregular operations, SpaceX’s connection with US military arouses concerns," No Publication, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202201/1245327.shtml> ] Lydia

The two near-misses between the Starlink satellites by the US' SpaceX and the China Space Station, caused by the Starlink satellites' descent into lower orbits without advance notice, have caused anger among the Chinese public and attracted greater attention from the international community. SpaceX and its founder Elon Musk haven't made any public response specific to the incidents and China's concern over them. This is not the first time that Starlink has come close to causing an accident in space or cause trouble for people on Earth. Since it launched the first batch of satellites in May 2019, many organizations and individuals across the world have complained about Elon Musk's ambitious project for its risks of interfering with astronomical research, colliding with other satellites or space crafts, and creating dangerous space debris. Worse still, Starlink and SpaceX, which announced to launch as many as 42,000 satellites into orbit, have reportedly initiated frequent instances of cooperation with the US military. Observers worry about this "space enclosure movement" of SpaceX and the Pentagon and say that it can pose a hidden danger to space missions of other countries, and may even threaten global security. "It is a certain fact that they will increase the actual combat capability of US' space force and other military services," Song Zhongping, a Chinese military and aerospace industry expert, told the Global Times. 'Troublemakers' Starlink, as operated by SpaceX, is a satellite constellation development project meant to provide satellite Internet access across the globe. Under the project, Musk plans to launch 42,000 small satellites over the next few decades to orbit the earth. So far some 1,900 Starlink satellites have been sent into space. Although the number is less than a twentieth of Musk's final goal, these satellites have become troublemakers in the eyes of many. The satellites' two close encounters with the China Space Station separately on July 1 and October 21, 2021, for instance, endangered the safety of Chinese taikonauts and forced China's Tiangong Space Station to "implement preventive collision avoidance control," according to a note that the Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations (Vienna) addressed to the UN Secretary-General. The autonomous collision avoidance system, equipped by Starlink satellites as SpaceX claimed, seemed not to work in the two incidents. In those cases, "it was highly irresponsible for Starlink satellites to force other spacecraft to institute collision avoidance," Yang Yuguang, Vice Chair of Space Transportation Committee for International Astronautical Federation, told the China News Agency on December 29. "The possibility that these satellites can be used to test the space perception capability of the Chinese space industry cannot be ruled out," Huang Zhicheng, a senior expert on aerospace science and technology, told the Global Times. Huang noted that the Starlink satellite, which normally operates at an orbital altitude of 550 kilometers, suddenly descended its orbit and maneuvered to an average altitude of 382 kilometers, and then continued to operate at this altitude, posing a threat to the Chinese Space Station, possibly to enhance the communication performance of the satellite constellation in the local area, or to test whether the Chinese side would accurately grip their actions. Technically, it is environmentally unfriendly and unnecessary for Starlink to launch as many as more than 40,000 small satellites, which can be replaced with several thousand larger satellites, aerospace industry insiders told the Global Times. "Look at China's Hongyan satellite constellation; it is composed of only several hundred satellites but can build similar [communication systems]," Song said. "Musk has built the satellite constellation with so many small, low-cost satellites. I don't think that can be a durable [system]," Song added. "And many of the 42,000 satellites are actually back-ups for each other, which is completely unnecessary." Besides, the more than 1,900 Starlink satellites that have been launched have seriously interfered with astronomers' scientific observations. Scientists in different countries are increasingly complaining about the Starlink program, because the telescopes designed to capture images of distant objects require long exposures, but when Starlink satellites that use reflective materials pass through the lens' field of view in the exposure, they leave long streaks on image. "The train of Starlink satellites lasted for over 5 minutes! Rather depressing," an astronomer at the Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory in Chile complained on Twitter in November 2019 that one of their observation images was heavily disrupted by the transit of at least 19 satellites from Starlink satellites.

#### Kessler syndrome is a non-reversible tipping point in which space is no longer usable. This precludes other impacts in this round because the usage of space for satellites is critical to crisis response.

Kessler et al., 18 [Donald J. Kessler\* American astrophysicist and former NASA scientist known for his studies regarding space debris. Kessler has received numerous awards for his pioneering work, the most recent being the 2010 Dirk Brower Award for his half-century career in astrodynamics. Dr. Holder Krag\*\* Head of the Space Debris Office at the European Space Agency and has been a Space Debris Analyst in the Space Debris Office since 2006. Asher Isbrucker\*\*\*, Writer & Video Producer; 11-2-2018; "Kessler Syndrome: What Happens When Satellites Collide," Medium, <https://asherkaye.medium.com/kessler-syndrome-what-happens-when-satellites-collide-1b571ca3c47e>] brett

Donald Kessler: The worst case scenario is that you end up creating enough debris that it’s not cost-effective to depend on space. Now, that may take a long time, but because it’s a non-reversible process, once you’ve reached a certain threshold where you’re generating debris from these collisions faster than it can be cleaned out, it’ll just continually get worse unless you can do something drastic. Holger Krag: If we continue operating the way we do today, we will have a disaster in 50 years, in 100 years. It compares quite nicely to the CO2 issue, and the climate on ground, so it’s not our generation suffering from all the CO2 released into the atmosphere, it is future generations, but it is our generation that has to take the action. And the space debris problem is quite similar. DK: My name’s Don Kessler, I worked for NASA till 1996 as the senior researcher for orbital debris. I started the program back in 1979, and the program is still very active today. In the 1960s my main job was to define the interplanetary meteoroid environment. At the time, the only space debris NASA had to be concerned about were meteoroids, many of which are generated from collisions in the asteroid belt. These asteroid collisions are a cascading phenomenon, meaning every collision creates more ammunition for future collisions. It’s a positive feedback loop. Don was studying this phenomenon when he started to consider an interesting question: DK: When will the same phenomenon start happening in the Earth’s orbit? When will this same kind of cascading occur with satellites? And it was just a matter of curiosity as to what that number may be, and actually when I did the calculations, I was really shocked at the answer that it would happen so soon. Don published a paper in 1978 proposing this scenario, predicting that we’d start to see satellite collisions in Earth orbit by the year 2000. Just like in the asteroid belt, these satellite collisions would trigger a domino effect: creating a whole bunch of debris which causes more collisions, creating more debris, and so on. His main point: once the process starts, it’ll be nearly impossible to stop. This self-perpetuating phenomenon, this domino effect, became known as Kessler Syndrome. The first accidental collision occurred in 1996, when a French satellite was struck by a piece of a rocket thruster that had exploded ten years earlier, severing its stabilization boom and, for the first time, demonstrating how entangled the orbital environment has become. HK: In 2009 a collision happened that was by far more dramatic. The event he’s referring to was the first collision between two intact satellites: the Russian satellite Kosmos and an American Iridium. And that was the first catastrophic accidental collision that got everybody’s attention because not only did they realize how much debris is generated when something like that occurs but that we are now entering this phase of what we’re calling the Kessler Syndrome. Just two years earlier the Chinese military conducted a controversial anti-satellite test, intercepting one of their own defunct weather satellites with a kinetic kill vehicle — a non-explosive missile which relies on sheer speed of impact to destroy its target. It blew the satellite to smithereens and created just a huge mess, it was really bad. DK: And unfortunately it was something they should have known not to do. Yeah, that’s because the US did the same thing back in 1985 — the first anti-satellite test, with more or less the same results. DK: We at NASA tried to delay that or stop that because, we said it’s going to create enough debris that we’ll have to add more shielding to the space station which was planned to be launched a few years later. And nobody believed it would make that much debris, but it did. All of these collisions, accidental or otherwise, make a big mess of junk zipping around the Earth called space debris. It accounts for 95% of the objects in Low Earth orbit, and comes in all shapes and sizes. It’s technically defined as any nonfunctional object in orbit, so there’s big stuff like rocket thrusters and defunct satellites, but the vast majority are little bits and pieces called fragmentation debris. Many of these fragments come from explosions caused by residual fuel and other explosive energy sources self-igniting under the extreme conditions of space. These explosions happen more often than you might think, and as catastrophic and messy as these explosions are, collisions are even worse due to the incredible amount of kinetic energy involved. At the velocities objects travel in Lower Earth Orbit (speeds known as hypervelocity) even an object as tiny as a screw can deliver an incapacitating strike to a satellite. In fact, NASA has repeatedly had to replace shuttle windows due to hypervelocity impacts by flecks of paint. HK: These are velocities, we have no example nor anything that compares to that on ground. So the energy involved in these collisions is extremely high. A 1 cm object that size like a cherry hitting a satellite with 10 km/s, the energy released by this corresponds roughly to an exploding grenade. You can imagine what the satellite looks like after that. DK: Yes, let me know show you something. This is something that was shot in the lab, it’s a projectile about the size of a BB, and it makes a crater into, this is solid aluminum, and this was only going about 5 km/s, about half the speed of what you would expect in space. Most of this is happening in Low Earth Orbit, the 2000 km strip of space above our heads where we’ve packed the vast majority of our satellites, including the International Space Station and the Hubble Space Telescope. The most crowded section is between 500 and 1000 km up. It’s the densest region, it’s the Highway 401 of space. DK: And that’s what’s creating the problem because we’ve crowded so much stuff in that small region. And the probability of collision goes as the square of the spatial density. So you double the number of satellites, you get four times as many collisions. Now, the space station usually flies around 300 km but the debris that’s generated at that higher altitude is being thrown down and drifting down to the lower altitudes. HK: If you look at the space station surface you will find craters everywhere, impact craters caused by debris everywhere. Whenever you bring hardware down and inspect it on ground you find craters of all sizes. What do we do with this? How do you protect the life of the astronauts? The only thing you can do is shielding. And to protect against a hypervelocity impact you need a special type of lightweight shielding, called Whipple shielding. DK: Let me show you something else. The same particle that caused this kind of damage [image below, left] only caused this kind of damage [image below, right]on a surface with a very minor amount of shielding on it. And that’s, it’s almost a liquid splattered onto that. Most spacecraft utilize this type of shielding, which can withstand impacts from objects up to about one centimeter. Objects larger than a softball are catalogued and tracked by the US Space Surveillance Network. Tracking is imprecise, but allows spacecraft to dodge some of the debris that comes too close. This only works for objects larger than 10 cm or so. Anything smaller can’t be reliably tracked. For that reason, the most concerning objects are those between 1 and 10 cm; too large for shielding to withstand and too small to be tracked. These objects could incapacitate any spacecraft in their path, or worse. And with every future explosion and collision there will be more and more of these invisible projectiles going around. The problem gets worse when you consider how long objects can remain in orbit. Depending on altitude, debris in Low Earth Orbit may remain there for years, decades, or centuries before their orbit naturally decays enough to re-enter the Earth’s atmosphere. For example, look no further than ENVISAT; a defunct 8-tonne satellite operated by the European Space Agency until it lost contact in 2012, becoming a massive piece of space junk in the densest region of Earth orbit. ENVISAT will remain in orbit for 200 years if not removed. Experts hope to avoid an encore of ENVISAT and to mitigate Kessler Syndrome through the international adoption of two clean space policies. The first will prevent explosions by requiring so-called passivation of onboard energy sources. HK: Meaning, residual fuel must be either depleted, burned, released through a valve, whatever. That’s number one: no more explosions. DK: And the other is what we call a 25 year rule. Once you put something in orbit, after you finish using it you have 25 years to get it out. Either by moving up to a designated “graveyard orbit” where it will pose minimal risk to active spacecraft or more ideally, lowering its altitude so it will burn up in the atmosphere sooner. These policies aren’t difficult to follow and are beginning to be adopted internationally. HK: When we do these two things that would already make space flight pretty safe for the future. It would mean, if we do this systematically, the risk in the future would be almost the same as it is today. The mitigation measures they help to dampen the effect of the Kessler Syndrome, we are not talking about stopping it, we are talking about maintaining it on an acceptable level, the growth. But it will grow, even if we implement these two measures strictly. If we want to even prevent this growth, then we need to do active removal. DK: We’ve already concluded that it’s going to take something like removing 500 intact objects over the next 100 years in order to stabilize the Low Earth Orbit environment again. That works out to five objects per year for the next century, which at least seems achievable, right? The challenge though is that there’s no easy way to remove space debris. HK: We need to approach the object that are not under control anymore, and attach to them, dock with them, rendezvous them, capture them somehow, and then get rid of them in a controlled way. You can imagine this is not so easy. Experts are working on ways to remove debris, and there are several promising ideas in early development. There are reusable concepts like tethers and space tugs which can grab multiple objects per launch, which saves money. There are ground- or space-based lasers which can deorbit objects by kind of shooting them down, but these face political challenges. There are actually active satellites in space right now, the University of Surrey is controlling a spacecraft called RemoveDEBRIS which will use a harpoon to grab on to debris, that’s promising. And there’s another single-use option like ESA’s e.Deorbit, currently planned to retrieve and deorbit ENVISAT in 2023. Many of these ideas aren’t scalable, though, that’s the problem, they’re expensive and complicated, and missions like these are almost completely unprecedented. The pressure is on, though, because Kessler Syndrome isn’t waiting, and the consequences for space infrastructure are dire. HK: Today only half of the satellites actually disappear from space within the 25 years that are recommended as the maximum on orbit time. We still have five explosions every year. If we continue and not improve the way we do spaceflight, then in a few decades some regions of space might not be useable anymore for spaceflight, or it might be much too risky to go there. And that might mean that we either lose services from space that we rely on today, or they get more expensive. AI: Do you think something like Kessler Syndrome is inevitable? Are you optimistic that this can be managed properly, or do you think this is an inevitable issue for a spacefaring society? HK: I think it can be managed, it can be managed. I do believe it’s time for young people to take charge and there’s a lot of work to be done, and there’s enough people involved today that I’m confident that it’s going to be done. Much like other environmental and generational problems, Kessler Syndrome is invisible to us. When you look up at the night sky, you don’t see collisions and explosions and fragments of debris. If you’re lucky and the conditions are right, you might see one white speck drifting across the sky, a tiny testament to humankind’s highest collective ambitions. But that speck is at risk, along with all it represents, if we don’t address this invisible problem — because Kessler Syndrome isn’t waiting.

#### Second is Miscalculation.

#### Increased crowding of space through debris risks collisions with military satellites, producing nuclear responses.

Dockrill 16 [Peter; 2016; Award-winning science & technology journalist. “Space Junk Accidents Could Trigger Armed Conflict, Study Finds.” <https://www.sciencealert.com/space-junk-accidents-could-trigger-armed-conflict-expert-warns>] brett

The increasingly crowded space in Earth's low orbit could set the stage for an international armed conflict, says a new study. Researchers from the Russian Academy of Sciences warn that accidents stemming from the steady rise in space junk floating around the planet could incite political rows and even warfare, with nations potentially mistaking debris-caused incidents as the results of intentional aggressive acts by others. In a paper published in Acta Astronautica, the team suggests that space debris in the form of spent rocket parts and other fragments of hardware hurtling at high speed pose a "special political danger" that could dangerously escalate tensions between nations. According to the study, destructive impacts caused by random space junk cannot easily be told apart from military attacks. "The owner of the impacted and destroyed satellite can hardly quickly determine the real cause of the accident," the authors write. The risks of such an event occurring are compounded by the sheer volume of debris now orbiting Earth. Recent figures from NASA indicate that there are more than 500,000 pieces of space junk currently being tracked in orbit, travelling at speeds up to 28,160 km/h (17,500 mph). The majority of those objects are small – around the size of a marble – but some 20,000 of them are bigger than a softball. In addition to these 500,000 or so fragments – which are big enough for scientists to know about them – NASA estimates that there are millions of undetectable pieces of debris in orbit that are too small to be monitored. But even extremely small fragments such as these pose a threat – in fact, they're considered a greater risk than trackable debris, as their invisible status means spacecraft and satellites can't do anything to avoid them until it's too late. As NASA observed in 2013: "Even tiny paint flecks can damage a spacecraft when travelling at these velocities. In fact a number of space shuttle windows have been replaced because of damage caused by material that was analysed and shown to be paint flecks… With so much orbital debris, there have been surprisingly few disastrous collisions." While we may have been lucky in the past, we can't rely on that to continue. The study by the Russian team cites the repeated sudden failures of defence satellites in past decades that were never explained. The researchers attribute two possible causes: either unrecorded collisions with space junk, or aggressive actions from adversaries. "This is a politically dangerous dilemma," the authors write.

#### **Absent nuclear early warning satellites, mutually assured destruction falls apart as nuclear armed nations are operating in the dark, risking escalatory conflict.**

Johnson 14 [Les, Baen science fiction author, popular science writer, and NASA technologist. “Living without satellites”. <https://www.baen.com/living_without_satellites>.] brett

Satellite imagery is used by the military and our political leaders to maintain the peace. When your potential adversaries can’t hide what they’re doing, where their armies are moving and what they are doing with their civilian and military infrastructure, then the danger of surprise attack is diminished. In our nuclear age with instant death only minutes away by missile attack, the doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) only works if both sides know whether or not they are being attacked. The launch of missiles or a bomber fleet can easily be seen from space far in advance of either reaching their potential targets halfway around the globe. The danger of surprise attack is therefore small, making an accidental war far less likely. So what does all this mean? And what do we do about it? First of all, it means that the advocates of space development, exploration and commercialization have succeeded far beyond their initial expectations and dreams. The economies and security of countries in the developed world are now dependent on space satellites. We space advocates should celebrate our success and be terrified of it at the same time. Should we lose these fragile assets in space, our economy would experience a disruption like no other: ship, air and train travel would stop and only restart/operate in a much-reduced capacity for years (GPS loss). Many banking and retail transactions would cease (VSAT loss). Distribution of news and vital national information would be crippled (communications satellite loss). Lives would be put at risk and the productivity of our farming would dramatically decrease (weather satellite loss). The risk of war, including nuclear war, would increase (loss of spy satellites) and our military’s ability to react to crises would be significantly reduced (loss of military logistics and intelligence gathering satellites).

#### Nuclear war causes extinction.

Trevithick and Rogoway ’19 [Joseph and Tyler; February 27; Military Analyst, M.A. in Conflict Resolution from Georgetown University, B.A. in the History and Policy of International Relations at Carnegie-Mellon University; Defense Journalist; The Drive, “Yes, India And Pakistan Could End The World As We Know It Through A Nuclear Exchange,” <https://www.thedrive.com/the-war-zone/26674/yes-india-and-pakistan-could-end-the-world-as-we-know-it-through-a-nuclear-exchange>] brett

A global threat

India and Pakistan's nuclear arsenals are tiny compared to those of the [United States and Russia](http://thedrive.com/the-war-zone/26013/russia-says-its-own-new-weapons-are-exempt-after-accusing-u-s-of-violating-nuclear-arms-deal), and these weapons are focused primarily on deterring each other, but that does not mean they're purely regional threats. Unlike conventional weapons, nuclear weapons create lasting and far-reaching effects that scientists have posited could upend life on Earth if warring parties were to use them in sufficient numbers.

[In 2012](http://climate.envsci.rutgers.edu/pdf/RobockToonSAD.pdf), Alan Robock, a distinguished professor in the Department of Environmental  Sciences and Associate Director of the Center for Environmental Prediction at Rutgers University, and Owen Brian Toon, a professor in the Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences and a research associate at  the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics at the University of Colorado, Boulder, argued that it might not take a large amount of nuclear weapons to create a scenario commonly known as "[Nuclear Winter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_winter)."

In general, this hypothesized event occurs when smoke and soot from nuclear explosions block significant amounts of sunlight from reaching the earth's surface, leading to a precipitous drop in temperatures that results in mass crop failure and widespread famine.

Robcock and Toon summarized their findings, which were based in part on their previous work, in an article in the Bulletin of The Atomic Scientists, [writing](http://climate.envsci.rutgers.edu/pdf/RobockToonSAD.pdf):

"Even a 'small' nuclear war between India and Pakistan, with each country detonating 50 Hiroshima-size atom bombs – only about 0.03 percent of the global nuclear arsenal's explosive power – as airbursts in urban areas, could produce so much smoke that temperatures would fall below those of the [Little Ice Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Ice_Age) of the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries, shortening the growing season around the world and threatening the global food supply. Furthermore, there would be massive ozone depletion, allowing more ultraviolet radiation to reach Earth's surface. Recent studies predict that agricultural production in parts of the United States and China would decline by about 20 percent for four years, and by 10 percent for a decade.

The bomb the United States dropped on Hiroshima Japan, known as [Little Boy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Boy), was an inefficient and essentially experimental design with a yield of around 15 kilotons. The reported results from [Indian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_nuclear_weapons_tests_of_India) and Pakistani nuclear testing indicate that both countries can meet this threshold and both countries' weapons programs have almost certainly matured in the decades since.

In previous studies, Robcock, working with others, postulated that temperature changes could begin within 10 days of a limited nuclear exchange and the effects from the detonations of 100 nuclear weapons in the 15-kiloton class would directly result in the deaths of [at least 20 million people](http://www.nucleardarkness.org/warconsequences/fivemilliontonsofsmoke/). The second order impacts would be even worse in the years that followed.

In 2014, Michael Mills and Julia Lee-Taylor, both then working at the federally-funded National Center for Atmospheric Research's (NCAR) Earth System Laboratory, authored another paper with Robcock and Toon. This [study concluded](https://web.archive.org/web/20140308191334/http:/acd.ucar.edu/~mmills/pubs/2014_EarthsFuture_Mills_et_al.pdf) again that detonation of 100 15-kiloton yield bombs in a purely regional conflict would result in "multi-decadal global cooling" and "would put significant pressures on global food supplies and could trigger a global nuclear famine."

It is important to note that[critics have questioned](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_winter#Critical_response_to_the_more_modern_papers) whether the Nuclear Winter concept relies on too many assumptions and would ever actually occur. At the center of many of these rebuttals are debates about whether the nuclear explosions would truly create the amount of smoke and soot necessary for major climate change, as well as the specific conditions for those particles to remain in the atmosphere for a prolonged period of time.

The studies here do indicate significant impacts based on a relatively limited number of nuclear detonations of smaller yield devices, though. But even if the impacts are less pronounced than projected in this particular scenario, they could be far more severe if India and Pakistan were to use a larger number weapons and/or ones of higher yields, which both belligerents readily have.

In addition, Nuclear Winter is just one of the potential things that might happen following a nuclear exchange between the longtime foes. A detonation of dozens of nuclear weapons, even small ones, would throw hazardous nuclear fallout [into the air](http://thedrive.com/the-war-zone/19450/u-s-training-for-arctic-nuclear-satellite-disaster-amid-russian-weapons-developments) that, depending on the weather pattern, could carry that material [far and wide](https://futureoflife.org/background/us-nuclear-targets/?cn-reloaded=1#nukemap), causing both near- and short-term health impacts. The various [ground zeroes](https://nuclearsecrecy.com/nukemap/) themselves would be irritated and potentially hazardous for many years to come.

Depending on where the detonations occur, a nuclear exchange could potentially cut people off from critical water and food supplies, putting increased and potentially unsustainable strains on uncontaminated areas.  After the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, situated in Ukraine, [melted down and exploded](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernobyl_disaster) in 1986, authorities established a 1,000 square mile restricted access "[exclusion zone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernobyl_Exclusion_Zone)" that remains in place today.

There would also be a major danger of second-order "spillover" effects, as individuals fled affected areas, putting economic and political strains on neighboring regions. This could inflame existing tensions not directly related to the inter-state conflict between India or Pakistan or lead to all new and potentially violent competition for what might already be limited resources. India has already threatened to [weaponize water access](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/world/asia/india-pakistan-water-kashmir.html) in its latest spat with the Pakistanis.

Any serious impacts on food and water supplies, or other economic upheavals as a direct or indirect result of the conflict, would have cascading impact across South Asia and beyond, as well. The very threat of a potential India-Pakistan war of any kind already caused [some negative reactions](https://www.cnbc.com/2019/02/27/indian-air-force-plane-crashes-in-kashmir-says-indian-police-official.html) in regional financial markets. Those markets would certainly collapse after an unprecedented nuclear exchange actually occurred, and that is before the long-term physical impacts of such an event would even manifest themselves.

Overall, we are talking about a sudden and dramatic geopolitical, financial, and environmental shift that would change our reality in a matter of hours. Even then, the darkness, both figuratively and literally, that could propagate over the weeks, months, and years would be far more damaging.

How great is the risk?

So far, India and Pakistan have not made any clear indications that the fighting is close to crossing their nuclear thresholds. Pakistan's warnings about the [risks of escalation](http://thedrive.com/the-war-zone/26642/pakistan-promises-retaliation-makes-nuclear-threats-after-indian-jets-bomb-its-territory) seem more calculated to try and prompt India to back down.

India itself has a so-called "no first use" policy, which means it has publicly pledged to use its nuclear weapons only in retaliation to a nuclear strike. However, experts have increasingly called into question whether this is truly the case and whether India might be developing delivery systems more suited to a first strike should there be a need to shift policies.

Pakistan, however, does not have a no first use policy and has insisted on its right to employ nuclear weapons to defend itself even in the face of purely conventional threat. Pakistani officials have, in the past, [specifically cited this policy](https://www.cfr.org/event/promoting-us-pakistan-relations-future-challenges-and-opportunities) as way of deterring India, which has a much larger and in some cases more advanced conventional force, and preventing larger wars.

The concern, then, is that this policy appears to have failed, at least to some degree, with India's strike on undisputed Pakistani territory on Feb. 26, 2019. India, however, did not target Pakistani forces in that instance and exchanges between the two countries have been limited, at least so far, to the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region, where violent skirmishes occur semi-regularly without precipitating a larger confrontation.

We can only hope that the two countries will find a diplomatic solution to this latest conflict and avoid any further escalation. If things were to spiral out of control and lead to the use of nuclear weapons, it would be something that would threaten all of humanity.