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As of the induction of the Space Race back in 1957, space surrounding the Earth is littered with a variety of space debris as well as various objects governed by various states. As there have been over 1,000(a) successful satellite launches worldwide over the years, there is a vast amount of waste and spacecrafts currently orbiting Earth, as well as the carbon emissions released by the rockets themselves upon launch. If the space transportation industry continues to grow in upcoming years, black carbon emissions could increase drastically. Over 500,000 pieces of space debris are currently being monitored hurtling around the Earth(b). As of late, there is no practical method of ridding debris from orbit. Debris poses a rather serious threat to spacecraft, specifically commercial satellites and the ISS(b). Various treaties have been proposed and signed to deal with the various spacecraft orbiting the earth at the moment, dictating that only the nations that originally launched them have any jurisdiction towards them. Far more protocols have been put forth providing guidelines to combat environmental pollution on behalf of space travel space debris continues to orbit the earth, with the numbers growing every year. The Outer Space treaty was created with the sole intention of promoting peaceful interactions in Outer Space, dictating that any given State has no jurisdiction or claims over celestial bodies (moon, asteroids, etc.) but only over spacecraft launched by that specific state(c).

The Militarization of Space relies on similar treaties. International law, specifically 1967’s UN Outer Space Treaty, dictates that space is to be reserved for peaceful uses(c). That being said, non-aggressive military usage of space is considered peaceful. These guidelines are rather broad and continue to not be strictly adhered to. Satellites deployed into space can be used for military usage, from positioning systems on ships to detecting hostile forces. As technology continues to grow, power imbalances on the military front continue to rise, particularly between Russia, China, the United States and the rest of the world. The United States is far in the lead as in 2015, they spent $601 billion on their military(d). As the power imbalances rise between these three dominant countries and the rest of the world, and amongst themselves, an arms race reminiscent of the Cold War is entirely possible and as more satellites are launched for military purposes, more and more space debris is created.

The commercialization of space follows the same track as the previous two scenarios; as technology continues to grow and horizons consistently expand, possibilities are opened. Eventually, commercial space travel will become a reality with dozens of companies battling over the market, much like airfare today. As with the two former cases, the sustainability of the environment is a cause for concern. Rocket exhaust is the only direct source of certain human-produced pollutant compounds. The exhaust from these rockets places vast quantities of thermal-capturing compounds, primarily carbon dioxide, water vapor and tons of soot in the atmosphere. If the space industry is going expand for commercial use, new sources of fuel must be discovered in order to prevent further harm to the planet.

When it comes to all three topics, the Dutch Republic calls for the promotion of clean space, both in a literal and figurative sense. If space is to be commercialized and/or if satellites and space stations will continue to be placed in the gravitational orbit, it must be cleaned up. Space debris hurtling around the earth at 30,000 km/h is highly dangerous to spacecraft and the astronauts aboard(b). Cleaner rocket fuels must be implemented for launch of new satellites and rockets carrying personnel, as the emissions produced will have a massive impact on the current Greenhouse Gasses problem. When it comes to the militarization of space, space is not a place to be militarized, but rather a state for international cooperation for the betterment of the human race through study of the new environment as well expansion to new frontiers.

* Citations
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