

Direct-Ascent Anti-Satellite Missile Tests:
State positions on the Moratorium, UNGA
Resolution, and Lessons for the Future





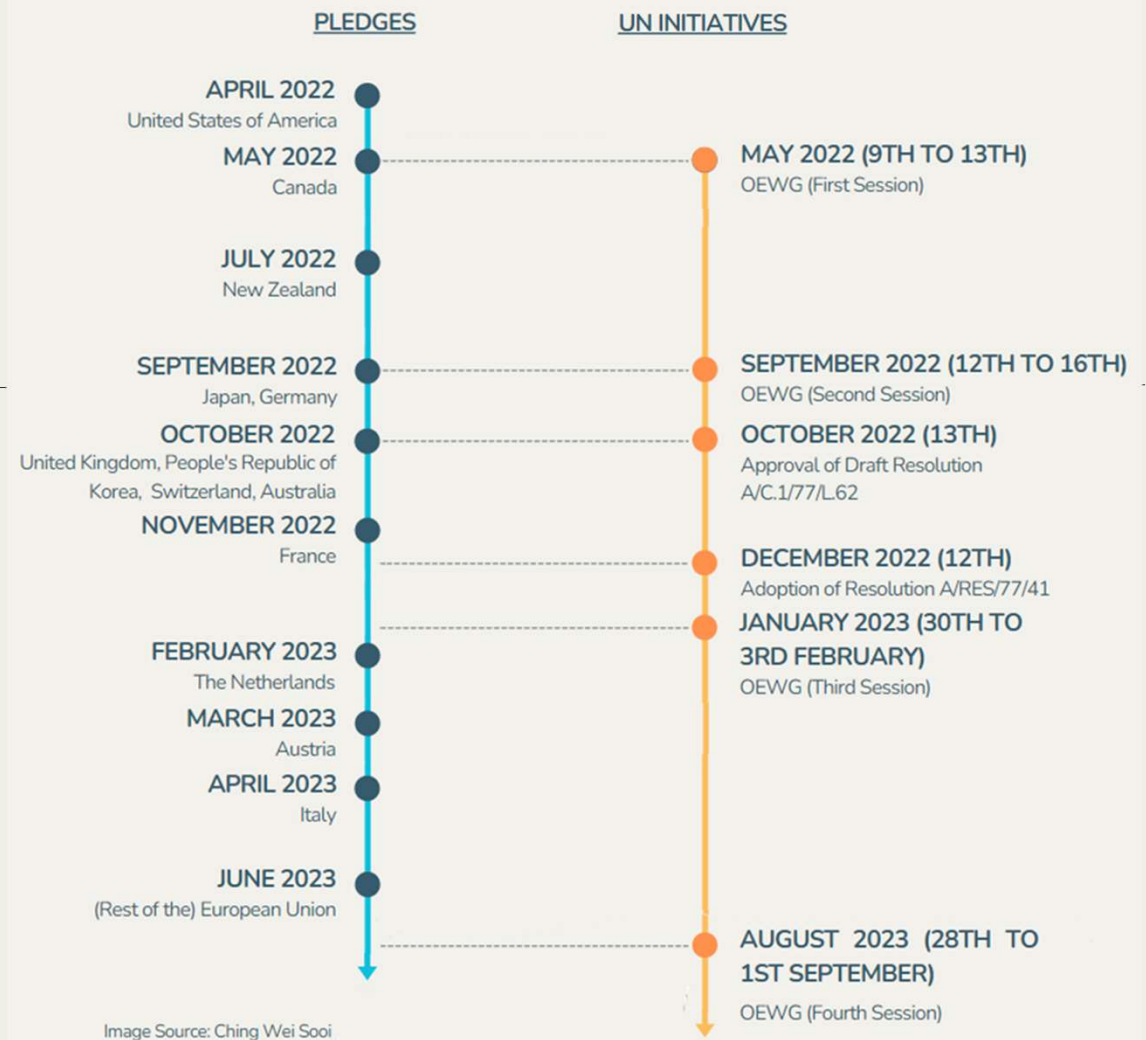
AGENDA

- Background
 - Moratorium on Destructive Direct-Ascent ASAT Missile Testing
 - Resolution A/RES/77/41
- Report
 - Research Questions
 - Methodology
 - Why States favour/oppose/abstained on the resolution
- Concluding Remarks

BACKGROUND

Moratorium on Destructive DA-ASAT Missile Testing

- 37 pledges to date
- Specifically on destructive, direct-ascent, anti-satellite missile testing
- Very linked to the OEWG process





BACKGROUND

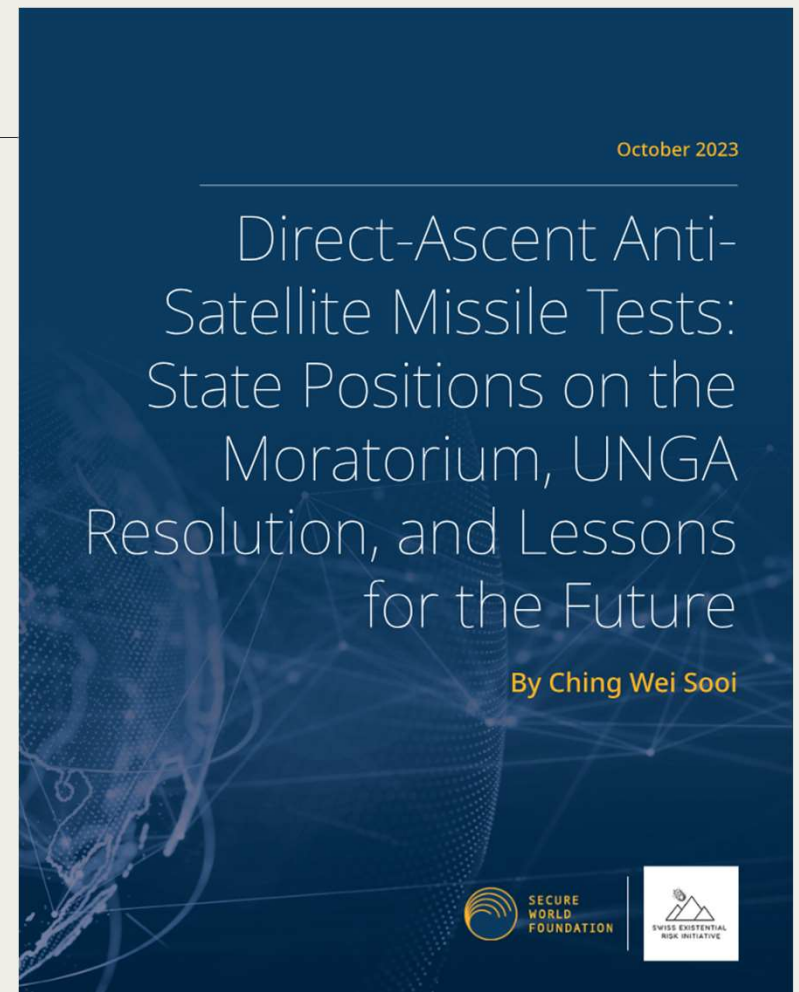
Resolution A/RES/77/41

- 155 votes in favour, 9 against and 9 abstentions - very successful resolution
- Only three operational paragraphs:
 - Calls upon all States to **commit not to conduct destructive DA-ASAT missile tests**;
 - Considers it as an **urgent, initial measure**, contributing to the development of further measures on PAROS;
 - Calls upon all States **to continue discussions** in the relevant bodies and to establish and **develop further practical steps** that could be taken... such steps could include, inter alia, transparency and confidence-building measures and additional moratoriums, which could **contribute to legally binding instruments** on the prevention of an arms race in outer space in all its aspects

REPORT

Research Questions

- This report provides insight into **key questions**:
 - What prompted the moratorium and resolution
 - How States arrived at their positions
 - Reasons for States to vote in favour
 - Reasons for States to oppose or abstain
 - What key factors influenced decisions made
 - How to explain the gap between 155 States voting in favour of the resolution with 37 States making the unilateral commitment for the moratorium





REPORT

Methodology

- Data collected for this research included:
 - **Official state contributions** at the OEWG and UNGA
 - Other **official public statements** outside of those fora
 - A series of **interviews** with several high-level representatives from governments as well as independent State experts
- Interviews
 - Purposive, snowball sampling
 - **Canada, China, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, and South Africa**
 - A representative from a **State in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** and two representatives from **Western States**
 - **Nigeria's** representative responded in writing
 - Diverse sample of States geographically and in how they voted for the resolution



REPORT

The Yes Vote

- Supportive of Norms as a Governing Mechanism and/or Building Block towards Legally Binding Instruments (LBIs)
- Supportive of a Capability Neutral Approach
- Supports the Promotion of Transparency and Confidence Building Measures
- Addresses the Concerns of Developing States



REPORT

The Yes Vote (Contd.)

- [Diplomacy](#) from the United States
- Supportive [Despite Narrowness](#) of the Resolution
- [Geopolitical Influences](#)
- Concerned by [Previous Destructive DA-ASAT Missile Testing](#)
- Resolution [Positively Affects/Does Not Negatively Impact](#) National Security



REPORT

The No Vote

- Believes that Legally Binding Instruments must be the **First Step**
- ‘**Sword & Shield**’ Suspicions
- **Moralizing Rhetoric**



REPORT

The No Vote (Contd.)

- Geopolitical Influences
- Concern and Suspicion over Past Rhetoric
- Concerned by Previous Destructive DA-ASAT Missile Testing
- Resolution Negatively Affects/Does Not Improve National Security



REPORT

The Abstentions

- Geopolitical Influences
- Strong Preference for LBIs
- Opposition Because of the **Narrowness** of the Resolution
- Others
 - Space debris -> purview of the **United Nations Committee for the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)**



CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Significant concern over destructive DA-ASAT missile testing
- Heavy emphasis on orbital debris
- Different prioritization of concerns between developed space powers and developing space powers
 - Stricter security concerns VS debris, access, and due regard under Article 9 of the OST
- The US spearheaded this initiative and the support of some NAM states was instrumental
- Successful linking of two salient topics: space debris and traditional security concerns



CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Similar reasons cited both for support and opposition
- States voting against cited **extremely similar** reasons between them
- **Softening divide** between the two approaches of norms vs LBIs
 - **Joint statement** by States that voted against noted that “the suggestion to undertake [the] political commitment... [is] a step in the right direction” but “insufficient”
- Current **geopolitical climate**:
 - “Before the hot phase of the [Ukraine] crisis started... there were signs that we might have moved somewhere in the direction of agreeing to start from norms to eventually reach a legally binding document. But for now, the overall competition between great powers and actual confrontation makes it very hard to reach consensus.”



CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Gap between support for resolution and voluntary commitments?
 - Developing States' **need for greater technical and legal expertise** regarding the effects of destructive DA-ASAT tests & implications of a commitment
 - Difficulty for developing States to **comprehensively understand** the technical and legal implications of the moratorium, making it **harder to convince Capital** – and for Capital to make a decision
 - Stressed the **disparity** between technological and developmental milestones of developing and developed States
- **Possible emergence** of a new norm against destructive DA-ASAT missile testing

Thank you!

Ching Wei SOOI

Graduate Professional, UNIDIR Space Security Programme

chingwei.sooi@un.org

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/chingweisooi/>