# 1AC

### Plan

#### I affirm: The appropriation of outer space by private entities via Large Satellite Constellations in Lower Earth Orbit is unjust.

Takaya et al 18 “The Principle of Non-Appropriation and the Exclusive Uses of LEO by Large Satellite Constellations” Yuri Takaya-Umehara [Visiting researcher at the University of Tokyo since April 2017. She was affiliated to the Kobe University to provide a course on space law to post-graduate students (2011-2017). She chairs a working group on the formulation of global norms in space law organized by the Keio University since 2018. She obtained her Ph.D. degree at the IDEST of Paris XI University in France, LL.M. at the Leiden University in the Netherlands.] Quentin Verspieren [Ph.D. in public policy @ The University of Tokyo, Assistant Professor of Space Policy @UTokyo, General Manager, Global Strategy @ArkEdge Space Inc., Associate Research Fellow @ESPI] Goutham Karthikeyan [The University of Tokyo & Institute of Space and Astronautical Science, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (ISAS-JAXA)] 2018 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328094878\_The\_Principle\_of\_Non-Appropriation\_and\_the\_Exclusive\_Use\_of\_LEO\_by\_Large\_Satellite\_Constellations SM

* LSC = large satellite constellations
* Outlines “L”SC thresholds

By investigating expected large satellite constellation projects and by reviewing existing interpretations of international space law, this paper argues that the exclusive use of specific LEO orbits by a large constellation of satellite could constitute a violation of the non-appropriation principle by means of occupation and by means of use, drawing a parallel between orbits as resources and the exploitation of tangible mineral resources in space. Based on this, the important question to be raised is what constitutes an exclusive use of a specific orbit. In other words, an important hurdle in the concrete evaluation of whether a planned or established constellation potentially violates the non-appropriation principle through an exclusive use of LEO resides in the lack of clear definition on what can be considered an exclusive use. While the authors claim that legal issue can be clearly solved in abstracto, it naturally shifts towards a regulatory challenge.

This regulatory challenge consists in first defining qualitatively what is the exclusive use of an orbit before translating this definition into measurable, technical rules. In this paper, the authors define an exclusive use of an orbit by a state40 as any use that would prevent/hinder the usage of the same orbit by any other state. Translating this definition into an applicable regulation could consist in defining a threshold of orbital collision risk or a threshold of density of satellites along an orbit based on its altitude, shape, relative velocity of neighbouring objects, etc. It is however not the purpose of this space law paper. What is more appropriate here is to think about which organization or forum would be in charge of elaborating this technical definition. Serious candidates could be the ITU, with excellent track-record in dealing with the use of the GEO region but which would have to review its “first come, first served” principle, or the UNCOPUOS, aiming for the widespread adoption of a new piece of international law. Moreover, even if its rules suffer from a low implementation rates, the IADC would be an appropriate discussion platform thanks to its very deep technical focus.

6. Conclusion

The various announced projects of LSC, also called mega-constellations, push existing regulations and practices to their limit, forcing researchers and practitioners around the world to rethink the applicability of existing space law principles to this new trend. In this paper, the authors, after providing background information on current LSC plans as well as recalling the legal status of the LEO region, investigate whether the deployment of an LSC having an exclusive use of an orbit constitutes a violation of the nonappropriation principle as stated in OST Article II. This paper concludes that:

The exclusive use of an orbit by an LSC constitutes a violation of the non-appropriation principle by means of occupation due to the innate nature of orbit being a specific location in space that can be occupied, but most notably by means of use, considering orbits as “limited natural resources” and invoking parallels with the exploitation of natural resources in outer space;

ITU’s “first come, first served” principle is reaching its limits with current LSC projects and should be re-evaluated;

The main challenge ahead is not legal but technical and regulatory and consists in defining precisely what can constitute an exclusive use of an orbit and in translating such definition into a clear regulation or code of conduct.

#### Privatization is driving uncontrolled satellite internet constellations that profit at the expense of cooperation and sustainability – perpetuates internet inequality.

Song and Bloom 20 “Big Tech is leading the new space race. Here's why that's a problem” Steve Song is a Fellow with the Mozilla Foundation where he works to promote policy and regulation that will increase equitable and affordable access to communication in rural and underserved regions of the world. Peter Bloom is a community digital defense activist and the founder and General Coordinator of Rhizomatica, an international non-profit that helps communities build their own communications infrastructure. He is a former Shuttleworth Foundation fellow and was named an Innovator under 35 by MIT Technology Review and appeared on Foreign Policy's 100 Leading Global Thinkers list in 2015. November 14, 2020 <https://www.salon.com/2020/11/14/big-tech-is-leading-the-new-space-race-heres-why-thats-a-problem/> SM

Big Tech is leading the new space race. Here's why that's a problem

New satellite tech could bring billions more online. But will Big Tech bring their extractive ethos into space?

The coronavirus pandemic has made having a stable and reliable internet connection a matter of extreme urgency, as people all over the world struggle to work, access education, and participate in society while staying safe. Yet universal affordable access is far from being achieved; indeed, half of the world still lacks access to the Internet, despite sustained efforts from governments and corporations.

One popular proposal for ubiquitous connectivity comes from Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite constellations. LEO boosters claims that such satellites will have the ability to deliver high-speed broadband anywhere on the planet. These satellites provide internet access from space, and require placing thousands of satellites into orbit at a much closer proximity to Earth than traditional satellites.

The prospect of a globe-encircling mesh of broadband communication satellites has attracted the interest and investment of billionaires ranging from Bill Gates in the 1990s to Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos today. Currently there are at least four major LEO initiatives from the US and Europe, including Starlink (SpaceX), Project Kuiper (Amazon), OneWeb, and Telesat. China has announced at least three LEO constellations, and Russia one. The size and scope of these projects are massive. To put current LEO satellite ambitions in context: the current total number of satellites of any kind orbiting Earth is just over 2,500. Starlink, who already have nearly 900 satellites in orbit, recently petitioned the US communications regulator for permission to launch a total of 12,000 satellites. Not to be outdone, OneWeb recently applied for permission to launch 48,000 satellites.

So what's not to love?

While the goal of these companies to ensure broadband anywhere and everywhere is laudable, the technology and the approach to connectivity are not free from concerns. Recent history, especially the development of the Internet itself, has shown us that simply having the capability to build something doesn't necessarily make it a good idea. The Silicon Valley ethos of "move fast and break things," perhaps valid in developing small applications, becomes irresponsible when the consequences of failure may be catastrophic and irreversible. Criticism of LEO constellations to date have focused on practical concerns around a variety of issues, including: the economic viability of the constellations, the occlusion of the night sky from astronomers, wireless interference between different constellations, and the potential chain reaction of collisions from a single error in satellite trajectory, leaving near-space an inaccessible junkyard of debris.

Beyond that, LEO constellations have deeper and longer-term implications that have yet to find their way into mainstream public debate. For one, LEO constellations are part of a larger process in which space exploration is being redefined and reframed in military and commercial terms. Closer to Earth, LEO constellations raise important concerns around the potential for the further entrenchment of a global internet oligopoly that increases inequality and disempowers citizens.

The scramble for space

Over the past seven decades, as our ability to explore beyond our planet has evolved, national security interests in space have aligned with commercial ones to an extent that they are nearly indistinguishable today. In the United States, private space launch companies like SpaceX and United Launch Alliance are major recipients of government contracts and now provide the bulk of US launch capacity for both scientific and military missions. While close ties between the defense and aerospace industries is nothing new, we are in a decidedly new phase of this relationship due to technological advancement, new policy priorities and the rise of private actors.

As commercial launch capacity has increased and space exploration technologies have advanced, the decades-old agreements around how we treat space and recognize our solar system as a commons for the benefit of all humanity are beginning to unravel. One clear example of this is the White House's recent "Executive Order on Encouraging International Support for the Recovery and Use of Space Resources," which emphasizes that "the United States does not view outer space as a 'global commons'" and refers to the Moon Agreement as "a failed attempt at constraining free enterprise."

It is necessary to better understand the deep ties of LEO companies to the hegemonic designs of national governments on near space. Recently, in exchange for $28 million USD, Starlink provided the services of its satellites for live-fire demos with the US Air Force to test its Advanced Battle Management System and lay the groundwork for a military Internet of Things. Speaking after the latest live-fire demo, William Roper, Air Force acquisition chief, opined that "the military needs to be ready to play a strategic role because we need communications in many areas of the world that there are no commercial providers . . . we can be the stability case for companies like SpaceX and others who want to sell communications worldwide."

SpaceX's connections to the military-industrial complex were made clear in comments by SpaceX president Gwynne Shotwell in 2018, who stated that her company would be willing to launch a space weapon to protect the US, in contravention of established space norms. Only weeks ago, SpaceX signed a contract with the Pentagon to jointly develop a rocket that can deliver up to 80 tons of cargo and weaponry anywhere in the world in just one hour.

The Internet, too, from its very inception until today, has proven to be a useful tool for pursuing military and security objectives. Of these, surveillance remains at the heart of Silicon Valley's highly profitable business model of manipulating our attention and preferences for the sake of profit. This profit model facilitates the designs of space-obsessed billionaires like Jeff Bezos who make it no secret that their ultimate goal and passion is the human colonization of other planets in our solar system. In general terms, with material and economic support from taxpayers through defense spending, the profits from the colonization of our data-bodies are being invested in the militarization, privatization and colonization of space.

Telecommunications: driving inequality or empowering citizens?

The telecommunications sector has always been a battleground for regulation. While the early days of the Internet seemingly teemed with competition and diversity, power and control has ultimately become concentrated with the growth of giant internet companies that now dominate our online life. The consequences of unregulated, technology-fueled expansion of globalization and inequality can now be seen in almost every aspect of life.

Digital technology plays a critical role in amplifying inequality, highlighting the need to reframe how we approach network technology development. Some governments and citizen groups understand the connection between economic mobility and tech skills development.

One great example of this comes from Broadband for the Rural North (B4RN), a cooperative in Northern England, that delivers 1 gigabit-per-second fiber-optic capacity to homes in a region deemed economically unviable by the incumbent telecommunications giant. B4RN's ability to build and sustain an affordable internet service at speeds many times that of commercial offerings is based upon the investment they make in both community engagement and the development of local capacity. Contrast this with the prospect of a broadband service from a LEO constellation, in which the role of the citizen is that of a consumer only. It is also worth noting that B4RN's profits are reinvested locally, while revenues from LEO constellations are beamed straight out of the country.

The failure to invest in alternatives that build local capacity replicates itself at the national level as well. LEO constellations have the potential to further abstract Internet service to a supra-national level in a manner that disempowers not just individuals but nation-states themselves in terms of domestic expertise and infrastructure. Investment and deployment costs for LEO constellations are so "astronomical," and in many cases so tied to national/military investment and subsidies, that only a small handful of corporations/countries will be capable of owning and managing their own constellation. This is likely to open up a new front in the ongoing wrangling by geo-political power blocs over the future of the Internet.

Furthermore, it is far from clear that LEO constellations have either the capacity or the economic model to deliver on their claims of providing affordable connectivity to the unserved in most parts of the world. Consider that the half of the world's population that remains unconnected to the Internet are the most economically disadvantaged. As such, most people will not be direct consumers of LEO services but will instead need to rely on a telco building infrastructure and using LEO as backhaul—a scenario which already exists with conventional satellite services. A further concern is that LEO constellations may ultimately create a disincentive to investment in rural connectivity, based on the assumption by service providers and governments that LEO constellations will address that gap.

It is troubling that companies like Amazon and Google (the third largest shareholder in SpaceX), which already wield tremendous power and influence over society, are vying to expand their dominance by becoming global internet service providers with support from taxpayers via subsidies and military spending. With their hands in essentially every layer of the communication stack, it will prove challenging to regulate or even know about the data they harvest and how those are used to competitive advantage in other areas of their businesses.

At the time of their emergence, both space exploration and the Internet served as beacons of hope and of potential transcendence for humanity—one of shared imagination and resources, and of cooperation in human development. In both cases, that hope has been dimmed in a quest for profit and geo-political power. If we want to recover a sense of shared purpose as a species, the question as to "who gets to put their satellites into low earth orbit?" is more important than we might think. Is space for everyone, or just a few huge corporations and global superpowers? This is the question we ask when we ask who gets to park their satellites in orbit.

There is an opportunity to return to the spirit of internationalism that infused the early days of space exploration in which space was held as a shared resource to be protected and guarded from exploitation. Similarly, here on Earth, we see successful efforts to manage Internet infrastructure as a commons in contrast to Silicon Valley's model of surveillance capitalism. Recognizing that individual and collective empowerment and agency are as important as the actual infrastructure itself is the key to a more egalitarian Internet. LEO satellite networks may deliver connectivity (although many doubts remain), but they are less likely to empower people and move us toward a more equitable world. The development of a healthy Internet that actually benefits humanity involves not just the end result of affordable access, but also the process through which people gain that access.

#### Constellations couldn’t support more than 1 user for every 10 km2 – only useful in extremely remote areas.

Ogutu and Oughton 21 “A Techno-Economic Cost Framework for Satellite Networks Applied to Low Earth Orbit Constellations: Assessing Starlink, OneWeb and Kuiper” Osoro B. Ogutu and Edward J. Oughton [O. Ogutu is with the Department of Geography and Geoinformation Science, George Mason University; E. Oughton is an assistant professor with the Department of Geography and Geoinformation Science, George Mason University] August 2021 <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/stamp/stamp.jsp?arnumber=9568932> SM

At maximum network density, each Starlink satellite covers approximately 101,000 km2, OneWeb 708,000 km2 and Kuiper 157,000 km2. At a subscriber density of 0.05 users per km2, the corresponding number of subscribers per satellite for Starlink, OneWeb and Kuiper are 5,000, 35,400 and 7,900 respectively. Since the aggregate capacity is shared among the subscribers, Starlink provides the highest mean capacity followed by Kuiper and OneWeb as shown in Figure 4. Therefore, an increase in population density (and logically a higher subscriber density) leads to a drastic decrease in mean capacity.

We also plot the potential cost in Figure 5. The NPV for a single satellite asset over the study period was estimated at US$ 0.6 million, US$ 5.6 million, and US$ 3 million for Starlink, OneWeb and Kuiper, respectively. Thus, the NPV cost per user for each constellation can then be plotted, which logically reduces as each subscriber density increases. Starlink incurs the least cost per user over the study period (2020–2025) that ranges US$ 100-US$ 10 for the subscriber density range of 0.005–1.0 (km2). Kuiper records the largest cost per user ranging between US$ 400 and US$ 30 for the same subscriber density range. The important caveat to these estimates is that there would be a major impact on the capacity available for each subscriber at the maximum adoption rate, due to increased contention. Hence, active constellations such as Starlink have already begun limiting adoption in high demand areas, to ensure QoS can be guaranteed to existing customers, ensuring the available broadband services remain competitive against competing technologies.

Figure 3 illustrates population density globally by sub-national region for population deciles ranging from below 5 people per km2, to over 45 people per km2. These decile boundaries were selected because we know a priori that higher density areas will be less suitable for LEO broadband constellations, and that they will be focusing on the bottom 5% of the market not currently served by conventional terrestrial broadband services using either fixed or wireless technologies.

We can see large parts of Asia (India, China etc.) will be unsuitable, along with most of mainland Europe (e.g. Germany, Italy) and central America (e.g. Mexico). However, the constellations can choose to limit the number of subscribers in such regions to provide relatively higher speeds and ensure QoS. In the USA, the West and South West have large areas which could be suitable, along with much of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In South America large parts of the Amazon may also have low enough population density to be suitable, as well as much of the Sahara region in Africa, although whether incomes would enable the purchasing of such services would be a main concern.

Therefore, to explore the suitability of these constellations we use a 1% adoption rate among the local population to explore capacity per user in the busiest hour of the day. Generally, Starlink provides impressive capacity for remote regions with global coverage thanks to its high asset density. In regions with very low population density Starlink provides a mean of over 90 Mbps per user, such as in parts of Canada, the West and South West of the USA, Central and South America, Sahara Africa, South-west Africa, Australia, Russia and remote parts of Asia. Kuiper performs similarly, with only slightly reduced performance. However, OneWeb offers generally lower capacity per user, although still reaching impressive peak rates in areas with very low population density.

SECTION VII.Discussion

In this paper a generalizable techno-economic assessment model was developed for satellite broadband constellations. The approach was used to estimate the capacity and related costs for three LEO constellations, including Starlink, OneWeb and Kuiper. The open-source codebase is provided to help boost scientific reproducibility, as well as support other engineers or business analysts working in this research area. The method consisted of a mix of engineering simulation, cost estimation and Geographical Information System (GIS) techniques, combined to provide new insight into the per user capacity and cost. Such analytics are very useful to help narrow the broadband availability gap in rural and remote areas by providing geospatial insight on the suitability of these technologies. The results demonstrate the connectivity opportunities and constraints of different LEO systems, as well as their viability. This section now revisits the research questions posed in the introduction of the paper. The first research question was articulated as follows:

A. How Much Capacity can be Provided by Different LEO Broadband Constellations?

The findings support existing theory whereby the capacity provided by the constellation is a function of the number of satellites. Fewer satellites result in a larger coverage area and vice versa. Unlike GEO, a satellite located at LEO will also have a shorter path length. As more satellites are added into the constellation, the coverage area per satellite reduces. Furthermore, the instantaneous number of satellites available to a ground user increases. We find that for network densities of 5,040, 720 and 3,240 satellites for Starlink, OneWeb and Kuiper respectively, the estimated coverage areas equate to 101,000, 708,000 and 157,000 km2.

The variation in the FSPL due to the orbital altitude and network density among the three constellations results in different received power. To compensate for high path loss, Kuiper and OneWeb opt for high receiver antenna gain, transmitted power and diameter. In contrast, the ultra-dense network and low orbital altitude enables Starlink to maintain large minimum elevation angles for its users compared to the other three systems, leading to superior QoS. This explains the constellation’s Business-to-Consumer (B2C) approach as users can easily connect to its satellites with minimum engineering requirements. In contrast, the limited capacity demonstrated in this analysis for OneWeb suggests why a more enterprise-focused approach is being adopted to provide Business-to-Business (B2B) global connectivity services, ranging from cellular backhaul to logistics for emergency services redundancy.

B. What is the Potential Capacity Per User From Different Constellations?

Related to the previous question, the per user capacity is therefore also positively correlated with the increase in the number of satellites for each constellation. The highest mean user capacity is achieved with the lowest subscriber densities, which occur in the most rural and remote regions where network contention is at its lowest. For instance, with 1 user every 10 km2 (0.1 users per km2) the best performing constellation (Starlink) records a very modest mean per user capacity of 24.94 ± 0.72 Mbps. This is worse for Kuiper and OneWeb with 10.30 ± 0.25 Mbps and 1.01 ± 0.02 Mbps, respectively. Hence, this explains why LEO broadband providers have been making a strong business case for the usage of satellites in the final 3 percent of customers in the hardest-to-reach rural and remote regions of the USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand (among other countries) due to their competitive advantage in these challenging deployment situations. While the aggregate speeds estimated are impressive, each satellite asset can easily become saturated, especially in higher populated urban and suburban areas, meaning SNOs will have to strictly manage spatial adoption rates. There is no doubt that the potential speeds per user which could be provided are highly desirable (and indeed revolutionary) for users who have struggled to gain a decent broadband connection from traditional providers. The potential services available would be more than adequate to enable intensive applications such as High Definition (HD) video streaming without buffering (providing QoS was well managed).

C. What is the Potential Cost Per User as Subscriber Penetration Increases?

The largest capital expenditure costs are incurred by rocket launches, building ground stations and acquiring spectrum. As more satellites are launched, the cost per user would increase, partly due to the rising operating costs, but this would ensure a better QoS for each user terminal thanks to smaller coverage areas with fewer shared spectrum resources. With more satellites in each constellation, the ground station energy requirements, maintenance, continual engineering and staff costs increase. At a low subscriber density, high capacity per user is available but the cost could be prohibitively expensive for some. In contrast, at a high subscriber density, the cost of broadband connectivity services is much more affordable but there is a major trade-off in QoS, with only very modest speeds being delivered.

The results open a question on whether LEO constellations could break into the urban broadband market given that MNOs and other operators can offer the services at a lower cost per user. While acquiring a segment of the urban market cannot be ruled out, the possibility of succeeding in developed countries where constellations such as Starlink are testing their products is low (driven by the need to limit the number of active users). Consequently, LEO broadband systems are more likely to play a significant role in providing global communications for niche industrial activities which require substantial mobility with high reliability. For example, maritime, rail, aviation and integration into other supply chain IoT architectures, thanks to LEO pole-to-pole coverage. Furthermore, LEO systems might also have a useful niche in delay sensitive applications such as monitoring offshore solar and wind farms in smart grid applications, thanks to the lower latency they can achieve relative to other technologies such as GEO. Alternatively, LEO broadband constellations can present a viable cost-effective solution for developing countries with growing urban centers that are yet to enjoy decent cellular and fiber infrastructure availability. However, this very much depends on the necessary spectrum being allocated in appropriate bands by each telecommunications regulator.

D. Which Parts of the World are LEO Constellations Most Suitable for?

The performance of the three constellations in areas of different population density shows a general trend. Regions with low population density generally experience higher capacity per user with Starlink and Kuiper providing superior speeds.

The simulation of possible geographical areas of adoption indicates that most parts of Central Asia, Middle East, South East Asia, South America, Sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe are less suitable for LEO constellations with quite low capacity provided (below 10 Mbps) using the modeling parameters explored.

These results are arrived at by only considering population density. Future research should recognize the roles of adoption factors such as disposable income, perceived relevance of the Internet, literacy and cellular network penetration, as these may affect the number of people who can actually afford to pay for broadband services.

SECTION VIII.Conclusion

Connecting the global population who are still unable to access a decent broadband service remains a key part of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (specifically Target 9.c).

Motivated by these developments, the framework applied in this paper introduces a techno-economic modeling approach for the integrated assessment of data capacity and investment cost per user by constellation. The model presents the engineering and economic simulation results using a single framework, unlike other approaches where this may be undertaken by two separate groups of professionals (engineers and business analysts). This theoretical model allows for estimation of the constellation capacity based on the known engineering parameters filed with local or global regulatory authorities such as Federal Communication Commission (FCC) and ITU. Using the information publicly available from such organizations, and estimation based on financial statements filed by publicly traded GEO, MEO and LEO broadband companies, the values can be imputed in the model to approximate the capacity and cost of delivering satellite Internet. The model has been tested for three different constellations with varying number of simulated satellites to derive the per user capacity and costs. The codebase for the model is fully open-source and available from the online repository, enabling anyone to access and further enhance the capability developed [71]. Future research could include addressing the issue of non-linearity in the multiple access of satellite resources, which would improve on existing simplifications. Moreover, as the modeling approach is generalizable for satellite constellations, the framework can be further adapted for other planned constellations, such as Telesat.

The results of the model reveal that at the 95% confidence level, mean aggregate capacity speeds of 11.72 ± 0.04 Gbps, 3.43 ± 0.01 Gbps and 7.53 ± 0.03 Gbps are achievable for Starlink, OneWeb and Kuiper, respectively. The current anticipation associated with the benefits of LEO broadband constellations is very high, but success will depend on maintaining relatively low spatial subscriber densities, preferably below 0.1 users per km2 (so less then 1 user per 10 km2), otherwise the services provided may offer little benefit against other terrestrial options. For example, the model has shown that at 0.1 users per km2, only a mean per user capacity of 24.94 ± 0.72 Mbps, 1.01 ± 0.02 Mbps and 10.30 ± 0.25 Mbps can be achieved by Starlink, OneWeb and Kuiper respectively in the busiest hour of the day.

### Adv – Collisions

#### Satellite internet constellations accelerate collision risks – more close encounters and less transparency means bad decisions are inevitable.

Pultarova 21 “SpaceX Starlink satellites responsible for over half of close encounters in orbit, scientist says” Tereza Pultarova [Master's in Science from the International Space University, France, to her Bachelor's in Journalism and Master's in Cultural Anthropology from Prague's Charles University. She worked as a reporter at the Engineering and Technology magazine, freelanced for a range of publications including Live Science, Space.com, Professional Engineering, Via Satellite and Space News and served as a maternity cover science editor at the European Space Agency.], August 18, 2021 <https://www.space.com/spacex-starlink-satellite-collision-alerts-on-the-rise> SM

SpaceX Starlink satellites responsible for over half of close encounters in orbit, scientist says

Starlink satellites might soon be involved in 90% of close encounters between two spacecraft in low Earth orbit.

Operators of satellite constellations are constantly forced to move their satellites because of encounters with other spacecraft and pieces of space junk. And, thanks to SpaceX's Starlink satellites, the number of such dangerous approaches will continue to grow, according to estimates based on available data.

SpaceX's Starlink satellites alone are involved in about 1,600 close encounters between two spacecraft every week, that's about 50 % of all such incidents, according to Hugh Lewis, the head of the Astronautics Research Group at the University of Southampton, U.K. These encounters include situations when two spacecraft pass within a distance of 0.6 miles (1 kilometer) from each other.

Lewis, Europe's leading expert on space debris, makes regular estimates of the situation in orbit based on data from the Socrates (Satellite Orbital Conjunction Reports Assessing Threatening Encounters in Space ) database. This tool, managed by Celestrack, provides information about satellite orbits and models their trajectories into the future to assess collision risk.

Lewis publishes regular updates on Twitter and has seen a worrying trend in the data that reflects the fast deployment of the Starlink constellation.

"I have looked at the data going back to May 2019 when Starlink was first launched to understand the burden of these megaconstellations," Lewis told Space.com. "Since then, the number of encounters picked up by the Socrates database has more than doubled and now we are in a situation where Starlink accounts for half of all encounters."

The current 1,600 close passes include those between two Starlink satellites. Excluding these encounters, Starlink satellites approach other operators’ spacecraft 500 times every week.

In comparison, Starlink's competitor OneWeb, currently flying over 250 satellites, is involved in 80 close passes with other operators' satellites every week, according to Lewis' data.

And the situation is bound to get worse. Only 1,700 satellites of an expected constellation of tens of thousands have been placed into orbit so far. Once SpaceX launches all 12,000 satellites of its first generation constellation, Starlink satellites of all close approaches, Lewis’ calculations suggest.will be involved in 90%

**Chart, line chart

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A graph showing the number of close encounters between Starlink satellites and spacecraft of other operators plotted by Professor Hugh Lewis based on data from the Socrates database.A graph showing the number of close encounters between Starlink satellites and spacecraft of other operators plotted by Professor Hugh Lewis based on data from the Socrates database. (Image credit: Hugh Lewis)

The risk of collision

Siemak Hesar, CEO and co-founder of Boulder, Colorado, based Kayhan Space, confirms the trend. His company, which develops a commercial autonomous space traffic management system, estimates that on average, an operator managing about 50 satellites will receive up to 300 official conjunction alerts a week. These alerts include encounters with other satellites as well as pieces of debris. Out of these 300 alerts, up to ten might require operators to perform avoidance maneuvers, Hesar told Space.com.

Kayhan Space bases their estimates on data provided by the U.S. Space Surveillance Network. This network of radars and telescopes, managed by the U.S. Space Force, closely monitors about 30,000 live and defunct satellites and pieces of debris down to the size of 4 inches (10 centimeters) and provides the most accurate location data of the orbiting objects.

The size of this catalog is expected to increase ten times in the near future, Hesar added, partly due to the growth of megaconstellations, such as Starlink, and partly as sensors improve and enable detection of even smaller objects. The more objects in the catalog mean more dangerously close encounters.

"This problem is really getting out of control," Hesar said. "The processes that are currently in place are very manual, not scalable, and there is not enough information sharing between parties that might be affected if a collision happens."

Hesar compared the problem to driving on a highway and not knowing that there has been an accident a few miles ahead of you. If two spacecraft collide in orbit, the cloud of debris the crash generates would threaten other satellites travelling through the same area.

"You want to have that situational awareness for the other actors that are flying in the neighbourhood," Hesar said.

Bad decisions

Despite the concerns, only three confirmed orbital collisions have happened so far. Earlier this week, astrophysicist and satellite tracker Jonathan McDowell, who's based at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Massachusetts, found evidence in Space-Track data that the Chinese meteorological satellite Yunhai 1-02, which disintegrated in March this year, was actually hit by a piece of space debris.

The worst known space collision in history took place in February 2009 when the U.S. telecommunication satellite Iridium 33 and Russia's defunct military satellite Kosmos-2251 crashed at the altitude of 490 miles (789 kilometres). The incident spawned over 1,000 pieces of debris larger than 4 inches (10 cm). Many of these fragments were then involved in further orbital incidents.

Lewis is concerned that with the number of close passes growing, the risk of operators at some point making a wrong decision will grow as well. Avoidance maneuvers cost fuel, time and effort. Operators, therefore, always carefully evaluate such risks. A decision not to make an avoidance maneuver following an alert, such as that made by Iridium in 2009, could, however, clutter the orbital environment for years and decades.

"In a situation when you are receiving alerts on a daily basis, you can't maneuver for everything," Lewis said. "The maneuvers use propellant, the satellite cannot provide service. So there must be some threshold. But that means you are accepting a certain amount of risk. The problem is that at some point, you are likely to make a wrong decision."

Hesar said that uncertainties in the positions of satellites and pieces of debris are still considerable. In case of operational satellites, the error could be up to 330 feet (100 meters) large. When it comes to a piece of debris, the uncertainty about its exact position might be in the order of a mile or more.

"This object can be anywhere in this bubble of multiple kilometres," Hesar said. "At this point, and for the foreseeable future, avoidance is our best recourse. People that say 'I'm going to take the risk', in my humble opinion, that's an irresponsible thing to do."

Starlink monopoly

Lewis is concerned about the growing influence of a single actor — Starlink — on the safety of orbital operations. Especially, he says, as the spaceflight company has entered the satellite operations world only recently.

"We place trust in a single company, to do the right thing," Lewis said. "We are in a situation where most of the maneuvers we see will involve Starlink. They were a launch provider before, now they are the world's biggest satellite operator, but they have only been doing that for two years so there is a certain amount of inexperience."

SpaceX relies on an autonomous collision avoidance system to keep its fleet away from other spacecraft. That, however, could sometimes introduce further problems. The automatic orbital adjustments change the forecasted trajectory and therefore make collision predictions more complicated, according to Lewis.

"Starlink doesn't publicize all the maneuvers that they're making, but it is believed that they are making a lot of small corrections and adjustments all the time," Lewis said. "But that causes problems for everybody else because no one knows where the satellite is going to be and what it is going to do in the next few days."

#### LEO collisions due to constellations take out ISR and other military assets – debris cascades into different altitudes and triggers Kessler Syndrome.

Wong 19 “Congested Outer Space: Increased Deployment of Small Satellite Constellations Could Hamper Military Space Operations” 2019 Arthur Wong [Strategic Development of Forces Division, SHAPE. Prior to working at SHAPE he has worked at NATO HQ, within the Defence Investment Division on interoperability for NATO’s multinational battlegroups.] <https://www.japcc.org/congested-outer-space/> SM

Since the production of a large number of small satellites in a factory environment will lower the cost of the overall programme, companies such as SpaceX, Amazon and OneWeb have been creating a satellite constellation within the LEO and Medium Earth Orbit (MEO).8, 9 OneWeb is a new company which plans to create an initial constellation of 648 satellites to provide global satellite internet broadband services. Each satellite weighs approximately 150 kg and will be programmed to operate in 20 different orbital planes at an altitude of 1,200 km.10 Creating a large constellation within the LEO could mitigate transmission delays and latency due to their closer range to ground stations while allowing users to send and receive data in a timely manner. The first six of the 648 satellites were launched in early 2019 with more launches scheduled to occur throughout this year.

Both SpaceX and Amazon have also announced their intention of creating a separate constellation for internet communication systems. SpaceX satellite constellations, named Starlink, will be the largest constellation ever built when it is completed. The constellations consist of nearly 12,000 satellites in more than 20 different orbital planes.11 The altitude of Starlink will range between 550 km to 1,150 km. SpaceX aims to have a minimum of 2,200 satellites in the next five years and achieve initial commercial operation by 2020.12 Amazon’s version of constellation, named Kuiper, has also been seeking approval from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to launch more than 3,200 satellites between 590 km to 630 km in the LEO.13

Space Debris Threat Increases in the LEO

The usage of cube satellite has provided positive impacts in various fields, ranging from environmental studies to offering worldwide internet access in rural areas through communication constellations. However, the current space environment is becoming congested. Hundreds of satellites have already been scheduled to launch each year before the construction of the constellation programme by OneWeb, SpaceX and Amazon. To further worsen the space debris situation in the LEO, direct-ascent Anti-Satellite Testing (ASAT) was conducted in recent years and more debris will be created through such testing. During the Chinese ASAT in 2007, some debris from the collision was blasted outward away from the Earth, causing a potential threat to satellites above the altitude where the ASAT testing occurred.14 Nine years after the incident happened, there are still more than 3,000 traceable pieces in orbit.

In 2009, two satellites collided at a speed of 10 km/s at an altitude of 800 km. This was the first time a collision had happened between two satellites. The incident created more than 1,000 pieces of debris larger than 10 cm. Such activity could initiate a chain reaction, creating more collisions from the initial impact. This phenomenon is known as the Kessler Syndrome.15

From early 2019, there were approximately 34,000 pieces of debris larger than 10 cm (similar to the size of a cube satellite) and more than 900,000 pieces of debris ranging from one cm to 10 cm in size. Objects that are smaller than one cm in size are expected to be more than 100 million within the LEO.16 Despite the small size of the space debris, they are travelling at a speed of more than seven km/s. At this speed, tiny objects could harm any large satellite orbiting in the LEO. While satellites can increase their physical hardening to protect the on-board instruments from impact, some satellites cannot be hardened due to the size and dimensional constraints. Furthermore, hardened materials would also increase the overall cost of the satellite.

Constellation in the Making Could Impact Space-Based Military Assets

The previous examples revealed the congestion of the LEO. With companies continuing to launch thousands of small satellites, the chances of a collision in space will continue to increase. This will hinder space-based Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) support to provide valuable information to military operations. A majority of the ISR assets are orbiting in the LEO. NATO relies on space-based assets to assist its operations. Increasing the number of spacecraft in the LEO could raise problems and threats to military assets as well as access to space assets to support operations. If the orbital path of these smaller objects were not tracked by the Space Operation Centre regularly, larger satellites or manned-space stations could be penetrated by the non-propulsion satellites, making them a potential kinetic kill vehicle.

Most satellites within the 600 km region of the LEO are affected by the atmospheric drag, which is helping to bring down some of the obsolete satellites. However, satellites orbiting above 800 km are less likely to be affected by the atmospheric drag, making cube satellites or small satellites without propulsion systems difficult to deorbit once they have reached the EOL.17, 18 The altitude for some of the OneWeb, Starlink and Kuiper constellations is planned to be above the atmospheric drag region. Despite this, Starlink satellites will have propulsion system for orbital manoeuvre and EOL deorbiting, tracking the full constellation with 12,000 satellites could be challenging for the company and the Combined Space Operations Center (CSpOC).19 Additionally, there is the possibility of losing contact with satellites before they reach their EOL. Envisat, an 8,210 kg satellite that is currently drifting at an altitude of 785 km, poses a collision threat with other satellites. Envisat was expected to decommission in 2014 but the European Space Agency (ESA) lost contact with the satellite in 2012.20 If no interaction will be made with the Envisat, it is expected to stay in orbit for the next 150 years.21

#### Collisions with early warning satellites causes miscalc and goes nuclear – magnified by the Kessler effect

Blatt 20 [Talia, joint concentration in Social Studies and Integrative Biology at Harvard, specialization in East Asian geopolitics and security issues] “Anti-Satellite Weapons and the Emerging Space Arms Race,” Harvard International Review, May 26, 2020, <https://hir.harvard.edu/anti-satellite-weapons-and-the-emerging-space-arms-race/> TG

Despite their deterrent functions, ASATs are more likely to provoke or exacerbate conflicts than dampen them, especially given the risk they [pose](https://thebulletin.org/2019/06/arms-control-in-outer-space-the-russian-angle-and-a-possible-way-forward/) to early warning satellites. These satellites are a crucial element of US ballistic missile defense, capable of [detecting missiles](https://www.globalsecurity.org/space/world/japan/warning.htm) immediately after launch and tracking their paths.

Suppose a US early warning satellite goes dark, or is shut down. Going dark could signal a glitch, but in a world in which other countries have ASATs, it could also signal the beginning of an attack. Without early warning satellites, the United States is much more susceptible to nuclear missiles. Given the strategy of counterforcing—[targeting](https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/files/publication/isec_a_00273_LieberPress.pdf) nuclear silos rather than populous cities to prevent a nuclear counterattack—the Americans might believe their nuclear weapons are imminently at risk. It could be [twelve hours](https://books.google.com/books?id=ET8lDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA1&lpg=PA1&dq=%22Protecting+Space+Assets%22+johnson-freese&source=bl&ots=6Oq0IdeBjw&sig=ACfU3U1G6Hj8QdP4JlCRNxA6i5XplZwHyg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj1n-jT2YzpAhUugnIEHUuMCu4Q6AEwA3oECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=%22Protecting%20Space%20Assets%22%20johnson-freese&f=false) before the United States regains satellite function, which is too long to wait to put together a nuclear counterattack. The United States, therefore, might move to mobilize a nuclear attack against Russia or China over what might just be a piece of debris shutting off a satellite.

Additionally, accidental warfare, or strategic miscalculation, is uniquely likely in space. It is [much easier](https://books.google.com/books?id=VyXTDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA339&lpg=PA339&dq=space+offense+dominant&source=bl&ots=Mw0bgJ51qf&sig=ACfU3U3DeZiEHpr9nfszlCbJZIoyyssIpg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjrs-WD3IzpAhVulHIEHbL0AE4Q6AEwCXoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=space%20offense%20dominant&f=false) to hold an adversary’s space systems in jeopardy with destructive ASATs than it is to [sustainably defend](https://www.cnas.org/publications/commentary/the-us-military-should-not-be-doubling-down-on-space) a system, which is expensive and in some cases not technologically feasible because of limitations on satellite movement. Space is therefore [considered](https://books.google.com/books?id=VyXTDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA339&lpg=PA339&dq=space+offense+dominant&source=bl&ots=Mw0bgJ51qf&sig=ACfU3U3DeZiEHpr9nfszlCbJZIoyyssIpg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjrs-WD3IzpAhVulHIEHbL0AE4Q6AEwCXoECAoQAQ#v=onepage&q=space%20offense%20dominant&f=false) offense-dominant; offensive tactics like weapons development are prioritized over defensive measures, such as [improving GPS](https://www.politico.com/story/2018/04/06/outer-space-war-defense-russia-china-463067) or making satellites more resistant to jamming.

As a result, countries are left with poorly defended space systems and rely on offensive posturing, which increases the risk that their actions are perceived as aggressive and incentivizes rapid, risky counterattacks because militaries cannot rely on their spaced-based systems after first strikes.

There are several hotspots in which ASATs and offensive-dominant systems are particularly relevant. Early warning satellites [play](https://www.politico.com/story/2018/04/06/outer-space-war-defense-russia-china-463067) a central role in US readiness in the event of a conflict involving North Korea. News of North Korean missile launches comes from these satellites. Given North Korea’s [history](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11813699) of nuclear provocations, unflinchingly hostile rhetoric towards the United States and South Korea, and diplomatic opacity, North Korea is always a threatening, unknowable adversary, but recent developments have magnified the risk. With the health of Kim Jong-un [potentially in jeopardy](https://apnews.com/f5d302ae65b03838173e40848223b771), a succession battle or even civil war on the peninsula [raises the chances](https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1273890/Kim-Jong-un-dead-North-Korea-nuclear-weapon-news-latest-death-US) of loose nukes. If the regime is terminal, traditional MAD risk calculus will become moot; with nothing to lose, North Korea would have no reason to hold back its nuclear arsenal. Or China [might decide](https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/28/kim-jong-un-china-north-korea/) to seize military assets and infrastructure of the regime. If the US does not have its early warning satellites because they have been taken out in an ASAT attack, the US, South Korea, and Japan are all in imminent nuclear peril, while China could be in a position to fundamentally reshape East Asian geopolitics.

The South China Sea is another hotspot in which ASATs could risk escalation. China [is developing](https://missiledefenseadvocacy.org/missile-threat-and-proliferation/todays-missile-threat/china-anti-access-area-denial-coming-soon/) Anti-Access Area Denial (A2/AD) in the South China Sea, a combination of long range radar with air and maritime defense meant to deny US freedom of navigation in the region. Given the disputed nature of territory in the South China Sea, the United States and its allies do not want China to successfully close off the region.

#### Independently causes cyberwar and satellite hacking which escalates.

Falco 19 “Opinion: Our satellites are prime targets for a cyberattack. And things could get worse.” Gregory Falco [Gregory Falco is a cyber research fellow at Harvard University’s Belfer Center and a postdoctoral security researcher at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. He is the founder and chief executive of NeuroMesh, a tech security company.] May 7, 2019 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/our-satellites-are-prime-targets-for-a-cyberattack-and-things-could-get-worse/2019/05/07/31c85438-7041-11e9-8be0-ca575670e91c_story.html> SM

One minute. That’s how long it took me last month to demonstrate to a major broadcasting company and production team how to access and restart a leading satellite Internet provider’s control system. Five minutes is how long it took me to demonstrate how to gain full control of it.

Hackers are always improving their ability to break into our digital infrastructure. Yet the computer systems running our satellites haven’t kept up, making them prime targets for an attack. This makes our space assets a massive vulnerability — and it could get much worse if we’re not careful.

This past weekend, SpaceX won approval from the Federal Communications Commission to increase the number of low-flying satellites as part of its Starlink project so that they can provide faster Internet access to the world. Unfortunately, access will be faster for both legitimate users and hackers alike. The FCC does not require applicants to publicly demonstrate how they will secure these satellites or the Internet they plan to provide. SpaceX, like other private space companies, has shared virtually no information about its cybersecurity efforts or plans.

This is extremely disconcerting, considering the potential ramifications of a satellite being hacked. The most mundane outcome is that the satellite will no longer function, but the other extreme is for an attacker to break into a satellite and take over any thrusters (which SpaceX has insisted its satellites will have) and then propel the satellite into critical infrastructure and military satellites in other orbits. In other words, attackers could possibly use the hacked satellite as a kinetic weapon.

There has long been a void of attention to securing space infrastructure, ranging from space-faring rovers to satellite ground-control systems that manage all the space-based assets. Virtually no policy or oversight agency exists concerning securing space assets — something I’ve discussed with government leadership to little avail. While the FCC regulates communications, it should not necessarily be responsible for all things space security. Perhaps the new Space Development Agency could be.

This leaves space security in the hands of the private sector, which is exploiting the recent ease of access to space. The advent of small satellites known as CubeSats offers the chance to launch a satellite into orbit for as little as $30,000 . And because the government wants to encourage economic activity in this area, requirements to do so are extremely light. This leaves those who are creating the satellites responsible for the cybersecurity of their assets, which is not usually part of the rocket scientist’s traditional skill set.

As a space cybersecurity researcher, I am excited about the renewed interest in space from both the commercial and exploratory perspectives. But we need to be strategic about the security of these space systems. Unlike “Internet of things” devices such as baby monitors, which we purchase for less than $100 and discard or sell once a new model comes out, satellites often remain in orbit for much longer and are less dispensable. So if we don’t consider the cybersecurity of the space asset now, we’ll likely be dealing with the ramifications of that for several years to come. The lack of government intervention in satellite security does not mean that we can ignore cybersecurity as an issue.

Private space companies such as SpaceX, OneWeb and Blue Origin need to join the conversation about cybersecurity and help consumers understand that they are taking it seriously (if they are). (Blue Origin’s founder and owner, Jeff Bezos, also owns The Post.) Right now, there are several job openings for information security analysts at private space companies, indicating that they are likely hurting for talent and are behind in figuring out their security. This isn’t surprising given that space is hard, and traditional IT experts don’t have the right skill sets for a space cybersecurity job. Space systems have unique requirements that are more akin to an industrial control system, such as an energy smart meter, than to an email server.

Private space companies need to start a dialogue with the security research community about their particular challenges so that we can help. They should also be transparent with the FCC that they need help in securing their infrastructure. The last thing we need is for China or Russia to take over SpaceX’s satellites and wreak havoc on our space assets.

#### Empirics prove it’s possible and likely by state and nonstate actors – especially true given private sector cost cutting.

Akoto 20 “Hackers could shut down satellites -- or turn them into weapons” February 13, 2020 William Akoto [a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Denver.] <https://www.upi.com/Top_News/Voices/2020/02/13/Hackers-could-shut-down-satellites-or-turn-them-into-weapons/4091581597502/> SM

Feb. 13 (UPI) -- Last month, SpaceX became the operator of the world's largest active satellite constellation. As of the end of January, the company had 242 satellites orbiting the planet with plans to launch 42,000 over the next decade. This is part of its ambitious project to provide Internet access across the globe. The race to put satellites in space is on, with Amazon, U.K.-based OneWeb and other companies chomping at the bit to place thousands of satellites in orbit in the coming months.

These new satellites have the potential to revolutionize many aspects of everyday life -- from bringing Internet access to remote corners of the globe to monitoring the environment and improving global navigation systems. Amid all the fanfare, a critical danger has flown under the radar: the lack of cybersecurity standards and regulations for commercial satellites, in the United States and internationally. As a scholar who studies cyber conflict, I'm keenly aware that this, coupled with satellites' complex supply chains and layers of stakeholders, leaves them highly vulnerable to cyberattacks.

If hackers were to take control of these satellites, the consequences could be dire. On the mundane end of scale, hackers could simply shut down satellites, denying access to their services. Hackers could also jam or spoof the signals from satellites, creating havoc for critical infrastructure. This includes electric grids, water networks and transportation systems.

Some of these new satellites have thrusters that allow them to speed up, slow down and change direction in space. If hackers took control of these steerable satellites, the consequences could be catastrophic. Hackers could alter the satellites' orbits and crash them into other satellites or even the International Space Station.

Commodity parts

Makers of these satellites, particularly small CubeSats, use off-the-shelf technology to keep costs low. The wide availability of these components means hackers can analyze them for vulnerabilities. In addition, many of the components draw on open-source technology. The danger here is that hackers could insert back doors and other vulnerabilities into satellites' software.

The highly technical nature of these satellites also means multiple manufacturers are involved in building the various components. The process of getting these satellites into space is also complicated, involving multiple companies. Even once they are in space, the organizations that own the satellites often outsource their day-to-day management to other companies. With each additional vendor, the vulnerabilities increase as hackers have multiple opportunities to infiltrate the system.

Hacking some of these CubeSats may be as simple as waiting for one of them to pass overhead and then sending malicious commands using specialized ground antennas. Hacking more sophisticated satellites might not be that hard either.

Satellites are typically controlled from ground stations. These stations run computers with software vulnerabilities that can be exploited by hackers. If hackers were to infiltrate these computers, they could send malicious commands to the satellites.

History of hacks

This scenario played out in 1998 when hackers took control of the U.S.-German ROSAT X-Ray satellite. They did it by hacking into computers at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland. The hackers then instructed the satellite to aim its solar panels directly at the sun. This effectively fried its batteries and rendered the satellite useless. The defunct satellite eventually crashed back to Earth in 2011. Hackers could also hold satellites for ransom, as happened in 1999 when hackers took control of the U.K.'s SkyNet satellites.

Over the years, the threat of cyberattacks on satellites has gotten more dire. In 2008, hackers, possibly from China, reportedly took full control of two NASA satellites, one for about two minutes and the other for about nine minutes. In 2018, another group of Chinese state-backed hackers reportedly launched a sophisticated hacking campaign aimed at satellite operators and defense contractors. Iranian hacking groups have also attempted similar attacks.

Although the U.S. Department of Defense and National Security Agency have made some efforts to address space cybersecurity, the pace has been slow. There are no cybersecurity standards for satellites and no governing body to regulate and ensure their cybersecurity. Even if common standards could be developed, there are no mechanisms in place to enforce them. This means responsibility for satellite cybersecurity falls to the individual companies that build and operate them.

As they compete to be the dominant satellite operator, SpaceX and rival companies are under increasing pressure to cut costs. There is also pressure to speed up development and production. This makes it tempting for the companies to cut corners in areas like cybersecurity that are secondary to actually getting these satellites in space.

#### Nuke war causes extinction – Ice Age, famines, and war 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. How nuclear war would affect Earth’s climate. September 8, 2017. earthsky.org/human-world/how-nuclear-war-would-affect-earths-climate] Note, we are only reading parts of the interview that are directly from Paul Edwards -- MMG

In the nuclear conversation, what are we not talking about that we should be?

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.

### Adv – Space Militarization

#### Desire to protect profitable LEO constellations leads states to militarize outer space—specifically with ASATs.

Bernat 19 “The Inevitability of Militarization of Outer Space” Pawel Bernat [Assistant Professor, Polish Air Force University] Safety & Defense 5(1) (2019) 49–54 <https://philarchive.org/archive/BERTIO-52> SM

Currently, the dominant interpretations of this article argue that the placement of conventional weapons, including systems with nuclear drives, in orbit does not violate the provisions of the Treaty (Bourbonniere & Lee, 2008). The Treaty, according to these elucidations, does not also prohibit nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction on trajectory passing through space, as it is the case with the Russian ballistic missile RS-28 Sarmat. However, it prohibits placing and keeping biological, bacteriological, chemical, and nuclear weapons in orbit (Boothby, 2017).

Of course, there are also other interpretations, according to which the Treaty has been infringed more than once. They are based on the quite right belief that in the case of modern weapons, one should talk about systems rather than a single ballistic missile. After all, the satellite navigation system was created as part of a ballistic missile guidance system with thermonuclear warheads (LaGrone, 2014). Therefore, we are dealing here with a very important philosophical and legal question whether the satellite being a part of such a system is a weapon and hence prohibited by the Treaty. This brings us back to the difficulty of clear and sound definition of the term “space weapon” addressed before. Does the fact that a civil communication satellite can be used (and often is) for military purposes make it a part of a weapon system? If so, what would be the consequences, especially if we took into consideration the fact that approximately 95% of satellites could be used that way? These questions, although theoretical in nature, bear significant consequences for the binding power of the Treaty, and therefore the whole outer space legal framework.

So far, however, the Treaty has been fulfilling its task quite well, and its provisions have been relatively seldom broken or violated. On the other hand, we are currently witnessing an undoubted renaissance of the space sector, which also applies to offensive and defensive military technologies and programs. The structure of the sector has changed as well – the twentieth-century traditional bipolar competition between the United States and the Soviet Union is long gone. New entities have appeared in the game, both, private companies, such as SpaceX, Blue Origin, Virgin Galactic and Virgin Orbit, Bigelow Aerospace, Rocket Lab, and national agencies – Indian ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization) or Chinese CNSA (China National Space Administration), which joined the key global actors like American NASA, Russian Roscosmos, European ESA, or Japanese JAXA. The record of orbital launches – 139, was set in 1967 (Kyle, 2019a). It may seem surprising that humanity has not been able to break this record for over 50 years. However, since the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, we have been observing a steady increase in the number of orbital launches (52 in 2005, 70 in 2010, 114 in 2018), and it seems that this record will be broken in 2019 because 173 starts are planned (Kyle, 2019b). The space sector is also growing as a market. It is estimated that it is currently worth about USD 350 billion, and according to various consulting companies, it should reach a value of between USD 1 and 2.7 trillion in 2040 (Foust, 2018).

The change in the sector means that the existing solutions, including the Space Treaty, are losing their significance (e.g., space mining cannot be reconciled with Article II of the Treaty), and the current geopolitical situation seems to exclude new, more adequate agreement that would be adapted to modern technologies. This situation, in turn, translates into more and more bolder violations of the existing laws, e.g., the already mentioned SPACE Act of 2015 or increasingly explicit orbital or suborbital weapons systems, which are clearly not developed “in the interest of maintaining international peace and security and promoting international co-operation and understanding” as it is stated in the Art. III of the Outer Space Treaty (UNOSA, 1967), as, e.g., the programs of Prompt Global Strike (CRS, 2019).

3. Outer Space as a Theatre for Potential Conflict

The progressive development of the space sector brings forth, as a natural consequence, the growth of its strategic importance. Every year we launch more and more satellites into the orbit. They are part of communication, navigation, reconnaissance, or security systems, which are used more and more and play an increasingly important role in the economy and security. Among many examples, one may point to the already mentioned Prompt Global Strike guidance system, the European Galileo navigation system, or Starlink - a constellation of satellites, which is expected to provide broadband internet for the entire globe and consist of approximately 42,000 satellites (SpaceX has already obtained a permission to launch 12,000 satellites, and in October 2019 the company asked the International Telecommunication Union to arrange spectrum for 30,000 new ones) (Henry, 2019).

On the other hand, there is a growing threat of the democratization of weapons capable of destroying satellite systems. According to the 2018 Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community describes the space threat as one of the most significant ones (Coats, 2018, p. 13). ASAT The anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) are currently in possession of four countries – the United States, Russia, China, and, more recently, India. However, it is reported that other nation-states have the potential to develop direct-ascent (DA) ASAT systems on the basis of their ballistic missiles, e.g., Iran and North Korea (Weeden, Samson, 2019, pp. 4.1-2, 5.1-2), and some believe that Israel’s Arrow 3 missile has been developed to gain such a capability (Opall-Rome, 2009). There are many indications that this technology will eventually also be available to traditionally weak actors who will acquire it through purchase or by developing their own systems. As it was already mentioned, the space sector is growing by leaps and bounds. National-states and private entities that did not invest much or at all in the space industry before are now developing launching technologies (e.g., New Zealand, Norway, Poland), what, as a consequence, must lead to the democratization of the technology. What is more, in addition to traditional groundspace or air-space ASAT missiles, new types of that kind of weapon can be developed (potentially it could also become available for traditionally weak actors), such as small kamikaze satellites1 , cyber-hacking involving redirecting the object to a cloud of cosmic debris leading to its destruction or a weapon system that would be capable of “blinding” the satellite or destroy its sensors without physically destroying the object.

Considering the above facts, it should not come as a surprise that in order to ensure the operability of increasingly important, also for national security, satellite systems, there are programs being implemented to create offensive and defensive systems for objects in orbit. And that, in turn, has generated the construction of countermeasures – weapons that would be able to neutralize the new systems – by the potential adversaries. As a consequence, we are witnessing an expansion of the potential conflict arena where outer space becomes a possible theatre for military operations. This process is still in its early stages, but there should be no doubts that it is taking place already. Countries with sufficient technological potential caring for their current and future interests have been developing and will continue working on defensive systems (also aimed at eliminating the threat from traditionally weak actors) and offensive systems (ensuring military superiority and deterrence factor). Space corps are established and developed for exactly these purposes.

There is no indication that this process will stop. On the contrary, it seems that due to the progressive development of space technologies and the privatization of the sector, as well as substantial potential revenues from space mining or the global satellite broadband internet system, it will accelerate. As it was demonstrated in the section dedicated to the legal framework of operating in outer space, the current laws and treaties have lost their significance, and they are not taken into account while planning future operations. The United Nations and its Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) are structurally and legally too weak to inflict punishment or sanction for breaking the rules. One may then risk the claim that further militarization of space is inevitable. It will undoubtedly further affect the validity of the Outer Space Treaty, which, over time, will not be respected at all. That, in turn, will open the door to the development of various kinds of space offensive weapon systems.

4. Militarization of Outer Space Is Imminent

The main argument of the paper provides the information why there will be a progressive increase of weapon systems placed in orbit, and various types of space corps will be further developed by national-states.

As was demonstrated above, we, as humankind, rely more and more on orbital communication, navigation, and security systems. Global and regional navigation satellite systems are continually developed and perfected by a progressive number of entities, mainly national states. Examples of GNSS include Europe’s Galileo, the US’s NAVSTAR Global Positioning System (GPS), Russia’s Global’naya Navigatsionnaya Sputnikovaya Sistema (GLONASS) and China’s BeiDou Navigation Satellite System. There are, however, another two regional systems under development, i.e., Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) and Japanese Quasi-Zenith Satellite System (QZSS). All of those satellites, apart from securing civil safety (e.g., in transportation, logistics, communication), play a crucial role in national security.

Another example is the mentioned already Starlink system that will provide broadband internet for the Northern US and parts of Canada already in 2020, and the plan is to create the global system before 2027 (Mosher, 2019). Again, the system, although designed for civil purposes, will be used by the military – the US Air Force is testing SpaceX’s Starlink technology in military aircraft to deliver high bandwidth into the cockpit of Air Force planes under a program called Global Lightning (Malik, 2019). The facts are straightforward – there are more and more satellite systems that play an essential role in countries’ security and are part of critical infrastructure, so in order to secure their interests and protect that infrastructure, these national states keep developing both defensive and offensive means. The Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community is very clear in its predictions in this regard:

We assess that, if a future conflict were to occur involving Russia or China, either country would justify attacks against US and allied satellites as necessary to offset any perceived US military advantage derived from military, civil, or commercial space systems (Coats, 2018).

However, we must not forget about the democratization of the weapon systems that may pose a serious and real threat to satellite systems. Currently, there are four countries in possession of the ASAT weapons that could destroy a satellite in orbit. However, more and more entities, both national states and private companies have been working on their launch technologies, like New Zeeland, Norway, Poland, just to name a few. Moreover, it should be remembered that not only ASAT missile systems may be used to attack and destroy satellites – one may use small kamikaze satellites to crash into the target, cyber-hacking to direct the object into the cloud of space debris, “blinding” the satellites with ground-based lasers (Mizokami, 2019). These technologies are much more reachable. Therefore, in time, we should expect that traditionally weak actors, like rogue states or terrorist organizations, will gain have access to them (Bernat, Posluszna, 2018).

#### China, Russia, and the US are developing dual use co-orbital ASATs that can stalk and attack other satellites using rendezvous and proximity operations – they make miscalculation highly likely

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Abstract

Since 2008, China has been developing a new co-orbital antisatellite weapon (ASAT). These “space stalkers” could be placed on orbit in peacetime and maneuvered to tailgate US satellites during a crisis. At a moment’s notice, they could simultaneously attack multiple critical satellites from such close proximity that the United States would not have time to prevent damage. Current national security space strategy, existing and developing space defense capabilities, and current proposals for dealing with weapons in space cannot counter this new threat. Since space stalkers cannot be reliably distinguished from ordinary satellites, these ASATs cannot be banned outright. Instead, this article proposes to ban threatening positioning of space objects, whether satellites or space stalkers. As these positions can be observed by multiple countries, the United States should declare and work with the international community to agree that any country configuring and readying space stalkers for attack demonstrates hostile intent, which justifies preemptive self-defense as the last resort. In the case of space stalkers, self-defense is a justified action rather than a pretext for aggression. The proposed scheme would be effective in deterring and defending against space stalkers.

The United States has 554 operational satellites, the largest number of satellites among all countries and organizations in the world (see table 1).1 While these space capabilities offer great advantages for the US military, they simultaneously create great vulnerabilities. The Department of Defense (DOD) is increasingly concerned, particularly about the space threat from China. In its annual reports to Congress, Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China for 2013,2 2014,3 2015,4 and 2016,5 the DOD has warned repeatedly: “PLA [People’s Liberation Army] writings emphasize the necessity of ‘destroying, damaging, and interfering with the enemy’s reconnaissance . . . and communications satellites,’ suggesting that such systems, as well as navigation and early warning satellites, could be among the targets of attacks designed to ‘blind and deafen the enemy.’ ” Gen John Hyten, the former head of Air Force Space Command, said without space assets, the United States would be forced to revert to industrial age warfare: “It’s Vietnam, Korea and World War II”—no more precision missiles and smart bombs.6 Hyten was also quoted as saying that “China will soon be able to threaten US satellites in every orbital regime, from low Earth orbit a few hundred miles above the Earth, to geosynchronous orbit more than 20,000 miles up—where some of the military’s most important satellites circle the Earth. . . . Now we have to figure out how to defend those satellites.”7

As threats from ground-based ASATs (such as traditional threats from ballistic missiles, lasers, and jammers and the newer cyber attacks8 ) grow, it is easy to continue focusing on these much more well-known ASATs and ignore China’s developing co-orbital ASAT—hereafter what this article refers to as space stalkers. In November 2015, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission released its annual report to Congress stating that “since 2008, China has tested increasingly complex space proximity capabilities.”9 It confirmed what it and others have been suggesting, that “China’s recent space activities indicate it is developing co-orbital antisatellite systems to target US space assets. These systems consist of a satellite armed with a weapon such as an explosive charge, fragmentation device, kinetic energy weapon, laser, radio frequency weapon, jammer, or robotic arm.”10 Space objects capable of rendezvous proximity operations and particularly equipped with a robotic arm could pose a game-changing threat as these objects could be placed in orbit during peacetime. During a crisis, such as China seizing Taiwan or territorial disputes in the South China Sea, these space objects could be maneuvered to tailgate US satellites and become space stalkers. They could simultaneously attack multiple critical satellites from such a close proximity that the United States would not have time to react. The space stalkers could destroy enough critical satellites to force the United States back toward General Hyten’s warning of fighting primitive “industrial age warfare” with greatly increased collateral damage. On 29 November 2016, CNN broadcast the documentary “War in Space: The Next Battlefield,” based on interviews of more than 10 high-ranking military personnel of the entire chain of command for space warfare. These interviews described the concerns of senior space officials about the threat from “kamikaze and kidnapper satellites launched by Russia and China.”11

Geosynchronous satellites have long been considered safe from attacks, especially simultaneous attacks, since direct-ascent ASAT ballistic missiles would typically take about four hours to reach geosynchronous satellites.12 However, these satellites could soon be under serious threat. Setting up the space stalkers to be co-orbital with, and in close proximity to, their prey is the easiest way to coordinate simultaneous attacks. If China could place these highly maneuverable space stalkers in close proximity to multiple US critical satellites, simultaneous attacks would be possible with little advance warning, leaving the United States inadequate time to save the targeted satellites.

The space-stalking threat is unique and cannot be mitigated by focusing on and responding to traditional satellite threats. Even if the United States could perfectly deter and defend against all the traditional ASAT threats and the newer cyber attacks, adversaries could still use multiple stalkers to mount a devastating first strike against critical US satellites. Thus, the United States must specifically deal with the emerging spacestalker threat. This article provides analysis and recommendations on how to develop an overarching strategy to deter and defend against space stalkers without ignoring other threats and while gaining international support for the new strategy.

One must first understand Chinese counterspace strategy to prescribe an effective US strategy and policy. The United States must also refocus its traditional space policies to address the emerging space-stalking threat— something neglected today. Additionally, the National Security Space Strategy must be updated to include a strategy to defend against and to deter space stalkers, including justified preemption as the last resort. Diplomacy alone with potential adversaries to lessen the space-stalking threat is important but not sufficient. Therefore, the new US strategy should include developing new international agreements on weapons in space and in particular space stalkers.

The space-stalker threat does not come from China alone. Russia has also been improving its close proximity operation capability, which is dual-use for non-ASAT and ASAT purposes. Its potential space-stalking capability would be more advanced than China’s.13 However, this article uses only Chinese scenarios since concerns about the threat and suggested measures for US response are essentially the same for both China and Russia.

#### Unknown legal thresholds for escalation make inadvertent escalation highly likely

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Another dimension of the problem is the issue of the scale of the attack, both qualitatively and quantitatively. While jamming one or two satellites in isolation appears unlikely to quickly escalate into all-out space war (given the longstanding role of electronic warfare in past conflicts), attacking multiple intelligence-gathering satellites would carry a far higher risk of escalation. Somewhere between these two extremes, however, is an uncertain and unknowable boundary that divides offensive space actions that modestly threaten stability from those that are clearly destabilizing and escalatory. In this unpredictable environment, a country with no desire to spark an all-out space war may still prompt rapid escalation with modest offensive actions that inadvertently cross an unknown threshold. In addition, for technological, commercial, and other reasons the space and cyber domains are evolving far more rapidly than the conventional and nuclear domains, potentially rendering space and cyber strategies ineffective or irrelevant within a few years. In both space and cyberspace, we may learn firsthand how much escalation is too much only after it is too late to stop. Evolving space dynamics could undermine whatever current understanding we may have of crisis and strategic stability in space, and this imperfect grasp of general principles can only add to our uncertainty about the space and cyber offensive capabilities of particular adversaries. Therefore, uncertainty, bluffs, and worst-case thinking are bound to remain prominent forces in the strategic landscape of space. For example, rendezvous and proximity operations on satellites will become more common in the years to come, but they could easily be viewed in a crisis as potentially hostile acts—or in fact be used to commit hostile acts.

### FW – Normal

#### Thus, the standard is consistency with hedonic act utilitarianism.

#### Prefer additionally:

#### 1] Actor specificity –

#### A] Aggregation – every policy benefits some and harms others, which also means side constraints freeze action.

#### B] No intent-foresight distinction – If we foresee a consequence, then it becomes part of our deliberation which makes it intrinsic to our action since we intend it to happen.

### Method

#### Evaluate the plan before discourse--focusing on their theory and requiring the Aff to defend every assumption collapses global progress

David A. Lake 14. University of California, San Diego, USA. “Theory is dead, long live theory: The end of the Great Debates and the rise of eclecticism in International Relations.” European Journal of International Relations 19(3) 567–587

More important, as Kuhn (1970) first argued, progress is only possible within paradigms. OEP and democratic peace theory, described above, made progress only through sets of shared assumptions and common epistemologies and ontologies that allowed theory to be extended to new topics, additional hypotheses to be deduced, and propositions confronted with evidence according to agreed-upon standards. Were researchers in each area forced to defend their methodological, epistemological, and ontological assumptions at every turn, progress within the approach would have been severely hampered. As these research programs have developed, they have been increasingly challenged by accumulated anomalies, as expected, and will either be revised or superseded by some future theory. Although I have not reviewed research in the postpositivist approach in similar detail in this article, and others are undoubtedly better qualified to address this question, I see similar progress in the feminist security studies program from the early works of Enloe (1990) that opened the political space to include women, to Tickner’s (1992) agenda-setting work, to more recent and substantive applications that reveal and highlight the ways in which gender deeply structures world politics (see Sjoberg, 2010; Sjoberg and Via, 2010; Towns, 2010). This too would have been even more difficult if researchers were forced to debate first principles at every turn. Within both positivist and post-positivist approaches, progress occurs within paradigms according to their own criteria for evaluating that progress. This suggests letting each paradigm develop on its own in its own fashion.

In the end, I prefer progress within paradigms rather than war between paradigms, especially as the latter would be inconclusive. The human condition is precarious. This is still the age of thermonuclear weapons. Globalization continues to disrupt lives as countries realign their economies on the basis of comparative advantage, production chains are disaggregated and wrapped around the globe, and financial crises in one country reverberate around the planet in minutes. Transnational terrorism threatens to turn otherwise local disputes into global conflicts, and leave everyone everywhere feeling unsafe. And all the while, anthropomorphic change transforms the global climate with potentially catastrophic consequences. Under these circumstances, we as a society need all the help we can get. There is no monopoly on knowledge. And there is no guarantee that any one kind of knowledge generated and understood within any one epistemology or ontology is always and everywhere more useful than another. To assert otherwise is an act of supreme intellectual hubris.

This is not a plea to let a hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand intellectual flowers bloom. Scholars working in cloistered isolation are not likely to produce great insights, especially when the social problems besetting us today are of such magnitude. All knowledge must be disciplined. That is, knowledge must be shared by and with others if it is to count as knowledge. Positivists and post-positivists are each working hard to improve and clarify the standards of knowledge within their respective paradigms. This is an important turn for both, as it will facilitate progress within each even as it raises barriers to exchange across approaches. So, if not a thousand flowers, it is perhaps better for teams of scholars to tend a small number of separate gardens, grow what they can best, and share when possible with the others and, especially, the broader societies of which they are part.

Do not mourn the end of theory, if by theory we mean the Great Debates in International Relations. Too often, the Great Debates and especially the paradigm wars became contests over the truth status of assumptions. Declarations that ‘I am a realist’ or pronouncements that ‘As a liberal, I predict …’ were statements of a near quasi-religious faith, not conclusions that followed from a falsifiable theory with stronger empirical support. Likewise, assertions that positivism or post-positivism is a better approach to understanding world politics are similarly blinding. The Great Debates were too often academic in the worst sense of that term. Mid-level theory flourished in the interstices of these debates for decades and now, with the waning of the paradigm wars, is coming into its own within the field. I regard this as an entirely positive development. We may be witnessing the demise of a particular kind of grand theory, but theory — in the plural — lives. Long may they reign.

#### Scenario planning is pedagogically valuable---

#### analyzing how policies might be otherwise and imagining the consequences is vital to critical reflexivity---deconstructs cognitive biases and flawed ontological assumptions, and empowers creativity and flexibility in thinking and advocacy.

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Over the past decade, the “cult of irrelevance” in political science scholarship has been lamented by a growing chorus (Putnam 2003; Nye 2009; Walt 2009). Prominent scholars of international affairs have diagnosed the roots of the gap between academia and policymaking, made the case for why political science research is valuable for policymaking, and offered a number of ideas for enhancing the policy relevance of scholarship in international relations and comparative politics (Walt 2005,2011; Mead 2010; Van Evera 2010; Jentleson and Ratner 2011; Gallucci 2012; Avey and Desch 2014). Building on these insights, several initiatives have been formed in the attempt to “bridge the gap.”2 Many of the specific efforts put in place by these projects focus on providing scholars with the skills, platforms, and networks to better communicate the findings and implications of their research to the policymaking community, a necessary and worthwhile objective for a field in which theoretical debates, methodological training, and publishing norms tend more and more toward the abstract and esoteric. Yet enhancing communication between scholars and policymakers is only one component of bridging the gap between international affairs theory and practice. Another crucial component of this bridge is the generation of substantive research programs that are actually policy relevant—a challenge to which less concerted attention has been paid. The dual challenges of bridging the gap are especially acute for graduate students, a particular irony since many enter the discipline with the explicit hope of informing policy. In a field that has an admirable devotion to pedagogical self-reflection, strikingly little attention is paid to techniques for generating policy-relevant ideas for dissertation and other research topics. Although numerous articles and conference workshops are devoted to the importance of experiential and problem-based learning, especially through techniques of simulation that emulate policymaking processes (Loggins 2009; Butcher 2012; Glasgow 2012; Rothman 2012; DiCicco 2014), little has been written about the use of such techniques for generating and developing innovative research ideas. This article outlines an experiential and problem-based approach to developing a political science research program using scenario analysis. It focuses especially on illuminating the research generation and pedagogical benefits of this technique by describing the use of scenarios in the annual New Era Foreign Policy Conference (NEFPC), which brings together doctoral students of international and comparative affairs who share a demonstrated interest in policy-relevant scholarship.3 In the introductory section, the article outlines the practice of scenario analysis and considers the utility of the technique in political science. We argue that scenario analysis should be viewed as a tool to stimulate problem-based learning for doctoral students and discuss the broader scholarly benefits of using scenarios to help generate research ideas. The second section details the manner in which NEFPC deploys scenario analysis. The third section reflects upon some of the concrete scholarly benefits that have been realized from the scenario format. The fourth section offers insights on the pedagogical potential associated with using scenarios in the classroom across levels of study. A brief conclusion reflects on the importance of developing specific techniques to aid those who wish to generate political science scholarship of relevance to the policy world. What Are Scenarios and Why Use Them in Political Science? Scenario analysis is perceived most commonly as a technique for examining the robustness of strategy. It can immerse decision makers in future states that go beyond conventional extrapolations of current trends, preparing them to take advantage of unexpected opportunities and to protect themselves from adverse exogenous shocks. The global petroleum company Shell, a pioneer of the technique, characterizes scenario analysis as the art of considering “what if” questions about possible future worlds. Scenario analysis is thus typically seen as serving the purposes of corporate planning or as a policy tool to be used in combination with simulations of decision making. Yet scenario analysis is not inherently limited to these uses. This section provides a brief overview of the practice of scenario analysis and the motivations underpinning its uses. It then makes a case for the utility of the technique for political science scholarship and describes how the scenarios deployed at NEFPC were created. The Art of Scenario Analysis We characterize scenario analysis as the art of juxtaposing current trends in unexpected combinations in order to articulate surprising and yet plausible futures, often referred to as “alternative worlds.” Scenarios are thus explicitly not forecasts or projections based on linear extrapolations of contemporary patterns, and they are not hypothesis-based expert predictions. Nor should they be equated with simulations, which are best characterized as functional representations of real institutions or decision-making processes (Asal 2005). Instead, they are depictions of possible future states of the world, offered together with a narrative of the driving causal forces and potential exogenous shocks that could lead to those futures. Good scenarios thus rely on explicit causal propositions that, independent of one another, are plausible—yet, when combined, suggest surprising and sometimes controversial future worlds. For example, few predicted the dramatic fall in oil prices toward the end of 2014. Yet independent driving forces, such as the shale gas revolution in the United States, China’s slowing economic growth, and declining conflict in major Middle Eastern oil producers such as Libya, were all recognized secular trends that—combined with OPEC’s decision not to take concerted action as prices began to decline—came together in an unexpected way. While scenario analysis played a role in war gaming and strategic planning during the Cold War, the real antecedents of the contemporary practice are found in corporate futures studies of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Raskin et al. 2005). Scenario analysis was essentially initiated at Royal Dutch Shell in 1965, with the realization that the usual forecasting techniques and models were not capturing the rapidly changing environment in which the company operated (Wack 1985; Schwartz 1991). In particular, it had become evident that straight-line extrapolations of past global trends were inadequate for anticipating the evolving business environment. Shell-style scenario planning “helped break the habit, ingrained in most corporate planning, of assuming that the future will look much like the present” (Wilkinson and Kupers 2013, 4). Using scenario thinking, Shell anticipated the possibility of two Arab-induced oil shocks in the 1970s and hence was able to position itself for major disruptions in the global petroleum sector. Building on its corporate roots, scenario analysis has become a standard policymaking tool. For example, the Project on Forward Engagement advocates linking systematic foresight, which it defines as the disciplined analysis of alternative futures, to planning and feedback loops to better equip the United States to meet contemporary governance challenges (Fuerth 2011). Another prominent application of scenario thinking is found in the National Intelligence Council’s series of Global Trends reports, issued every four years to aid policymakers in anticipating and planning for future challenges. These reports present a handful of “alternative worlds” approximately twenty years into the future, carefully constructed on the basis of emerging global trends, risks, and opportunities, and intended to stimulate thinking about geopolitical change and its effects.4 As with corporate scenario analysis, the technique can be used in foreign policymaking for long-range general planning purposes as well as for anticipating and coping with more narrow and immediate challenges. An example of the latter is the German Marshall Fund’s EuroFutures project, which uses four scenarios to map the potential consequences of the Euro-area financial crisis (German Marshall Fund 2013). Several features make scenario analysis particularly useful for policymaking.5 Long-term global trends across a number of different realms—social, technological, environmental, economic, and political—combine in often-unexpected ways to produce unforeseen challenges. Yet the ability of decision makers to imagine, let alone prepare for, discontinuities in the policy realm is constrained by their existing mental models and maps. This limitation is exacerbated by well-known cognitive bias tendencies such as groupthink and confirmation bias (Jervis 1976; Janis 1982; Tetlock 2005). The power of scenarios lies in their ability to help individuals break out of conventional modes of thinking and analysis by introducing unusual combinations of trends and deliberate discontinuities in narratives about the future. Imagining alternative future worlds through a structured analytical process enables policymakers to envision and thereby adapt to something altogether different from the known present. Designing Scenarios for Political Science Inquiry The characteristics of scenario analysis that commend its use to policymakers also make it well suited to helping political scientists generate and develop policy-relevant research programs. Scenarios are essentially textured, plausible, and relevant stories that help us imagine how the future political-economic world could be different from the past in a manner that highlights policy challenges and opportunities. For example, terrorist organizations are a known threat that have captured the attention of the policy community, yet our responses to them tend to be linear and reactive. Scenarios that explore how seemingly unrelated vectors of change—the rise of a new peer competitor in the East that diverts strategic attention, volatile commodity prices that empower and disempower various state and nonstate actors in surprising ways, and the destabilizing effects of climate change or infectious disease pandemics—can be useful for illuminating the nature and limits of the terrorist threat in ways that may be missed by a narrower focus on recognized states and groups. By illuminating the potential strategic significance of specific and yet poorly understood opportunities and threats, scenario analysis helps to identify crucial gaps in our collective understanding of global politicaleconomic trends and dynamics. The notion of “exogeneity”—so prevalent in social science scholarship—applies to models of reality, not to reality itself. Very simply, scenario analysis can throw into sharp relief often-overlooked yet pressing questions in international affairs that demand focused investigation. Scenarios thus offer, in principle, an innovative tool for developing a political science research agenda. In practice, achieving this objective requires careful tailoring of the approach. The specific scenario analysis technique we outline below was designed and refined to provide a structured experiential process for generating problem-based research questions with contemporary international policy relevance.6 The first step in the process of creating the scenario set described here was to identify important causal forces in contemporary global affairs. Consensus was not the goal; on the contrary, some of these causal statements represented competing theories about global change (e.g., a resurgence of the nation-state vs. border-evading globalizing forces). A major principle underpinning the transformation of these causal drivers into possible future worlds was to “simplify, then exaggerate” them, before fleshing out the emerging story with more details.7 Thus, the contours of the future world were drawn first in the scenario, with details about the possible pathways to that point filled in second. It is entirely possible, indeed probable, that some of the causal claims that turned into parts of scenarios were exaggerated so much as to be implausible, and that an unavoidable degree of bias or our own form of groupthink went into construction of the scenarios. One of the great strengths of scenario analysis, however, is that the scenario discussions themselves, as described below, lay bare these especially implausible claims and systematic biases.8 An explicit methodological approach underlies the written scenarios themselves as well as the analytical process around them—that of case-centered, structured, focused comparison, intended especially to shed light on new causal mechanisms (George and Bennett 2005). The use of scenarios is similar to counterfactual analysis in that it modifies certain variables in a given situation in order to analyze the resulting effects (Fearon 1991). Whereas counterfactuals are traditionally retrospective in nature and explore events that did not actually occur in the context of known history, our scenarios are deliberately forward-looking and are designed to explore potential futures that could unfold. As such, counterfactual analysis is especially well suited to identifying how individual events might expand or shift the “funnel of choices” available to political actors and thus lead to different historical outcomes (Nye 2005, 68–69), while forward-looking scenario analysis can better illuminate surprising intersections and sociopolitical dynamics without the perceptual constraints imposed by fine-grained historical knowledge. We see scenarios as a complementary resource for exploring these dynamics in international affairs, rather than as a replacement for counterfactual analysis, historical case studies, or other methodological tools. In the scenario process developed for NEFPC, three distinct scenarios are employed, acting as cases for analytical comparison. Each scenario, as detailed below, includes a set of explicit “driving forces” which represent hypotheses about causal mechanisms worth investigating in evolving international affairs. The scenario analysis process itself employs templates (discussed further below) to serve as a graphical representation of a structured, focused investigation and thereby as the research tool for conducting case-centered comparative analysis (George and Bennett 2005). In essence, these templates articulate key observable implications within the alternative worlds of the scenarios and serve as a framework for capturing the data that emerge (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994). Finally, this structured, focused comparison serves as the basis for the cross-case session emerging from the scenario analysis that leads directly to the articulation of new research agendas. The scenario process described here has thus been carefully designed to offer some guidance to policy-oriented graduate students who are otherwise left to the relatively unstructured norms by which political science dissertation ideas are typically developed. The initial articulation of a dissertation project is generally an idiosyncratic and personal undertaking (Useem 1997; Rothman 2008), whereby students might choose topics based on their coursework, their own previous policy exposure, or the topics studied by their advisors. Research agendas are thus typically developed by looking for “puzzles” in existing research programs (Kuhn 1996). Doctoral students also, understandably, often choose topics that are particularly amenable to garnering research funding. Conventional grant programs typically base their funding priorities on extrapolations from what has been important in the recent past—leading to, for example, the prevalence of Japan and Soviet studies in the mid-1980s or terrorism studies in the 2000s—in the absence of any alternative method for identifying questions of likely future significance. The scenario approach to generating research ideas is grounded in the belief that these traditional approaches can be complemented by identifying questions likely to be of great empirical importance in the real world, even if these do not appear as puzzles in existing research programs or as clear extrapolations from past events. The scenarios analyzed at NEFPC envision alternative worlds that could develop in the medium (five to seven year) term and are designed to tease out issues scholars and policymakers may encounter in the relatively near future so that they can begin thinking critically about them now. This timeframe offers a period distant enough from the present as to avoid falling into current events analysis, but not so far into the future as to seem like science fiction. In imagining the worlds in which these scenarios might come to pass, participants learn strategies for avoiding failures of creativity and for overturning the assumptions that prevent scholars and analysts from anticipating and understanding the pivotal junctures that arise in international affairs.