



Strategic Stability in Outer Space After Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

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Abstract

The space dimension is crucial in nuclear relations between the US and Russia. Space systems support vital functions like early warning, communication, reconnaissance, and targeting directly connected to strategic stability. However, shifting geopolitics and the disappearance of arms control agreements put the space dimension under strain. The Russian invasion of Ukraine showcases modern warfare's reliance on space assets. It also influences space dynamics and US-Russian relations. Although the current impact on strategic stability is limited, it is important to consider it. The most essential element of strategic stability in the space domain—the taboo against kinetic satellite attacks—endures, but there are reasons for concern. The broad use of civilian satellites for military purposes, Russia's evolving stance regarding targeting space objects, cyber-attacks against space infrastructure, the disappearance of provisions for non-interference with space assets, and sanctions affecting space industry—all of these in their separate ways could lead to crisis and undermine strategic stability. On top of this, the lack of dedicated channels for US-Russian dialogue on space security diminishes prospects for crisis prevention or mitigation.

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