CHAPTER 1

MILITARIZATION, WEAPONIZATION AND SPACE SANCTUARY: PAST DIALOGUES, CURRENT DISCOURSE, IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS

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I cannot tell you how humbled I am to be addressing this audience. I very much applaud the many of you who have dedicated the better part of your life to working on these tough international issues in your efforts to secure global stability and peace, and particularly on this day, I would like to thank our hosts:

- UNIDIR;
- The Simons Centre for Peace and Disarmament Studies;
- Project Ploughshares Canada; and
- The Simons Foundation.

While I do not pretend to fully understand the many related international disarmament issues, I do understand the state of discussions on space weaponization. Continued discussion is paramount—but many ask, when is formal negotiation appropriate? As Ms. Rebecca Johnson of the Acronym Institute adeptly put it last week in her address to the Carnegie International Non-Proliferation Conference, we must first build the ***conditions for negotiations***—and at this stage, those conditions simply do not exist.

I would add, though, that it is incumbent upon us all to mature the understanding—and not to delay discussion, because continued inaction on this issue will in all probability lead us to a future that none of us would elect.

The issue of space security, and pointedly, the potential of weapons migrating to space, is an important international concern—and needs to be addressed openly, as will be done at this Conference over the course of the next two days. We also need to work hard to keep the issue from being clouded.

Polarizing the issue as proponents of weapons and war, opposing those who favour international peace, incites an emotional response and misdirects attention away from the real issue: that is, what is the best approach towards international security in space? Or, more specifically,

> Can we—as a community of responsible nations—reasonably expect to form a secure international environment on the frontiers of space, without weapons available to those who would seek to secure that environment?

Within these discussions, I hope that we do look creatively at the largely unexplored middle ground—away from the poles of a complete ban on the one hand, and no negotiated guidelines on the other.

Will we consider as possibilities:

- Multilateral, collaborative efforts in place of unilateral action at one extreme, or a complete multilateral ban at the other extreme...

Will we consider in the face of immediate threats:

- Temporary military uses of space, that are to be withdrawn once those threats subside, as opposed to the extreme of permanently orbiting weapons, or the other extreme that offers no flexibility to respond in the face of immediate danger...

And will we consider opening confidence-building discussions in areas where we are likely to agree to some extent at the outset, establishing “rules of the road” that address:

- Space debris;
- Launch notifications;
- Verification approaches; or
- Commercially-crowded orbits.

A principle of effective discussion is to seek common grounds first. I am suggesting that path, before we take on the more difficult issues surrounding

national military uses of space, and in particular, space weapons. BUT—we must also not lose sight of the ultimate goal, as it will be a far-reaching decision, IF we have the wisdom, patience, and perseverance to address it. That is, **what of space weapons**?

To be clear about what is meant by space "weaponization", the current state of affairs reflects that **space is currently militarized—but not weaponized**. Globally, we are postured with communications and intelligence-gathering capabilities that offer the possibility of everyone watching everyone—nurturing global stability. These capabilities are used in military force enhancement roles and are accurately referred to as "space militarization", but few would argue that these force enhancement capabilities constitute "space weapons". There may be latent terrestrial-to-space capable systems such as airborne lasers, but they are not dedicated ASAT systems, nor has their use as "space weapons" been exercised to any great extent. In fact, both the Russian Federation and the United States have opted in favour of restraint on ASAT deployment. So in these terms, the issue becomes clear: **Given that space is currently militarized—but not weaponized... should we allow space weaponization (either explicitly by collaborative and coordinated action, or implicitly by inaction)?**

At this juncture, I would simply like to frame the debate, by making several propositions, and several counter-propositions, as to the advent of space weapons. I will not attempt to support or attack these here, but I contend that they are credible, they are supportable, and they are at odds with each other—hence the debate.

PROPOSITION 1: *SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS*

Civil and commercial interests in space are rapidly outpacing military concerns and are becoming a central focus for many national economies. As a service to the nation, the military role is typically to organize, train, equip, and posture forces—complete with weapons—to defend those interests. Space weapons will necessarily follow space commerce—that is, they will "follow the money".

PROPOSITION 2: *TECHNOLOGICAL AND DOCTRINAL INERTIA*

Seizing the high ground is a military doctrinal precept as old as warfare itself. As technology opens the new high ground of space and offers the means to exploit it, sound military doctrinal development would be grossly remiss to overlook it. Simply put, the coupling of advanced technologies with well-intended and effective military doctrine development will inevitably lead to the acquisition of space weapons, particularly, in the absence of countervailing policy direction.

PROPOSITION 3: *DIPLOMATIC LEVERAGE*

We have played this game before—and one need only look to the Sputnik era: the confluence of prestige, prowess, and leverage offered by space presence—a witness to the perceived superiority of a particular ideology—will compel a space race, to include the pursuit of military dominance by way of space weapons.

PROPOSITION 4: *MILITARY SUPERIORITY*

The exercise of twenty-first century military power is critically dependent upon communications and intelligence, much of which is collected from and/or passed through space systems. The world witnessed the incredible advantage this supplied in the first “space war”, Desert Storm. Future adversaries will not allow such an advantage to go unchallenged, and it must be defended.

Additionally, the prospect of a secure homeland and space-based defence, combined with overwhelming offensive potential, represents the ultimate military high ground. Any nation that achieves space weaponization will readily become a pre-eminent military power.

SUMMARY PROPOSITION FAVOURING THE ADVENT OF SPACE WEAPONS: *HISTORICAL PRECEDENT*

As stated in the four propositions, social and economic leverage, technological and military doctrinal inertia, prestige and prowess afforded on the international stage, as well as military superiority provided by

weapons' accession to the frontiers are the determining reasons for the historical precedent.

Where goes man, goes the clash of opposing wills, goes the instruments to effect that clash: weapons. It was true of the territorial frontiers throughout history, true of the high seas in the Middle Ages, and true of the air realm in the twentieth century. The same is destined to be true in space: the weaponization of space is inevitable.

International efforts to secure the frontiers of space need to accept this inevitability, and work towards measured and collaborative agreements to provide a stable space environment. Again, I am framing the debate, and I do not necessarily hold to these propositions—nor do I hold to the following counter-propositions.

COUNTER-PROPOSITION 1: *APPROPRIATENESS*

Whatever the space posture, it must be unity-enhancing, justice-enabling, tranquillity-ensuring, defence-providing, general welfare-promoting, and liberty-securing. These constitutional precepts apply uniformly to individuals and nations. Quite apart from any perceived immediate benefit, a strong case can be made that space weapons are unity-negating, justice-inhibiting, tranquillity-disrupting, defence-inhibiting, general welfare-demoting, and liberty-constraining. As a community of responsible individuals and nations, a future of space weapons is inconsistent with basic human and national values.

COUNTER-PROPOSITION 2: *MILITARY NONSENSE*

The migration of weapons to space is likely to create more military problems for the host nation than it will solve. From a military and national-security perspective alone, a space-weaponizing nation creates both:

- The powder-keg of global instability (where it has weakened its own international posture among allies and adversaries alike); and
- It also creates the spark of regional instability (where it has made itself a target of pre-emption and escalation).

Coupled with this very unstable environment, that same space-weaponizing nation will damage its own military power by extending and exposing an already vulnerable military communications and intelligence-gathering centre of gravity (that was previously protected under the open-skies environment). From the military and national security perspective alone, "nonsense" may be too weak a term; more to the point, for one nation to posture weapons in space to improve its defence posture is "counter-sense".

COUNTER-PROPOSITION 3: *EXORBITANT COSTS*

US$ one trillion—and that is on the low side, assuming the world is not compelled into a space race. Additionally, opportunity costs go well beyond mere dollars—in the zero-sum game of government expenditures, costs must be measured in foregone investments in:

- Other necessary military and defence acquisitions;
- Domestic investments in education, pensions, and health; and
- International investments in relief efforts to save millions (and that is people, not dollars).

True—national security is often an issue of life and death. But to highlight the significance of domestic and international concerns, last year alone over six million people died of cancer worldwide, and the 2020 projection is 20 million deaths—yet our collective investment in research to combat this foe is less than 1% of defence spending. This begs the question—what real wars are to be lost while we collectively expend billions on space weapons—weapons that in all probability will merely pacify our paranoid insecurities.

COUNTER-PROPOSITION 4: *BAD PRECEDENT*

Should nations seek to move away from the precedent-based interpretation of international law that implicitly prohibits weapons in space, in favour of the literal interpretation that allows conventional weapons in space, it could pose an international precedent that would have grave consequences on the spirit of international cooperation recently built

around suppressing aggression in the Middle East, and combating terrorism worldwide. It would also jeopardize broad efforts to negotiate on international issues of the gravest of import, such as weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation and arms control. Principally, most nations favour the expansion of the Outer Space Treaty of 1967 to address and explicitly prohibit weapons migration to space.

Summary Counter-Proposition opposing the advent of space weapons: *A Logical Appeal*

Based upon the four preceding counter-propositions, weaponizing space is:

- Inappropriate (by almost any value-base);
- Military nonsense, as it is:
  - ineffective in the light of countermeasures (expanding and exposing a space centre of gravity);
  - destabilizing locally (escalatory);
  - destabilizing globally (inflammatory and threatening);
  - militarily ineffective (at the expense of many better alternatives).

additionally, weaponizing space is:

- Extremely costly (at costs that would cripple any national economy), and
- Politically unviable in a growing interdependent world of responsible nations.

It is evident that nations should simply choose to pursue avenues towards national and international objectives other than space weapons.

Again, I do not adhere to these counter-propositions either. What I have attempted to accomplish is lay a foundation at the poles of this space and global security issue:

- Are space weapons inevitable? Human nature seems to lead us there... and if so, should we not work now to create a stable international environment as they emerge? On the opposite pole...
- Counter to the natural progression... is there a better—rational—choice that we must work on now if we are to shape a future we would like to have?

To you, those actively working on such efforts here in Geneva, I would offer this closing.

Balancing the propositions that point to a "natural path" of weapons migration to space, with the counter-propositions that call for an "unnatural" and collective rational choice to prohibit weaponization is a complex and difficult challenge. A challenge that will require unprecedented levels of patient discussions—and concessions—in a context that includes many other equally important issues.

While you continue honourably to represent your country's positions, values, and people, also remember that you have a greater obligation. You are representing all future generations of this increasingly small planet and in these brief moments—your opportunity to change history—remember that agreements made here will echo in eternity. I implore each of you to work on your domestic politics and encourage support for selfless steps forward on the space weapons issue and the other critical issues addressed here in Geneva. Do not allow one issue to become a stumbling block and prevent discussions on the many issues that must be addressed.

On the space weapons issue in particular, in a hundred years, will the historical account show man's intentional but fumbling and ad hoc migration to space, or will it show a community of nations with a noble vision, making a rational choice? If the latter, it will take selfless concession, wise decision, and commitment and perseverance of action.

What I fear most is not what decision might come of this, but the path of indecision we seem to be on. Is it possible to get to such a decision? On that, I am reminded of a comment made by Henry Ford: "In the end, if we think we can, or if we think we cannot, we are probably right."

This is a breakpoint in human history, and you are squarely at the centre of it. From one person that appreciates the responsibility you have accepted, I would like to say emphatically, THANK YOU and God's speed.