



# FACT SHEET

## Americans and Russians on Space Weapons

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### Introduction and Background

Current security debates have focused primarily on non-state actors and unconventional warfare, but numerous security issues with roots in the Cold War remain unresolved. Two of these are the security of satellites and weapons in space, issues that have become increasingly significant as space is used by a growing array of countries for a diversity of purposes.

At present there are no weapons in space (hit-to-kill interceptors, directed energy systems, co-orbital satellites and space bombers) and no country has ever attacked another country's satellites, yet there are good reasons to be concerned about military competition in space. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty (OST) prohibits weapons of mass destruction orbiting in space and military activities on the moon, but there are no other legal bans on space weapons. Since the mid-1980s there have been repeated calls throughout the international community for new negotiations on the prevention of an arms race in space, but negotiations have never been started.

The United States has been the key opponent. Since 1980, the United States has refused to negotiate any new limits on military uses of space because it wants to preserve its own freedom of action. Indeed, the 2006 U.S. National Space Policy projects aspirations for U.S. military space dominance that many feel are at odds with the principles of peaceful use and mutual benefit that the United States championed in the OST. Meanwhile, the United States continues to pursue the development of anti-satellite options, including ways to interfere with a satellite's functions or permanently disable it without destroying it and creating large amounts of space debris.

Although the Soviet Union had programs to develop ASATs and other types of space weapons at various points during the Cold War, the Russian government has been one of the leading countries, along with China, calling for negotiations on space weapons and proposing ideas for consideration. It is hard to know how the Russian position would evolve if there was a serious prospect of an agreement, because such negotiations have not gotten underway. In Russia, as well, there has been little public discussion of these issues.

In order to find out how the American and Russian public feel about the underlying principles involved in these issues related to the weaponization of space, and to assess how the public might react to these issues if they were to become the focus of serious attention, the Secure World Foundation commissioned the Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM) and its affiliate organization the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) jointly conducted a project to measure the attitudes of American and Russian constituencies, the two countries most extensively involved in military space programs.

### Results

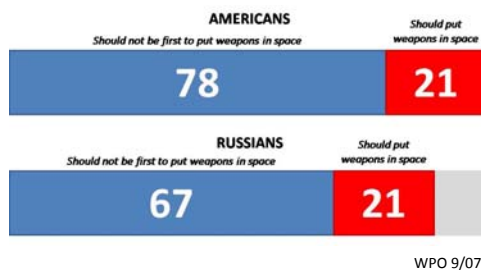
#### 1. UNILATERAL RESTRAINT AND A SPACE WEAPONS TREATY

A large majority of Americans and Russians say their country should not put weapons in space as long as no other country does so. Large majorities in both countries also favor a treaty banning all weapons in space.

At present no country has weapons in space. Here are two positions on the question of whether [Country] should put weapons in space. Which position is closer to yours?

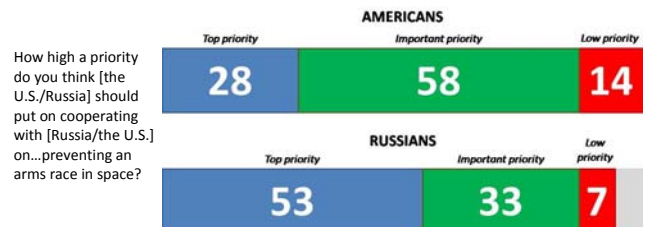
As long as no other country puts weapons in space it is better for [Country] not to do so either. We should avoid creating an arms race in space.

[Country] should put weapons in space because it could serve important military purposes such as protecting [Country] satellites.



#### 2. PRIORITY OF PREVENTING AN ARMS RACE IN SPACE

Americans and Russians agree that their governments should make it an important priority to cooperate to prevent an arms race in space, while a majority of Russians go further, saying that it should be a top priority.





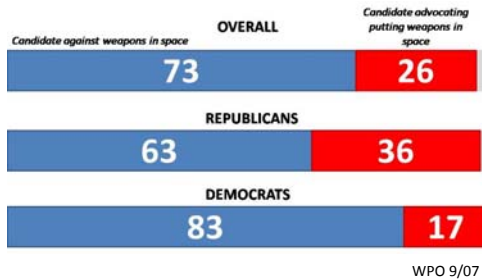
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### 3. AMERICAN'S PREFERENCE FOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Most Americans say they would have more confidence in the national security approach of a presidential candidate who would refrain from putting weapons in space or who would favor a treaty banning weapons in space. This is true of Republicans as well as of Democrats, though the majority of Democrats is larger.

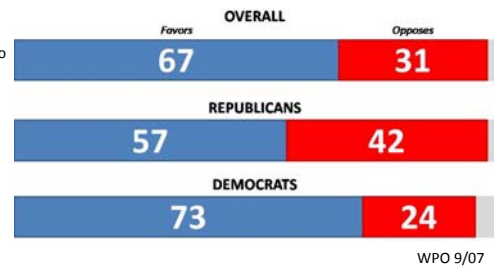
Imagine you are watching a debate on television between two candidates for President and they are discussing whether the U.S. should put weapons in space. When it comes to dealing with U.S. national security, in which candidate would you have more confidence:



A candidate who says: As long as no other country puts weapons in space it is better for the U.S. not to do so either. We should avoid creating an arms race in space.

A candidate who says: The U.S. should put weapons in space because it could serve important military purposes such as protecting U.S. satellites.

Imagine you are watching a debate on television between two candidates for President. When it comes to dealing with U.S. national security would you have more confidence in a candidate who favors or opposes a treaty banning weapons in space?



### 4. TREATIES TO PROTECT SATELLITES

A large majority of Russians and Americans favor treaties that would prohibit countries from attacking or interfering with each other's satellites, both as a general rule and in the midst of conflict.

There is a debate about whether [Country] should negotiate a treaty that would prohibit countries from attacking or interfering with each others' satellites.

Advocates say such an agreement is important because satellites provide information and communication services critical to [Country's] military and economy.

Opponents say [Country] should be free to attack or interfere with other countries' satellites because this might be useful militarily.

Do you think [Country] should or should not negotiate an international treaty that would prohibit countries from attacking or interfering with each others satellites?



### 5. ANTI-SATELLITE WEAPONS

A large majority of Americans and Russians favor a treaty prohibiting testing or deploying weapons dedicated to attacking satellites.

There is a debate about whether [Country] should negotiate an international treaty that would prohibit countries from testing or deploying weapons dedicated to attacking satellites.

Opponents say such a treaty is not a good idea; arms control does not work and it is inevitable that countries will build the capacity to destroy satellites.

Advocates say such a treaty is a good idea; many arms control agreements have proven to be effective and all the major countries have an interest in not having their satellites threatened.

Do you think [Country] should or should not negotiate an international treaty that would prohibit countries from testing or deploying weapons dedicated to attacking satellites?



### 6. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING ATTACKS INITIATED TO PROTECT SATELLITES

Only very small minorities of Americans and Russians believe that their countries have a right to make preventive attacks against another country's missiles that could be used to target their own satellites. A larger minority believes that preemptive attacks would be valid. The most common position is that attacking the other country's missiles would only be legitimate once the other country actually initiated an attack.

As you may know a number of countries have land-based missiles that could be used to attack [Country] satellites. Under what circumstances would [Country] have the right to destroy these missiles?

