



## Advance Social Science Archives Journal

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol.3 No.1, January-March, 2025. Page No. 386-398

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)

Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)



### SPACE MILITARIZATION: THE US-CHINA ARMS RACE AND ITS IMPACT ON SOUTH ASIA

**Muhammad Hamza Farooqi**

MS Scholar at Department of Political Science and International Relations - University of Management and Technology, Lahore

Email: [f2024389001@umt.edu.pk](mailto:f2024389001@umt.edu.pk)

#### ABSTRACT

The focus of this essay is to provide a deep insight into the intensifying US-China arms race in space and its broad implications for the South Asian world from the theoretical lens of realism in IR. Both superpowers are scaling up their space armament as they fight for strategic and technological supremacy; the impact is shifting the dynamics of global security and amplifying insecurities in particular regions. South Asia, a geopolitically vulnerable region already steeped in longstanding rivalries and uncertain stability, has become further mired in the arms race of these world leaders. It uses the realist paradigm – the prioritization of power, security and state survival – to analyze the forces driving the US-China space race and how they affect South Asia's security context. Analyzing some of the major trends, such as ASAT test firings, the development of space-based surveillance, and the geopolitical calculations of regional alliances, the study shows the existence of a regional arms build-up. It goes on to examine how these forces might re-inflate conflict and make the area unstable. These results highlight how South Asian states must respond to the twin issues of technological dependence and strategic vulnerability in a militarizing space environment in rapid flux.

**Keywords:** Space militarization, US-China strategic competition, South Asia, realist theory, international security, arms race.

#### Introduction

The militarization of space entails the deployment and expansion of weapons and military technologies in outer space. The early exploration of space in the mid-twentieth century was motivated in part by military considerations, as the United States and the Soviet Union utilized it to test ballistic missile technology and other technologies with possible military applications. Since then, military spacecraft such as

imaging and communications satellites have operated in outer space, and some ballistic missiles travel through it while in flight<sup>1</sup>.

Classical realist Hans Morgenthau argues that humans have a natural desire for power and control, which can lead to conflict. Similarly, the anarchic structure of the international system allows governments to use all means to survive, which is the primary cause of conflict in the international system. Using the realism lens, it is plausible to argue that space militarization could lead to a dangerous arms races and produce harms for the world and space which is a worldwide heritage of all humans<sup>2</sup>.

#### Official Policies on Space Militarization: United States

The US space militarization is based on superiority and the security of infrastructure. Some key policies include, Space Policy Directive-4 (SPD-4) and the Establishment of the US Space Force (2019): SPD-4 signed by then-President Trump created the US Space Force as an independent war fighting branch. The policy reiterates the "desertion and restitution of US interest" and recognizes space as an important ground for both offensive and defensive activities<sup>3</sup>.

Defense Space Strategy (2020): It is the US Department of Defense's plan for countering space risks. It name China as a major strategic rival and points to maintaining "space superiority" by building more resilient, deterrent and alliances. It also points to partnership with partners for exchange of intelligence and space defense capabilities.

National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA): The NDAA sets the budget and law for space-based military expenditures that continue to increase in recent years. This includes satellite defense systems, anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons and other space-based warfare systems<sup>4</sup>.

"Freedom of Operations" Model: US space Freedom of Operations as a commons for all countries. This is a position opposed to China's attempts to impose restrictions on the space activities of other states under the rubric of "space sovereignty" and open space for both China and its partners.

---

<sup>1</sup> LU Hongya et al., "Analysis of the Development of US Space Military Strategy and Its Impact on Space Security," *Xdfyjs.Cn*, 2023, <https://www.xdfyjs.cn/EN/abstract/abstract467.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> HJ Cho, "Militarization of Space and Arms Control," *Koreascience.Kr*, 2023, <https://koreascience.kr/article/JAKO201826359195996.page>.

<sup>3</sup> M Naheed, "Space Militarization-A Peace Hoax," *Humapub.Com*, 2023, <https://www.humapub.com/admin/alljournals/gsssr/papers/cRpdR9k98c.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> A Flynn - Astropolitics and Undefined 2024, "Star-Bound and Star-Crossed: A Path to US-China Space Cooperation Through Science Diplomacy," *Taylor & Francis*, 2024, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14777622.2024.2368599>.

### Official Policies on Space Militarization: China

China's space policy is all defense, deterrence and assertion of hegemony. Some defining policies include, White Papers on Space Activities: China's white papers (published by the China National Space Administration or CNSA) explain the peaceful space capabilities' evolution and emphasize China's space assets' safeguarding. In the 2021 white paper, space situational awareness, satellite communications and dual-use technologies with clear military applications are all specifically mentioned<sup>5</sup>.

People's Liberation Army (PLA) Strategic Support Force (SSF): Founded in 2015, the SSF unifies China's space, cyber and electronic warfare forces. It is also China's drive to integrate space directly into its own military, boosting space capability both for attack and for defense.

Anti-Satellite (ASAT) Programs and Counterpace Weapons: China's military strategy also includes counterpace weapons like direct-launched ASAT missiles and satellite-disrupting electronic warfare systems. The PLA has tried out ASATs, which have provoked international criticism and war with the US<sup>6</sup>.

Space Sovereignty" and "Strategic Deterrence" Doctrine: China advocates "space sovereignty," space is important for national security and development. China is not for US space weaponisation and focuses on utilizing space capability to protect Chinese interests and deter opponents.

### The US-China Space Arms Race and Impact on South Asia.

The US-China space race has broad ramifications in South Asia, a region already rife with history, nuclear rivalry and strategic competition. As the two superpowers mount a space presence, their confrontation affects South Asian states — mostly India and Pakistan — as well as the region's security landscape in consequential ways.

India considers China's advances in space weapons technologies a direct threat. China's purchase of anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons, space observation and multi-purpose satellites furthers its military capabilities and its regional aims, especially on the tense Himalayan frontier. India has responded by militarizing space even faster. ISRO had been heavily pursuing civilian missions, but recently (after Mission Shakti (2019), a successful ASAT test) it made the move to security. It's India trying to compete with China and stay at technological parity.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ashley J. Tellis, "China's Military Space Strategy," *Survival* 49, no. 3 (September 2023): 41–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330701564752>.

<sup>6</sup> Rubab Nawaz, Asma Bilal, and Maria Rehman, "United States-China Space Offensive: A Dangerous Competition," *Astropolitics* 20, no. 1 (2023): 27–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14777622.2022.2078195>.

Pakistan has neither space expertise in-house like India or China, but it's still in Beijing's interest. Chinese assistance to Pakistan with civilian and military satellites enriches their strategic alliance. The Chinese-built Pakistan Remote Sensing Satellite (PRSS-1), for instance, launched in 2018, shows just how important Beijing's contribution to Islamabad's space surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities are, but Pakistan's dependency on foreign aid makes asymmetric responses even more likely. By making the Chinese satellite systems part of Pakistan's defense system, it will create a regional security imbalance and only make India militarized further.

### **Research Methodology**

This study draws on secondary data analysis qualitative methodology using official policy papers, academic papers and think-tank publications. Its methodology is set against the context of the major International Relations theories – Realism, Constructivism – in order to comprehend the reasons for and consequences of space militarization. Realism reveals the politics of power and security generated by the US-China war, Constructivism reveals norms, identities and global cooperation as agents for space policy.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the official policy and conduct of the US and China on space militarization?
2. What is the US-China space arms race doing to South Asian countries (in particular India and Pakistan) in terms of their security calculations?
3. What are the more regional and global consequences of space militarization for global security and management?
4. What are policy recommendations that can combat space militarization and limit its destabilizing impacts on South Asia?

### **Theoretical Framework**

**Realism:** The realist point of view emphasizes the anarchy of the international order, where the only things that matter is survival and strength. Space militarization is an extension of the power struggle on the ground, and both the US and China compete for strategic superiority.

**Security Dilemma:** Rooted in Realism, the security dilemma is an instrument for considering how an act of one state (ASAT testing or military satellites) creates a response in others and so causes an arms race.

#### **Power Transition and Space Militarization**

Realists see the U.S.-China space rivalry as part of a bigger transitional power equation. The United States is the dominant player and wants to hold that dominance by occupying strategic fields such as space. The rising China wants to overturn this control and create a multipolar world. Space technologies — including ASATs — provide

China with a nonsymmetrical tool to overcome U.S. superiority in conventional power  
7

#### Implications for South Asia

The US-China space race will affect South Asia – and especially India and Pakistan, two nuclear-armed neighbors with space ambitions.

India's Close Relations with the U.S. Space and Defense Cooperation with U.S. Space and Defense cooperation like joint satellite launches, sharing of intelligence has also increased. India has been working on their own ASAT capabilities and exhibited them in the "Mission Shakti" test of 2019. This is a realist move to repel China and Pakistan. India's space technologies have pushed it towards regional dominance and an answer to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)<sup>8</sup>.

Pakistan's space programme is closely enmeshed with China in an alliance meant to beat India. Joint projects such as satellite launches and navigation system increase Pakistan's capabilities. Small Space Militarization: Space plans in Pakistan are, given economic limitations, not militarized like India's. But it regards India's advances as an immediate threat, which fuels regional insecurity.

This space race between the US and China makes the South Asian security crisis all the worse:

Pakistan and China see India's entanglement with the U.S. and space militarization as an existential risk. Pakistan's dependence on China feeds India's insecurity in the form of arms accumulation in space and on land<sup>9</sup>. Realist arguments, by the US and China, to defend their space interests are at play in South Asia.

America allied with like-minded countries such as India to fend off the rise of China. China links up with Pakistan and other nations against U.S. coalitions. Deterrent: Space militarization – the US and China build technologies to defend their own infrastructure and the systems of others. The lack of unified international law in space is no different from the anarchy of the world order of realism.

For all the outrages of treaties such as the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, loopholes are still present to enable the synthesis of dual-use technologies and space weapons. There are no regulations to prevent the arms race as states compete at their own whims. Realism points to the larger consequences of the U.S.-China space arms race for the global order, Militarization of space risks accidental or intentional escalation

<sup>7</sup> Tellis, "China's Military Space Strategy," September 2023.

<sup>8</sup> JV Berge, HS Hiim - Journal of Strategic Studies, and Undefined 2024, "Killing Them Softly: China's Counterspace Developments and Force Posture in Space," *Taylor & Francis*, 2023, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01402390.2024.2388658>.

<sup>9</sup> R Nawaz et al., "United States-China Space Offensive: A Dangerous Competition," *Taylor & Francis*, 2023, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14777622.2022.2078195>.

in the absence of clear rules and communication channels. South Asia and other nations could invest in space militarization at the expense of socio-economic development<sup>10</sup>.

### **Discussion Model**

#### **Space Militarization: An Overview**

Space militarization is the militarization of space technologies and resources. These are reconnaissance, navigation, communications and even potentially offensive technologies such as anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons. Space militarization, in contrast to space exploration generally, is about exploiting these technologies for strategic and tactical gain – and often drives an arms race between great powers.

#### Historical Context

The militarization of space had begun during the Cold War when the US and the Soviet Union were vying for space supremacy. Both countries created satellites for surveillance, communication and warning. This pattern was limited by the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, which banned the use of nuclear weapons in space and limited their application to non-nuclear weapons. All of this said, technology has since passed regulations, ushering in the age of space militarization, with high-tech satellite constellations, ASAT weapons and exclusive military space programs<sup>11</sup>

#### Emerging Trends

Space is a key enabler of contemporary war in recent years. Satellite GPS, near real-time surveillance, and missile guidance all altered military life. At the same time, the development of ASAT weapons, cyber capabilities for space weapons, and military space forces all illustrate how this arms race is getting more intense.

The militarization of space, as a stage for rivalry between great powers, is a perfect embodiment of realist theory in IR. With its focus on an anarchic international order, the need for power and war, realistic thought is a potent framework in which to consider the US-China space race and its implications for South Asia. New developments in space militarization are both an expression of that battle between

---

<sup>10</sup> MK Linden, "Contesting Securitization: Chinese Media Discourse on the Politics and Security of Outer Space," 2024, [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mckenzie-Linden/publication/381111849\\_Contesting\\_securitization\\_Chinese\\_media\\_discourse\\_on\\_the\\_politics\\_and\\_security\\_of\\_outer\\_space/links/665da100bc86444c72294f2e/Contesting-securitization-Chinese-media-discourse-on-the-politics-and-security-of-outer-space.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mckenzie-Linden/publication/381111849_Contesting_securitization_Chinese_media_discourse_on_the_politics_and_security_of_outer_space/links/665da100bc86444c72294f2e/Contesting-securitization-Chinese-media-discourse-on-the-politics-and-security-of-outer-space.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> FA Awan, PDU Javaid - South Asian Studies, and Undefined 2021, "Space Militarization Race among China-Russia and USA: Implications for South Asia," *Journals.Pu.Edu.Pk*, 2023, <https://journals.pu.edu.pk/journals/index.php/IJSAS/article/view/4106>.

giant powers and of how local actors become complicit with, and are influenced by, this larger strategy 12

### **Space Warfare between US-China**

The space race between the US and China represents a larger competition for world dominance. In the realist sense, this competition is a form of the security dilemma: as one state increases its own self-sovereignty, it ends up endangering others, and so counterattacks ensue. With the US holding space technology by the boot, China's explosive rise – from anti-satellite missiles to lunar explorers to satellite constellations – is seen as a direct threat to its hold. This has in turn brought the US closer, as it's put in the Space Force, and invested in new satellite missile defenses and new-fangled satellite technologies.

China's reasons are no less realist. Its space missions are designed to counter US control, win strategic advantages and assume global authority. Space, for Beijing, isn't just a frontier for the exploration of space but also a battlefield in which national security is threatened and its power as a giant has to be staked. It is an insidious cycle of militarization that both states want to circumvent in advance. And, with China's dual-use technologies and cooperation with civilian space programs, it is harder to tell whether they are for peaceful or military purposes, leading to mutual distrust.

### **Implications for South Asia**

Space wars by the US and China will have deep implications for South Asia, already riven by geopolitical tensions and nuclear wars between India and Pakistan. Realism assumes that a lesser state will become part of a larger state in order to apportion spoils to regional foes. To this end, India's cooperation with the US in space and defense projects – in the Quad, enhanced satellite cooperation, and missile defense collaborations – is a counterbalance to China's rise. Indian presence in joint military exercises and space-based intelligence-sharing deals shows the firmness of its resolve to leverage partnerships globally for strategic advantage 13

As India militarizes space through the manufacturing of anti-satellite weapon systems (ASAT), satellite tracking and Indian navigation systems, it does so for regional and global reasons. It wants to discourage China one way; it wants to be a space power in its own right the other. These endeavors also reflect India's desire to be less dependent on foreign technologies and become strategic independent. Pakistan, on the other

---

<sup>12</sup> Loren Brandt and Thomas G. Rawski, "China's Great Economic Transformation," *China's Great Economic Transformation*, January 1, 2008, 1–906, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511754234>.

<sup>13</sup> Dimitrios Stroiakos, "China and India as Rising Powers and the Militarisation of Space\*," *The Militarization of European Space Policy*, January 1, 2023, 170–88, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003230670-14/CHINA-INDIA-RISING-POWERS-MILITARISATION-SPACE-DIMITRIOS-STROIKOS>.

hand, views India's advances as existential and therefore enlarges strategic engagements with China. Then, Beijing's export of space technologies to Pakistan has strained relations further, in a three-way relationship of rivalry and dependence.

That is a combination that swells the security crisis in South Asia, making an arms race all the more probable in the traditional and space arena. Space militarization brings imbalances of capabilities, Pakistan's dependency on Chinese technology contrasted with India's globalized model. Those differences create strategic fragility because miscalculations and errors could spiral into catastrophe <sup>14</sup>

Pakistan's space program – led by the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) – has not progressed much ahead of India. But Pakistan's close cooperation with China gives access to the latest space technology and weapons. Pakistan's dependence on Chinese technology allows them to align strategically and make Pakistan stronger without investing in the country extensively. ASAT test by India has increased the security threat level for Pakistan, and this may increase the counter-space spending. Pakistan lacks the economic and technological resources to be competitive in space militarization on its own. Pakistan's space policy is heavily based on deterrence and strategic rebalancing against India.

US-China competition compounds the South Asian security puzzle as India and Pakistan react to each other's rise in space militarization. More ASAT experiments and satellite launches create more space debris that threatens all the space nations and tangles regional security equations. The difference in space capability between India and Pakistan points to broader economic and techno-economic disparities, which have implications for regional stability and development. Despite all the conflict, South Asia can be a space cooperative in debris collection, disaster mitigation and space sustainability.

### **Findings**

America's and China's space militarisation has positioned South Asia as a crucible of the global security order. The strategic importance of India and Pakistan, geographical proximity to China and US interest in neutralising Beijing make South Asia particularly prone to the spillover of the space arms race. India's collaboration with the US via the Quad and the search for space-based weapons are seen as premeditated countermeasures to China's rising space and military technology lead. On the other hand, Pakistan which had historically been at China's back is more and more dependent on Beijing for top-tier technology and strategic assistance. This

---

<sup>14</sup> A Kalhoro - Pakistan Horizon and undefined 2023, "Strategic Triangle in Outer Space: China, Russia, and the US," *Pakistan-Horizon.Piia.Org.Pk*, accessed November 6, 2024, <http://www.pakistan-horizon.piia.org.pk/index.php/pakistan-horizon/article/view/291>.



dependency gives the region a bipolar security structure that makes any space-based military buildup very risky.

Both India and Pakistan have ramped up their efforts to build space-based military systems in response to US-China competition. It was the Indian successful test of an anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon in 2019 that turned the tide and proved that it would not relent in becoming a major space power. Not only did this provoke a regional rift but it made Pakistan increasingly aggressive in seeking space technologies, most of which it obtained with Chinese help. Pakistan's increasing use of China's BeiDou compass and increasing demand for satellite-based surveillance points to the militarisation of space that is unfolding in the region. All these advances speak to a wider pattern of space becoming a surrogate frontline of earthly conflicts.

In South Asia, space militarisation has also taken large sums away from developmental objectives. As developing countries, India and Pakistan have severe socio-economic difficulties in poverty reduction, healthcare, education and so on. But the race for military space supremacy entails huge financial commitments to satellite programmes, missile systems and defence infrastructure. India's space programme, for example, has turned to military uses more and more, while Pakistan poured money into projects in collaboration with China. This diverted investment reveals the economic expense of strategic competition, and further penalises countries that already face developmental shortfalls.

The militarisation of space has undermined strategic stability in South Asia. As realist theory shows, India's spatial prowess is a bid to become the hegemonic opposite of Pakistan and to overtake China's growing hold. Pakistan sees these developments as existential crises, so there is asymmetric reaction including the search for low-cost counterspace technology. Such reactions make missteps and violence all the more probable, given how little the two countries communicate and share information. Inflections from the US-China rivalry have further complicated the regional security problem in which every move one state makes to become more secure threatens other states.

South Asia has no standard framework for space militarisation, compared with other parts of the world that have tried to develop norms and protocols for space operations. Lack of regional engagement or institutions that specifically focus on space security makes the militarisation of space all the more perilous. Global agreements like the Outer Space Treaty (OST) offer a regulatory starting point, but they're not sufficient to keep up with new technologies, and they're not enforced. This vacuum leaves the door open to the arms race in space to run wild without proper control, thereby fuelling regional and global instability.

### **Policy Implications and Realist Prescriptions**

The realist aim of states in such a world is security and less vulnerability. This requires two things for South Asian states – improving domestic capabilities to deter enemies and forming limited coalitions to compensate for asymmetries. But realistic thinking also accepts the possibility of war-prevention through balance of power and real deterrence. South Asian countries might try to tackle the destabilizing forces of space militarization by:

**Confidence-Building Measures (CBMs):** bilateral or multilateral agreements on space norms to eliminate potential for mistake. These might include open satellite launches, non-interference in each other's space infrastructure, and emergency communications.

**Alliances with Major Powers:** Build alliances with big powers to get technological and strategic benefits without becoming too dependent. For example, alliances in satellite production and data-sharing could add regional capabilities without making rivalries worse.

**Regional Co-operation:** Promoting dialogue across South Asia to control competition and promote openness in space activities. Projects like joint disaster management satellites or regional space forums might become the basis of trust and the source of common demons.

**Capital investment in resilience:** Build the ability to secure space assets from physical and cyber-attack. This includes satellite steeling, redundancy, and a mix of launch options to reduce vulnerabilities.

If space militarization, especially the US-China arms race, is to be stopped, global governance systems must be strengthened. The only way to do this is to revisit and revise enduring international agreements – for example, the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 – according to modern technological and geopolitical realities. Recommitment to norms and regulations that are legally binding will make space a safe space to explore for the purposes of peace. Second, it will make the negotiations for treaty between new spacefaring states more inclusive and flexible, making sure that the framework of governance addresses multiple viewpoints and challenges <sup>15</sup>

Bilateral and multilateral conversations between the US and China to build trust and openness about space cooperation must take priority. Set up CBMs (pre-launch announcements, data-sharing agreements, verification processes) to avoid confusion and accidental escalation. Neither would have to take a position, but the two countries could go on space missions or share science to prove they were interested in peaceful

---

<sup>15</sup> Mingyan Nie, "Space Privatization in China's National Strategy of Military-Civilian Integration: An Appraisal of Critical Legal Challenges," *Space Policy* 52 (May 1, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.spacepol.2020.101372>.

space travel. These would not only establish trust but would provide a template for other countries, leading to a more stable and co-operative global space environment. South Asian countries will have to acknowledge the sleight-of-hand effect of the US-China arms race on their security. States such as India and Pakistan need to work towards local space cooperation, for mutual gain in disaster management, communications and science. Promoting alliances with organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) can support discussion and pooling of resources. A code of conduct on good space behavior can also help avoid a militarized space race in the area. Moreover, capacity-building efforts, such as training and technology transfers, can give smaller countries in the region the ability to be both a part of and beneficiaries of space activities <sup>16</sup>

The world needs to support inclusive, collective space exploration and use. Organizations like the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) and the Conference on Disarmament can also be places where discussions and agreement-making about space security can take place. Then there are the investments in joint scientific missions and multilateral research initiatives, which can pivot the debate away from militarization to cooperation. International cooperation (a global space debris control programme, say) could tackle shared problems and promote mutual friendship. The private sector can also contribute innovation and capital through engagement in these cooperation mechanisms that help to build further international cooperation. Technological and Normative Protections

Dual-use technologies, as they become ever more widespread, need to have security safeguards that restrict their weaponisation. Disciplined rules for the design and deployment of technologies such as ASATs and directed-energy systems need to be set up so they don't get misused. The advocacy and enforcement of these protections can also be done proactively by NGOs and academia. There can also be public education initiatives and programs to create a global community of good space practices. Moreover, innovation for non-military uses of space technologies — green propulsion systems, satellite communications, etc. — can move away from militarization.

Combining great power competition with regional competition increases strategic risk. Space, which is not so easily controlled but so strategically valuable, is particularly susceptible to increasing. A realist analysis stresses that there is no central body to set norms or settle disputes, and therefore mistakes and conflict are more likely to arise. These uncertainties are made worse by the fragility of space infrastructure – satellites

---

<sup>16</sup> Ashley J. Tellis, "China's Military Space Strategy," *Survival* 49.3, May 12, 2023, 41–72, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003420231-2/CHINA-MILITARY-SPACE-STRATEGY-ASHLEY-TELLIS>.

for communication, navigation and surveillance, for example – whose destruction or failure could be met with unanticipated reaction <sup>17</sup>

For South Asia, whose security in times of crisis is already in doubt, space militarization could make the region even more unstable by adding new dimensions of threat and flashpoint. For example, the use of space-based early warning might cause false alarms or misinterpretations during high-tension operations. And the annexation of space technologies to nuclear C4i increases the tensions, because strike on space facilities could be seen as precursor to larger aggression.

### **Conclusion**

This US-China competition-fueled militarization of space threatens security and stability worldwide. For South Asia, the repercussions might only stoke intraregional frictions and distort developmental priorities. But they're also challenges that open the possibility of reimagining space as a common border to be used in cooperation rather than war. As the ripple effects of a space race with militarism in both economic and environmental terms show, it is time to think about how to make things sustainable and cooperative.

The solution has to be a complex one that entails international laws, measures of trust, and inclusive governance. Nation governments will have to come together to make space not a place of battle but a space of scientific discovery, economic development and international cooperation. And the fight has to also include getting new spacefaring nations and the private sector into the act, making it really a partnership. Only with continued efforts worldwide, regional and national will the dangers of space militarization be reduced, leaving a peaceful and secure outer universe for future generations. What we do now will define if space is a place of untold possibility or an extension of terrestrial conflicts.

The US-China space race as a realist case study shows how competitive and anarchic the international order is. For South Asia, this competition only intensifies rifts and poses new dilemmas and possibilities for regional actors. The realist model makes it clear that power struggles are inevitable, but it also gives us means of surviving them, through the balance, deterrence and pragmatic collaboration. At a time of growing militarization, South Asia's reaction will decide both its regional security and its place in the changing world order <sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the region's involvement in space militarization is a microcosm of the world's patterns, with technology leaping ahead of regulations. If South Asia has the

---

<sup>17</sup> Nawaz, Bilal, and Rehman, "United States-China Space Offensive: A Dangerous Competition."

<sup>18</sup> 鄧中堅易思安, 李國雄, "China's Militarization of Space: Motivations and Implications for US-Chinese Relations," 2023, <https://nccur.lib.nccu.edu.tw/ir/handle/140.119/34911>.

ability to play the tacks, whether it can predict this with strategic acumen,<sup>19</sup> strong diplomacy and enhanced capacities, it will decide whether it will become an anti-tank force or be a casualty of the great power games. Finally, space militarization is an obstacle and a possibility for South Asia to gain control of the space arena and contribute to the global governance of space.

---

<sup>19</sup> Wu Xiaodan, "China's Lunar Exploration and Utilization: Positive Energy for International Law or Not?," *Anuario Mexicano de Derecho Internacional* 15, no. 1 (2015): 137–64, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amdi.2014.09.003>.