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Assuring a Safe, Secure and Sustainable Space Environment for Space Activities (4)

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STABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND CRISES: THE ROLE TABLETOP EXERCISES IN SPACE
CRISIS DYNAMICS CAN PLAY IN ENSURING THE LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF SPACE.

Abstract

As more countries integrate space into their national capabilities and rely on space-based information for national security, there is an increased chance that any interference with satellites could spark or escalate a crisis or conflict. At the same time, the growing reliance on space for national security capabilities creates incentives for attacks on space capabilities as part of a conflict on Earth. To help address these issues, the Secure World Foundation (SWF) and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) co-hosted a tabletop exercise (TTX) on Space Crisis Dynamics and Uncertainty in Washington, DC, in November 2016. A second TTX was held in New Delhi, India, by the Observer Research Foundation in February 2017 and which had very similar discussions. The goals of the TTXes were to raise awareness about the risks of escalation and crisis stability, and to identify gaps or shortcomings in existing national and international policies, strategies, communication channels, and political/legal mechanisms.

This paper will discuss the output of the two TTXes, explain how it could be used to inform future work on developing new mechanisms to enhance space stability, and reduce the risk of a crisis involving space capabilities escalating to armed conflict. The discussions sparked by these TTXes could be very helpful for seeking to advance SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, by exploring ways in which conflict in or over space might be avoided with appropriate guidelines and protocols in place.