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A History of Space Security

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Abstract. This article provides a conceptual infrastructure for thinking about the history of space security.

In a history of space security, it is more than a sophomoric exercise in humor or a vacuous exercise in semantic parsing to differentiate between inner space and outer space. The former would apply to the world of the mind and entail a number of tasks such as attempting to be happy rather than sad, foster high rather than low self-esteem, and develop and maintain a stable sense of self in the face of threats to the very notion of who we are. The latter would apply to the world outside the body and entail tasks such as attempting to avoid physical injury from adversaries and natural disasters, exploitation by those individuals who do not have our best interests at heart, and death and destruction from bad luck, accident, and Fate. Philosophical complexities would immediately appear as to whether there is an objective world physically constituted and separate from the mind, whether there is a subjective world psychologically constituted courtesy of the mind, and whether the potential disparity between subjective and objective worlds is small or large, stable or ever-changing, impervious to change or flexible, and so on. In simplest terms, it is inner space that may be our only vehicle to outer space.

Opinions, attitudes, and beliefs on such matters inevitably lead to practical consequences for the most hard-headed or tough-minded engineer—let alone for allegedly soft-headed or egg-headed and tender-minded social scientists. For example, if there is a huge disparity between subjective and objective worlds, resolving Issues of security would be but a pipe dream and attempts at Issue resolution would most likely lead to disaster. It also seems to be the case—if developmental psychologists with their varying theoretical orientations are to be believed—that efforts to resolve security Issues of inner space set the stage for the challenge of outer space security. For example, an individual with significant emotional or mental disorder may be less likely to accurately perceive security threat, conceive options to prevent or meet the threat, implement options, and evaluate their consequences. Also the cognitive styles—e.g., degrees and types of complexity, confidence, fear, cohesion, logic, and reason—of inner space security resolution may well be the same ones employed for outer space security resolution. In some very basic ways, how we handle our own inner demons may tell the story of how we handle external threat.

Thus, there are two approaches to describing a history of space security wherein space as external space might denote some location above which a vehicle may orbit the Earth without entering the Earth's atmosphere as suggested in the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (1967). The first is a narrative history of events related to space security. In such a history, one might learn that on July 7, 1959 the United States Information Agency's Office of Research Analysis published a document enTitled Impact of US and Soviet Space Programs on World Opinion: A Summary Assessment and that the document provided data concluding that world opinion equated the so-called space race as a race for military superiority. One might also learn that Project Mercury's Security Office was established under the Director, Flight Systems Division, on September 1, 1960. And that safety, as opposed to security phenomena, were considered the primary causal factors in the Apollo 1 fire of January 27, 1967—as was

1

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

the case with the Apollo 13 oxygen tank explosion of April 13, 1970. And that the Convention on International Liability for Damage Caused by Space Objects entered into force in 1972. And that the Union of Concerned Scientists produced a document, Appeal by American Scientists to Ban Space Weapons, in 1985. And that the Russian spacecraft, Mars – 96, crashed on November 16, 1996, perhaps into the Pacific Ocean or somewhere near the border between Chile and Bolivia—each of the spacecraft's 18 batteries containing 12 grams of plutonium-238. And so on.

These and other facts and approximations to facts could be woven into a number of themes and subplots. This weaving, however, would be predicated on the assumption that there is indeed meaning, cause and effect, and continuities rendering human striving as a saga. And even if there is or could be a purpose, goal, and trend in the trajectory of human striving, the implicit and explicit identification of key events and factors is still tenuous when historiography is subjected to the crucible of philosophies of science. For out of a plethora of "usual suspects"—such as human character, political and economic phenomena, preexisting historical trends, and even physical laws founded on inductive and deductive logic—what can be reliably and validly ascribed as meaningful and significant? In fact, there is even a variant of psychological discourse—viz., terror management theory—positing that the need for ascribing meaning is so strong that it is ascribed in cases wherein there is no meaning, because there must be meaning even or especially when there may not be.

An alternative to narrative history is only the assertion that space security is a recapitulation of the history of human security—a true case of baggage being taken on a trip that cannot be discarded and only ignored or discounted at one's own peril. (See APOD: 2001 May 19 – Damage to Apollo 13. http://apod.gsfc.nasa.gov/apod/ap010519.html; Apollo 1, the fire, 27 January 1967. http://history.nasa.gov/SP-4029/Apollo_01a_Summary.htm; Dehue, T. (1998). Community historians and the dilemma of rigor vs relevance: A comment on Danziger and van Rappard. Theory & Psychology, 8, 653-661; Hills, A. (2002). Responding to catastrophic terrorism. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism, 25, 245-261; Project Mercury – Chronology. Appendix 8. http://history.nasa.gov/SP-4001/app8.htm; Oberg, J. (March 6, 1999). The probe that feel to earth. The New Scientist. http://www.jamesoberg.com/plutonium.html; Stam, H.J. (2003). Retrieving the past for the future: boundary maintenance in historical and theoretical psychology. In D.B. Hill, & M.J. Kral (Eds.). About psychology: Essays at the crossroads of history, theory, and philosophy. SUNY series, alternatives in psychology. (pp. 147-163). State University of New York Press; Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies. (1967). http://www.state.gov/t/ac/trt/5181.htm.) (Keywords: Space Security.)