

Large Majorities of Americans and Russians Oppose All Space Weapons

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Strong Bipartisan Support for Unilateral Restraint

Large Majorities Favor Treaty Against Attacking or Developing the Capability to Attack Satellites

[Full Report \(PDF\)](#)

[Questionnaire / Methodology \(PDF\)](#)

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Most Americans and Russians agree that their governments should work together to prevent an arms race in space. Large majorities in both countries favor unilateral restraint and a treaty that would keep space free of weapons.

A United States Air Force Defense Support System satellite used for infrared detection (Photo: USAF)

Americans and Russians also support treaties that would prohibit countries from attacking or interfering with each others' satellites and from testing or deploying weapons designed to attack satellites.

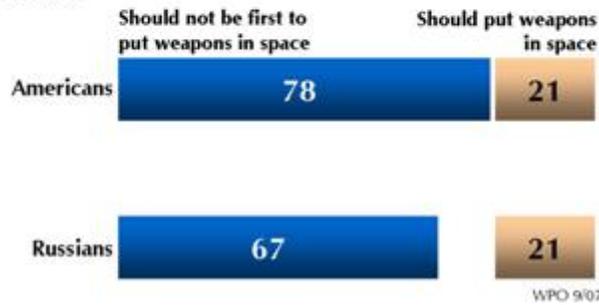
These are among the key findings of a WorldPublicOpinion.org poll of 1,247 Americans and 1,601 Russians developed in conjunction with the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland (CISSM). Knowledge Networks in the United States and the Levada Center in Russia conducted the interviews.

Reciprocal Restraint

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



Majorities in both the United States (78%) and Russia (67%) say that as long as no other country puts weapons into space, their own governments should also refrain from doing so.

Most Russians (72%) and Americans (80%) also favor a new treaty banning all weapons in space. Support for such a ban was strong among Americans even when they were presented counter arguments about the potential military advantages of deploying such systems.

The US poll revealed strong bipartisan consensus on the issue. Majorities in both the Republican and Democratic parties believe the US government should refrain unilaterally from deploying space weapons. There is also bipartisan backing for a treaty to ban these weapons, though support is higher among Democrats.

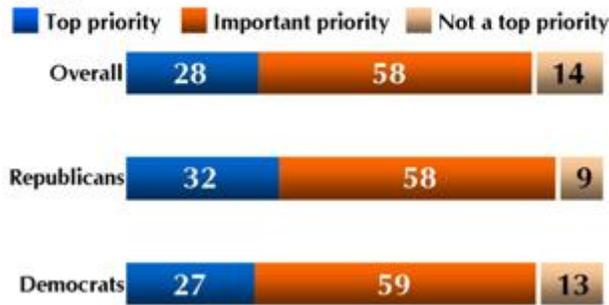
Steven Kull, director of WorldPublicOpinion.org, noted that there was remarkable agreement within and between the two countries on the issue of space weapons.

"What is striking is the robust consensus among Russians as well as Americans, and among Republicans as well as Democrats that space should not be an arena for the major powers to compete for military advantage," Kull said.

John Steinbruner, director of CISSM, added that the observed consensus also reflects a robust conception of security interest.

Preventing an Arms Race in Space

How high a priority do you think the US should put on cooperating with Russia on...preventing an arms race in space?



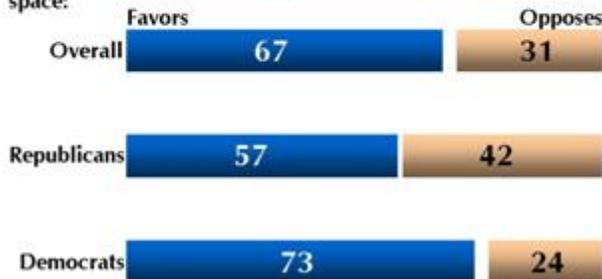
WPO 9/07 "The use of space for common protection is, in fact, far more important for all countries under the circumstances of globalization than the pursuit of national advantage in performing traditional military missions," Steinbruner said.

Asked how high a priority their governments should place on bilateral cooperation to prevent an arms race in space, large majorities of Americans (86%) and Russians (also 86%) agree that it should be an important priority. A majority of Russians (53%) consider this a top priority.

American respondents were asked how they would like presidential candidates to deal with US national security and space weapons.

Candidates and Space Weapons Treaty

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



WPO 9/07 Sixty-seven percent overall said they would have more confidence in a presidential candidate who favors a treaty banning weapons in space, including 57 percent of Republicans and 73 percent of Democrats. Seventy-three percent would also have more confidence in a candidate who took the position that as long as no other country puts weapons in space, the United States should not do so (Republicans 63%, Democrats, 83%).

Americans and Russians agree that a treaty prohibiting countries from attacking or interfering with each others' satellites is a good idea, even when given the argument that disabling satellites could be useful militarily. Seventy-eight percent of Americans and 65 percent of Russians say that such a treaty should be negotiated.

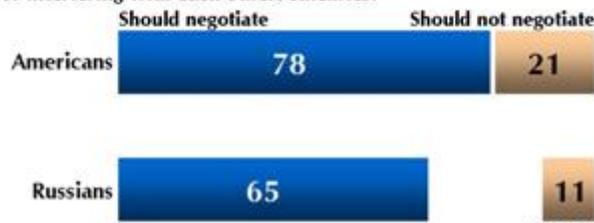
Treaty Prohibiting Attacks on Satellites

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?



Similarly, both Americans (79%) and Russians (63%) favor a treaty that would prevent countries from testing or deploying weapons systems dedicated to attacking satellites, even when given the counterargument that arms control treaties are sometimes ineffective.

Furthermore, majorities of Americans (77%) and Russians (61%) favor a treaty prohibiting interference with satellites. Support for these treaties was bipartisan in the United States, though Democratic support was larger.

Americans and Russians also overwhelmingly reject the idea of preventively destroying another country's missiles that could be used in an anti-satellite attack.

The US poll included a nationwide sample of 1,247 respondents interviewed Sept. 14-23, 2007. Most questions were administered to a half sample, thus the margin of error is plus or minus 4.0 percent. Knowledge Networks fielded the poll using its nationwide panel, which is randomly selected from the entire adult population and subsequently provided Internet access. For more information about this methodology, go to <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp>.

The Russian poll had a nationwide sample of 1,601 respondents taken Sept. 14-24, 2007. Most questions were administered to a half sample, thus the margin of error is plus or minus 3.5 percent. The poll was fielded by the Levada Center using face-to-face interviews.

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