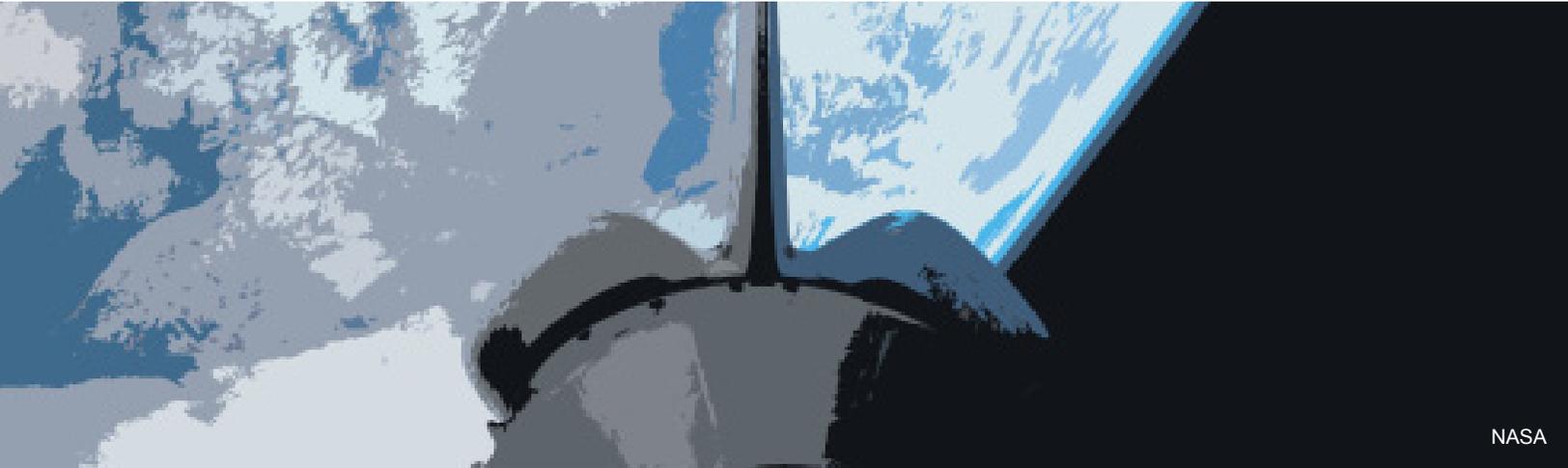


# FACT SHEET

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## Preventing the Weaponization of Space



**What is the PPWT?** PPWT stands for the Treaty on the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force Against Outer Space Objects, a draft treaty jointly introduced to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) by Russia and China in 2008.

### What regulation preceded the PPWT?

- The Outer Space Treaty entered into force in 1967. It prohibited states from
  - claiming any celestial body,
  - placing nuclear weapons or weapons of mass destruction in space and
  - using the moon and other celestial bodies for military purposes (including weapons testing, conducting military manoeuvres or establishing military bases). The Outer Space Treaty does not prohibit the placement of conventional weapons in outer space.
- The Moon Treaty entered into force in 1984. Its intention was to establish an international regime with jurisdiction over the moon and other celestial bodies. No space-faring state has signed it so the treaty is of no direct relevance to current space activities.
- The Space Preservation Treaty is a proposed international treaty to ban all weapons from space. It has yet to be signed by any country.
- PAROS (Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space) is a resolution acknowledging the unique nature of space as a global commons and the weakness of current regulations in preventing an arms race in space. Though the resolution was adopted by most states, the objection of a few states – notably, the United States – prevents further action on the issue.

## What would the PPWT prevent?

1. The placement of weapons in outer space. In this case, weapon refers to
  - any device that has been made or altered for the purpose of destroying, damaging or disrupting the function of objects in outer space, on Earth or in the Earth's atmosphere and
  - any device that has been made or altered to eliminate a population, to inflict damage on a population or to damage components of the biosphere that are important to human existence.
2. Aggressive action, or the threat of aggressive action, against outer space objects. Aggressive action refers to any hostile action that would destroy, damage, temporarily or permanently disrupt the normal functioning of or deliberately change the orbit of any outer space object.

## What issues remain unresolved by the PPWT?

- The use of space objects to conduct war on Earth
- The treatment of dual-use technologies (i.e. space-based objects used mainly for civil or commercial purposes that could also be used as weapons)
- The development, testing or deployment of missile defense systems or other ground-based anti-satellite systems
- The development or testing of space weapons before placement in orbit
- The lack of reliable verification measures

**What could prevent the PPWT from achieving its goal?** Apart from the unresolved issues mentioned above, staunch U.S. opposition poses the most serious obstacle to reaching consensus on the PPWT. The administration of George W. Bush firmly opposed the development of any restrictions on U.S. access to or use of space. As well, the belief that there is no arms race in space and, therefore, no problem to solve continues to pervade the U.S. attitude. Under President Barack Obama, the U.S. National Space Policy was reviewed and a new National Security Space Strategy unveiled—unfortunately, the report does not indicate support for a legally binding treaty such as the PPWT. Instead, the United States appears to be leaning toward non-binding transparency and confidence-building measures.

