

thinking about how existing resources could be combined and expanded into something much more valuable than the sum of the original parts. Many of the elements would require unprecedented forms of cooperation, but such cooperation would be much closer to current practice than is the vision of a nuclear weapons-free world. Building a reassurance-based regime for space security should also be easier than eliminating nuclear weapons because the most consequential security commitments in regards to space involve continuing to refrain from doing things that have never been done before—i.e., not deploying weapons in space or attacking other countries' satellites. By contrast, nuclear elimination requires the most powerful countries in the world to give up tens of thousands of weapons that have constituted the centerpiece of their security policy for the last 60 years.

Indeed, establishing some type of reassurance-based regime for space security may be a prerequisite for eliminating nuclear weapons. Certainly, Russian and Chinese leaders have indicated that the failure to prevent the weaponization of space would destabilize their strategic security and that they will not consider deep cuts to their nuclear arsenals if they believe that the United States will offset its nuclear reductions by deploying more useable space-enabled conventional global strike weapons. Even if one is not literally a prerequisite for the other, progress made and lessons learned in the space case would create a more favorable context and set valuable precedents for the nuclear one.

At this critical juncture in history, though, it is more important to start holding serious discussions about cooperative steps to address core space security concerns than it is to know exactly what the desired end product of those discussions would be. The very process of governments formulating their positions for space security negotiations would arguably encourage as much restraint and responsible behavior in space as would any formally adopted rules. It would prompt more agencies to get involved in national deliberations over space security policy; it would encourage countries to invest in the technical, diplomatic, legal, and other expertise needed for space security; it would compel countries to think more carefully about the international security implications of the space technologies they are pursuing; and it would create a structured forum in which the states with more advanced military space capabilities could talk about how jointly developed rules and unilateral precedents are likely to play out in the future, when many more countries are capable of doing what only one or a few can do today.