

SPACE DEBRIS AND THE LAW OF WAR

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Space debris was, for some time, a neglected problem: it is now the most serious and urgent problem in space exploration. The presence of space debris now endangers both commercial and other activities in space and restricts new ventures.

One aspect that I cannot see has been analyzed is that space debris can be maneuvered into positions to function as anti-satellite weapons. If a belligerent in space resorted to such strategies and tactics, there must be an adequate plan to counteract.

ESA and UNCOPOUS and others have so far only concentrated on space debris as inconvenient obstacles to scientific or commercial space operations. Because of the scope of these organizations usually being limited to 'peaceful' activities in Space, other matters have not been considered.

But not even NASA or military academies, as well as and others dealing with hostile situations in Space, appear to have considered the possibility of a dangerous scenario where space debris are used as space weapons. Space debris will have to be taken as presenting a serious threat in a possible theatre of war in Space.

The presentation will consider ways to eliminate debris in Space, debris remediation, debris mitigation and quick de-orbiting. Questions of liability and responsibility will also be discussed. In that context, problems of identification and registration issues will also be considered as well as other matters relevant to military operations in a space theatre, increasingly filled by debris.

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