

KNIGHTS MODEL UNITED NATIONS INVITATIONAL CONFERENCE

UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE FOR OUTER SPACE AFFAIRS:
COMBATING COSMIC TENSIONS



DECEMBER 3, 2022

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Hello, delegates! My name is Dylan Navarrete and I am currently a junior at the Bishop's School. I've been doing Model United Nations since 10th Grade and served as part of the Crisis Staff for our previous committee on the Trojan War. I have always loved committees where the topics being discussed, while they are important, are also fun to debate and find solutions for. I am greatly looking forward to meeting all of you and getting the opportunity to watch as we work towards global solutions regarding the galaxy around us. The exploration of space has been a goal of humanity since someone looked up at the night sky and thought to themselves, "I want to go there." Unfortunately, during the 1950s and 60s, space exploration became a political topic during the Cold War. While there has been international cooperation since, the topic remains tense as countries around the globe begin looking to take advanced steps in not only the exploration of space, but the colonization and militarization of it. This makes it more pertinent than ever to focus on global solutions to the growing problem of space travel. I encourage you to all look not only at the problems of the present but those that might arise in the future. I want to see a spirited debate on how to deal with the celestial bodies around us and if nations should be allowed to set up colonies on the moon. Or if they are allowed to arm satellites. Should you think of anything else regarding our understanding of space, I invite you to guide the conversation in that direction; the discussion is in your hands. Delegates, I wish you all the best of luck.

Should you need to contact me, please do so at dylan.navarrete.24@bishops.com

Please refer to position paper guidelines on the KnightsMUN Website for position paper requirements.

I. BACKGROUND

The first recorded instance of an object being launched outside Earth's atmosphere was on October 4th, 1957. On that day the Soviet Union launched the first artificial satellite, Sputnik, into orbit around Earth.¹ At the time it was not celebrated as the next step in human history, but rather as a setback for the United States of America's space program, which was also trying to send an artificial object into the space above us; this competition, the Space Race, was one facet of the Cold War. The conflict of The Cold War stemmed from seeing which nation, the Soviet Union or the United States, could become more advanced after the end of the Second World War, and the Space Race became one front of the conflict.

The launch of Sputnik began to worry the United States, as it proved that the Soviets had more advanced technology when it came to space travel. This was further proven when on November 3rd of the same year, the Soviets launched Sputnik II, another satellite. Except this time it had a living creature on it: the dog Laika.² All the while, the United States struggled to even get a satellite off the ground. Eventually, on January 31, 1958, the Explorer left Earth's atmosphere, marking the beginning of the United States's resurgence in the Space Race. In that same year, the United States founded the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). However, the Soviets struck back by being the first nation to send a human into space. On April 12, 1961, Cosmonaut (note: Soviet/Russian astronauts are called cosmonauts and are part of the military) Yuri Gagarin was sent into orbit around the Earth, and that was swiftly

¹ Wilkinson, Freddie. "The History of Space Exploration." *National Geographic*, education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/history-space-exploration. Accessed 24 Oct. 2022.

² Williams, David R., editor. "Sputnik 2." *NASA*, nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/nmc/spacecraft/display.action?id=1957-002A. Accessed 24 Oct. 2022.

followed by an American astronaut, Alan Shepard, going into Space.³ Eight years later, the United States would land three American astronauts on the moon with the Apollo 11 mission in 1969. Hoping to unite the world in the glory of space exploration, the first man on the moon, Neil Armstrong, uttered, “That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”⁴

Fast forward to 2022, and the future of space exploration looks equally bright and dangerous. On the optimistic side, several satellite cameras have been sent into the vastness of space to monitor the galaxy, and Mars rovers continue to send us pictures and information about the Red Planet. However, the United States, Russia, and China have begun to use their weight as global superpowers to utilize space in different ways. Russia has decided to leave the International Space Station (a satellite launched in 1998) after the year 2024 to focus more on its own pursuits of space.⁵ Furthermore, China has began using satellites for telecommunication and navigation purposes, but it has been highly theorized by the rest of the global community that they are also developing satellites for military uses.⁶ However, when questioned about it, Chinese Foreign Military Representative Zhao Lijian stated, “The US is the main driver in turning outer space into a weapon and a battlefield” and “China is always committed to the peaceful use of space and actively promotes international space cooperation.”⁷ Meanwhile, the United States has

³ "Yuri Gagarin and Vostok 1, the First Human Spaceflight." *The Planetary Society*, www.planetary.org/space-missions/vostok-1#:~:text=Yuri%20Gagarin%20became%20the%20first,Race%20with%20the%20United%20States. Accessed 24 Oct. 2022.

⁴ Millis, John P. "Neil Armstrong Quotes." *ThoughtCo*, www.thoughtco.com/neil-armstrong-quotes-3072214. Accessed 24 Oct. 2022.

⁵ Russia to Quit International Space Station 'after 2024'. *Aljazeera*, 26 July 2022, www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/7/26/russia-to-quit-international-space-station-after-2024#:~:text=Russia%20has%20decided%20to%20quit,of%20the%20country's%20space%20agency. Accessed 22 Oct. 2022.

⁶ Song, Wanyuan, and Jana Tauschinski. "China Space Station: What Is the Tiangong?" *BBC*, 26 July 2022, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-61511546.

⁷ Lijian, Zhao. Videoconference interview. 7 July 2022.

begun creating satellites for defense purposes, but also made its Space Force a branch of the U.S. military and part of the Department of Defense.⁸

Now we reach the present where delegates will find solutions to navigate the tense history of space travel and the equally tense future.

II. UN ACTIONS

Due to the use of atomic weapons in World War II and the tension of the Space Race, the United Nations saw fit to set regulations for the use of space when it came to weapons of mass destruction. In 1967, The Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (or Outer Space Treaty) was passed.⁹ The treaty offers the overarching framework for law when it comes to space, as it prohibits the placement of a weapon of any kind on a celestial body, while requiring that the exploration of space must be done for the benefit of all humanity and countries.¹⁰

Since then, there have been additional resolutions proposed and accepted. For example, China and Russia proposed a revision to a 1980 treaty in 2008 that was designed to prevent an arms race in outer space.¹¹ However, no resolutions have explicitly outlined regulations when it comes to satellites and different uses from space other than militarization and exploration, such as the harvesting of natural resources from celestial bodies and development of scientific research in space.

⁸ "FACT SHEET." *United States Space Force*, www.spaceforce.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/#:~:text=U.S.%20Space%20Force%20operated%20Defense,space%20launches%20and%20nuclear%20detonations. Accessed 24 Oct. 2022.

⁹ "Outer Space." *The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs*, United Nations, www.un.org/disarmament/topics/outerspace/. Accessed 24 Oct. 2022.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

III. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

As you begin to consider the ramifications of galactic exploration and tension, and plan out your goals, aspirations, and solutions, consider the following questions:

1. What solutions cater to the majority of the world?
2. How should the UN influence individual space programs?
3. How do the events on Earth influence what is possible in space?
4. Is global cooperation possible in outer space as nations grow more militaristic outside Earth's atmosphere?
5. Is past precedent still relevant?
6. Should the militarization of space be permitted?
7. Should the duty and/or privilege of the exploration of space be given to countries with less geopolitical standing?

IV. HELPFUL RESOURCES

While preparing the following sources might be useful:

- <https://www.un.org/disarmament/topics/outerspace/>
- https://www.spf.org/iina/en/articles/nagashima_02.html
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-61511546>
- <https://www.unoosa.org/>

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www.planetary.org/space-missions/vostok-1#:~:text=Yuri%20Gagarin%20became%20the%20first,Race%20with%20the%20United%20States. Accessed 24 Oct. 2022.