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## Role and Identity for Europe in Space Security


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### Cover Page Footnote

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# Role and Identity for Europe in Space Security

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Modern societies have become heavily dependent on space and its applications. As a consequence, the issue of security in space is increasingly being recognized as critical for humankind. This development is reinforced by events like the Chinese anti-satellite (ASAT) test in January 2007. Various alternatives to support the peaceful uses of space, to promote international cooperation, and to prevent an arms race in outer space are under discussion. These attempts occasionally lack support by space actors that emphasize the right to act freely when national security concerns are at stake. Possible routes forward include legally binding treaties, confidence building measures, and soft law, such as codes of conduct or rules of the road.

The respective efforts cannot be seen isolated from the political boundary conditions, like existing national space security doctrines. To devise recommendations for action, this background needs to be taken into account. Europe will have to decide upon its own position, to come up with a distinct strategy, and to find suitable ways of implementing its approach to space security. While identifying distinct elements of a possible European doctrine, this article puts Europe in the context of the existing doctrines of other spacefaring countries. In doing so, it goes beyond the mere provision of an internal view, providing a detailed analysis of the legal framework and current proposals under negotiations. Taking, on the one hand, a political sciences approach by using international relations theories to

explain differences in doctrines, the paper, on the other hand, offers concrete recommendations addressed to policy makers. It aims at showing how Europe should position itself on the international scene.

## Existing National Security Space Doctrines

Doctrines, be they implicit or explicit, demonstrate national goals and security objectives. Different strategies can be chosen to achieve these aims. To prevent an arms race, the possible reasons for the development of an arms race have to be analyzed. Theories offering explanations can be subdivided into theories focusing on external or on internal factors, i.e., factors that lie outside or inside the states participating in an arms race.

The U.S. is the only spacefaring country with an explicit space policy. Its plans are evidenced by the national space policies, the latest formal one from 2006, as well as by other documents, such as the Air Force Space Command’s *Vision 2020* or the *National Security Strategy*. In the Cold War era, the U.S. saw space as a sanctuary, i.e., as a surveillance medium and strived for space control – not on a permanent basis, but in case of conflict. In the Reagan Administration, there was a move towards considering space as another area for military operations. After 9/11, security aspects of space were emphasized over civil and scientific ones.

While still pursuing the concept of space control, which may well go beyond the right of self-defense, and asserting a “specific right” for itself, the U.S. also stresses the importance of compliance to the existing international legal framework. However, the fact that the U.S. opposes legal regimes that might infringe on its right of using and accessing outer space has impacts on the process of preventing an arms race in space. It remains to be seen, which approach the Obama Administration will take.

Russia does not have an explicit space doctrine. One of the main rationales for Russian space activities is national security. In the early 1970s, the former Soviet Union had refrained from multilateral efforts to prohibit the development or deployment of space weapons. In that period, it had developed space weapons, such as ASATs. At the beginning of the 1980s, the Soviet Union shifted its policy and proposed a multilateral treaty banning space weapons in the framework of the United Nations. It also called for a total demilitarization of outer space. Russia continues this trend, calling for unhindered space exploration and preservation of space as a sanctuary. At the same time, it has expressed concerns that attacks on its early warning systems would represent a direct threat to its security.

While China’s space objectives are stated openly, its military space doctrine is not published. Thus, there is no explicit space policy doctrine. The Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress and the Central Military Commission define national and strategic objectives, and policies and doctrines are clarified by the relevant

bureaucratic actors through speeches, white papers, and other instruments. The 2006 White Paper on Space Activities states national security as a main objective, besides the utilization of space for peaceful purposes. The principle of independence is also declared a fundamental policy. Further indications on its space doctrine can be found in China’s White Papers on National Defense. China emphasizes the importance of securing information dominance. To avoid vulnerability, it refrains from increasing military reliance on space assets. Concerns about China’s real space intentions were raised by its ASAT activity in 2007. At the international stage, the official Chinese position is that space security will be undermined by the weaponization of space. Consequently, China is one of the key proponents of negotiating a multilateral arms control treaty within the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) talks at the United Nations Conference on Disarmament (UNCD). In this context, it lines up with Russia. There are different political theories to explain this alliance.

### **Towards a European Space Security Identity**

Europe as a whole has only recently regarded space as a strategic asset. Looking at existing space policy documents, it is only possible to distinguish elements of a European space security identity. Space activities in Europe are carried out by multiple actors at different levels: (1) the overall European level with the European Union (EU); (2) the intergovernmental organizations, e.g., European Space Agency (ESA) and the European Organization for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT); and (3) the Member State level with the national space actors.

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The EU as the central political authority at the European level has begun to get involved. ESA is the Space Agency of Europe. EUMETSAT provides its members and cooperating states with Earth observation data and weather information. A major part of its data goes to defense-related institutions. Other European organizations and bodies relevant for space and security exist as well. All these institutions are complemented by national projects that are sometimes carried out in bilateral or multilateral cooperation outside the official European structures. A key role is played by the Member States and their space policies.

A number of documents show the ongoing process of developing a European approach to space security. In this regard, the *Three Wise Men Report* of 2000 stated that the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) are incomplete without a space component. The EU-ESA Framework agreement in 2004 called on both sides to take into account the security dimension of space technologies and infrastructures. The Council of the EU in 2004 and 2005 called for a roadmap for the development of effective and coherent space capabilities necessary for ESDP and specified the steps needed therefore. The European Space Policy of 2007 contained a distinct chapter on security and defense and called for protection of space infrastructure. The 2008 *von Wogau Report* adopted by the European Parliament insists that European space policy must not contribute to militarization or weaponization of space. The EU is also involved in setting up a Code of Conduct for sustainable space

activities. In the long run, Europe will have to come up with a European Space Security Strategy (E3S). Such a strategy can contribute to shaping a European identity in space security, which should comprise a corresponding doctrine as well.

## Current Negotiations

Several proposals have been made to negotiate a space weapons ban with Canada, China, and Russia taking the lead, and the U.S. as a major spacefaring nation being involved in the debate. These main players link their position in this domain to their larger strategic positions, relationships and their national space security doctrine. Current proposals can broadly be divided into three categories: (1) the treaty approach; (2) the code of conduct approach; and (3) alternative ideas, including transparency and confidence building measures and the proposal for comprehensive space traffic management.

China and Russia have been strong advocates of a treaty on the peaceful use of outer space in the past. Apart from negotiating a legally binding treaty there is the option of adopting a code of conduct, which can be regarded as a single instrument or an interim solution, i.e., elemental to a future treaty. Alternatively, one of the often referred to all-encompassing solutions is the proposal of a comprehensive space traffic management regime with the most prominent proponent being the International Academy of Astronautics. Thereafter, space traffic management is “a set of technical and regulatory provisions for guaranteeing safe access to outer space, operation in outer space and return from outer space to Earth free from physical or radio frequency interference.” Space traffic management is not tackling single issues, but concerns the regulation of space activities as a comprehensive concept. Space traffic

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management could be complimentary to existing or future legal regulations, solving the existing deadlock in the UNCD.

### Assessing a Role for Europe on the International Scene

The situation described above leaves room for several options to move forward. Accordingly, one could simply neglect the threat of an arms race and avoid any action. Another option would be to amend the existing legal structure.

A third possibility is to introduce confidence building measures and a code of conduct. A fourth way is the negotiation of a legally binding treaty. Given these options, the question arises in more specific terms, which road the EU should take. Conceptualizing Europe's international role does not mean outlining a single role or route Europe does adopt or might follow. Considerations can be broken down into three possible scenarios for Europe shown in Figure 1.

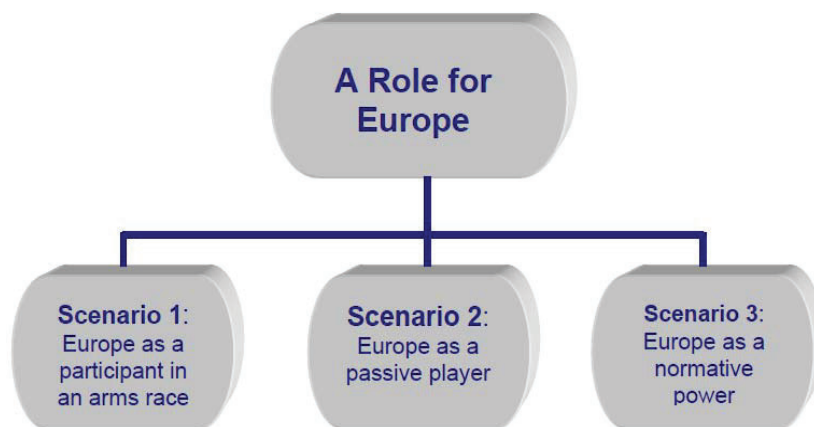


Figure 1. Scenarios for Europe's International Role.

The discussion above showed the future possibilities and roads for the EU to take. The introduction of the code of conduct by the EU might already indicate a certain future direction. It increases the EU's position in the space debate by indicating its willingness and

ability to deal with sensitive questions even in the face of opposition from key partners. needs to shape its identity in space security. This identity has to correspond to the values, goals, and policies of the EU.

All in all, the role that Europe takes will need to be formative, i.e., it will have to actively influence the situation of space security by normative action instead of just handling or administrating the given status quo that has been set by others. Europe should pursue certain goals in this regard. Such goals follow from values that have been laid down in various documents, like the European Security Strategy. They include: multilateralism, emphasizing international cooperation and diplomacy; combining civilian and military means; and promoting the rule of law. An identity formed by these underlying values is a principled one.

Based on such an approach, Europe should take into consideration the following policy recommendations: formulate a strategy and develop a space identity in line with the European Security Strategy, corresponding to the values, goals and policies of the EU; decide on the policy making and decision making processes and introduce key mechanisms to oversee the European Space Policy; clarify the organizational and institutional questions relating to space and Common Foreign and Security Policy / ESDP, e.g., in regard to ESA and EDA; establish a European Space Situational Awareness System; increase investments for space programs, research and development; move away from a purely State focused actor perception; and establish a coordinated space dialogue with international partners.