Main MUN conference

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Daring Democracy

Background Guide

General Assembly

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Table of Contents

1. Words of Welcome **1**

2. About the Committee **1**

2.1 The General Assembly (GA) *1*

2.2 Main Committees *2*

3. Topic I: Preventing Foreign Interference in National Elections **2**

3.1 Introduction *2*

3.2 Key Terms and Basic Definitions in the Field of Foreign Interference in National Elections *3*

3.3 The Evolution of Foreign Electoral Interference *4*

3.3.1 Historical Origins of Foreign Electoral Interference 4

3.3.2 Cold War and Post–Cold War Case Studies 4

3.3.3 The Digital Transformation of Electoral Interference 4

3.3.4 Non-Digital and Financial Forms of Interference 5

3.4. Further and Regional Framework *5*

3.4.1. Europe 5

3.4.2. North America 5

3.4.3. South America 6

3.4.4. Asia 6

3.4.5. Africa 6

3.4.6. Case Studies 7

4. Theoretical Perspectives and Consequences of Foreign Electoral Interference **7**

4.1 Academic Perspectives on Effectiveness and Incentives *7*

4.2 Domestic Perceptions and Political Polarization *7*

5 Methods of Foreign Election Interference **8**

5.1 Domestic Collaboration and Conditions for Intervention *8*

5.2 Categories of Intervention Methods *8*

5.3 Technological Evolution and Strategic Adaptation *9*

6 Past International Responses **9**

6.1 United Nations Resolutions and Normative Principles *9*

6.2 Strategic Concepts in International Responses *9*

6.3 Practical Approaches and Policy Measures *9*

7.Conclusion and Remaining Challenges **10**

7.1 Further Reading and Guiding Questions *10*

8. Topic Two: Satellite Governance and the Protection of Global Connectivity **11**

8.1. Background, Data, and Facts *12*

8.2. Current State *13*

8.3. Analysis: Global Connectivity Report 2025 *13*

8.4. General Assembly Framework: Satellite Governance and the Protection of Global Connectivity *15*

8.5. Further and Regional Framework *19*

8.5.1. Europe 19

8.5.2 Asia 19

8.5.3. North America 20

8.5.4. South America 20

8.5.5. Africa 21

8.5.6. Case Studies 21

9. Conclusion and remaining challenges **22**

10. Further Reading and Guiding Questions **22**

11 Bibliography **23**

11.1. Bibliographie Topic 1 *23*

11.2. Bibliography Topic 2 *26*

1. Words of Welcome

Honorable Delegates,

We are pleased to welcome you to the General Assembly of MainMUN 2026. Whether this is your first Model United Nations conference or you already have prior experience, we are glad to have you join us for what we hope will be a focused and engaging debate. While MUN conferences can initially feel overwhelming, particularly for first-time participants, we will support you throughout the conference to ensure a clear understanding of the Rules of Procedure and the debate process.

Hi, I'm Julianna, and I am pursuing an undergraduate degree in Political Science, Sociology, and English at the Julius-Maximilians University Würzburg. I started my MUN journey with my Uni's delegation, and MainMUN will be my fourth conference, but my first time chairing. Apart from MUN and international politics (with a focus on Asia), I love reading, learning languages, and swimming. I am very much looking forward to meeting you guys, hearing your speeches, and making MainMUN a great experience for all of you, as I am very honored to be your chair :)

Hey everyone! My name is Lanie, and this year I have the honor of serving as one of your General Assembly chairs. I fell in love with MUN during high school, and this will be my second time chairing! I'm currently pursuing my bachelor's degree in Political Science and Sinology at Goethe University. Alongside my passion for history and the Chinese language, I love reading, knitting, and memorizing flags from all around the world. I'm incredibly excited to get to know all of you and hope you'll make wonderful memories throughout this conference!

Hi everyone! I'm Samia, studying Political Science and European Cultural Anthropology. This is my first time chairing a MUN conference, and my third conference overall. I'm really passionate about international politics and diplomacy, and I also spend a lot of time on voluntary work. I'm excited to work with all of you to create a respectful and productive committee environment, and I can't wait to see the ideas and perspectives you bring to the debate!

Before arriving at the conference, we strongly encourage you to prepare by considering the following points:

- Carefully read this Background Guide
- Conduct independent research and consider specializing in one of the two topics
- Familiarize yourself with your country and its position on both agenda items
- Review the Rules of Procedure
- Prepare and submit your Position Paper until the 16th of February.

We look forward to welcoming you to MainMUN 2026 and to a focused and constructive General Assembly debate!

Warm regards,

Julianna, Lanie and Samia

2. About the Committee

2.1 The General Assembly (GA)

The **General Assembly (GA)** is the main forum of the United Nations, where all 193 Member States come together to discuss global challenges and work towards shared solutions. Established in 1945 under the UN Charter, the GA guarantees that each Member State has an equal vote, regardless of its size or resources, reflecting the principle of sovereign equality. Within this forum, countries debate a wide variety of issues, from peace and security to development, human rights, and international law.

The GA holds **annual sessions** beginning each September at the UN Headquarters in New York, and special or emergency sessions can be called when urgent matters arise. Although GA resolutions are not legally binding like those of the Security Council, they carry significant political and moral weight and often shape international expectations and norms. As a delegate, you will see how even non-binding decisions can influence discussions and guide policy at the global level.

In addition to serving as a platform for debate, the GA has several key functions, including:

- **Appointing the Secretary-General** following a recommendation from the Security Council
- **Electing non-permanent members** of the Security Council and other UN bodies
- **Approving the UN budget** and supervising financial management

2.2 Main Committees

To manage its wide-ranging responsibilities, the GA works through **six Main Committees**, each focused on a specific area. Every Member State may send one delegate to each committee, often supported by advisors or experts. These committees allow delegates to explore issues in depth, develop proposals, and prepare resolutions for the GA plenary. The committees are:

- **First Committee – Disarmament and International Security (DISEC):** Addresses global security and disarmament matters that affect international peace.
- **Second Committee – Economic and Financial (ECOFIN):** Focuses on economic growth, sustainable development, poverty reduction, and financing for development.
- **Third Committee – Social, Humanitarian and Cultural (SOCHUM):** Covers human rights, humanitarian issues, social concerns, gender equality, indigenous rights, and the protection of children.
- **Fourth Committee – Special Political and Decolonization (SPECPOL):** Handles decolonization, peacekeeping operations, and political matters not covered by other committees.
- **Fifth Committee – Administrative and Budgetary:** Oversees administration, financial matters, and management across the UN system.
- **Sixth Committee – Legal:** Focuses on international law, its codification, and ongoing legal developments

Delegates in these committees **collaborate to draft resolutions**, which are then presented to the GA plenary for discussion and adoption. This process highlights how cooperation between nations leads to meaningful action and demonstrates how global challenges can be addressed in an organized, inclusive, and effective manner.

3. Topic I: Preventing Foreign Interference in National Elections

3.1 Introduction

Democracy is a constitutional form of government that enables the self-determination of all citizens through the principle of popular sovereignty. It achieves this by ensuring meaningful participation in the selection of political decision-makers through free, competitive, and fair elections; by providing opportunities for continuous

influence over the political process; and by guaranteeing institutional mechanisms for the control of political power (Lauth, 2004, p. 100). Because democratic participation grants citizens the authority to shape political leadership,

electoral outcomes can result in significant shifts in both domestic and foreign policy. These shifts may, in turn, influence a country's susceptibility to domestic unrest or international conflict.

In this context, foreign actors may have strong incentives to intervene in competitive elections. By supporting particular candidates or political parties, external actors can attempt to shape electoral outcomes in ways that advance their own strategic interests (Levin, 2016, p. 189). In recent years, foreign interference in elections has emerged as a major challenge to democratic governance worldwide. National elections have increasingly become targets for external actors seeking to influence political outcomes, exacerbate political polarization, or generate conditions of ungovernability within democratic institutions (Wigell, 2021). Such interference can take various forms, ranging from the provision of financial support to favored campaigns to the dissemination of disinformation via social media, or the exertion of diplomatic or economic pressure, such as public threats to withdraw foreign aid should a disfavored political actor prevail (Ghattas, 2009, p. 1).

To effectively address the complex challenges posed by foreign interference in national elections, it is essential to establish clear definitions of the key concepts involved.

3.2 Key Terms and Basic Definitions in the Field of Foreign Interference in National Elections

Foreign Electoral Interference (FEI): Deliberate actions by external actors to influence the outcome or public perception of another state's elections. This can be political, financial, or technological, and may be overt or covert.

Digital Electoral Interference: The use of digital tools, such as cyberattacks, hack-and-release campaigns, or social media disinformation, to influence elections.

Financial Interference: Provision of money or resources by foreign actors to sway electoral outcomes, either directly or indirectly.

Deterrence: Strategies aimed at discouraging foreign interference by creating credible threats of legal, economic, or diplomatic consequences.

Political Polarization: Increased ideological divisions within a society, which can be exploited or worsened by foreign actors to influence elections.

Domestic Collaboration: Cooperation or consent by local actors, such as parties or candidates, who accept or benefit from foreign electoral interference.

Influence: Activities by external actors that shape public opinion or voter behavior without necessarily breaking laws, such as media campaigns or strategic information releases.

Interference: Direct actions that violate laws or norms to alter electoral outcomes, including illicit funding, cyberattacks, or manipulation of voter systems.

Disinformation: Deliberate spreading of false information to deceive voters or undermine trust in institutions.

Misinformation: Inaccurate or misleading information spread unintentionally, which can still affect elections.

Electoral Integrity: The extent to which elections are free, fair, transparent, and trustworthy. FEI undermines electoral integrity by distorting outcomes and eroding public confidence.

3.3 The Evolution of Foreign Electoral Interference

3.3.1 Historical Origins of Foreign Electoral Interference

Foreign interference in national elections is not a new phenomenon; rather, it has long posed a challenge to democratic governance. Since the emergence of competitive elections, external actors have sought to influence electoral outcomes in order to protect or advance their strategic, ideological, or economic interests. Understanding this historical pattern is essential for identifying the tools, technologies, and processes used in foreign election interference (FEI), as well as the cost–benefit calculations that guide decisions about whether, when, and how such interventions occur.

According to Levin's *Partisan Electoral Interventions by the Great Powers (PEIG)* dataset, at least 117 foreign electoral interventions occurred between 1946 and 2000, primarily conducted by major powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia (Levin, 2019, p. 88). These interventions were most likely to take place in highly competitive elections, where relatively small shifts in voter behavior could determine the final outcome.

3.3.2 Cold War and Post–Cold War Case Studies

Historical examples illustrate the long-term consequences of foreign electoral interference. During the Cold War, elections were often considered strategic fronts between competing ideological blocs, which encouraged direct and indirect intervention by external powers.

For example, the 1948 Italian general elections saw the United States conduct a wide-ranging campaign that included financial assistance, diplomatic pressure, and information operations to prevent a victory by the Italian Communist Party. Less than three days after the conclusion of this overt United States intervention, Palmiro Togliatti, the then head of the Italian Communist Party, openly attributed his party's unexpected defeat to what he described as the brutal foreign intervention of the United States (Levin, 2016, p. 189). This demonstrates that electoral interference was openly recognized even in the early post-war period.

Similarly, several major political developments in the post-Cold War era were shaped by electoral outcomes influenced by foreign actors. These include Canada's acquisition of nuclear weapons in the 1960s, Germany's adoption of eastern politics in the 1970s, and the United States' withdrawal from the Iran nuclear agreement in 2018 (Palmer, 2023). Such interventions were most likely to occur in highly competitive elections, where relatively small shifts in voter behavior could determine the final outcome.

3.3.3 The Digital Transformation of Electoral Interference

While foreign electoral interference is not a new phenomenon, the methods through which it is conducted have evolved significantly in the digital age. According to Freedom House (2020), of the 40 national elections and referendums held worldwide between June 2018 and May 2020, 88 percent were affected by some form of digital election interference. As a result, voters in at least 32 countries faced obstacles to accessing objective information and participating meaningfully in the democratic process.

One of the most prominent examples of this transformation is Russia's interference in the 2016 United States presidential election. This operation combined cyber activities, including hacking and the release of stolen data, with large-scale disinformation campaigns intended to influence public opinion and undermine trust in democratic institutions (Palmer and Wilner, 2024, p. 5). Similar concerns have emerged in other democratic states. In Canada, media reports published in November 2022 revealed extensive foreign interference in the federal elections of 2019 and 2021, highlighting the vulnerability of electoral systems even in long- established democracies (Palmer and Wilner, 2024, p. 2).

3.3.4 Non-Digital and Financial Forms of Interference

The impact of foreign involvement in elections is not limited to digital era interventions, and these cases raise important policy challenges for the international community. The 2000 Yugoslavian elections demonstrated how direct foreign assistance can shape electoral outcomes through financial, logistical, and strategic support for opposition groups. Observers noted that such international involvement was critical to the opposition campaign's success, which ultimately led to the defeat of Slobodan Milošević and a peaceful transfer of power following mass public demonstrations (Dobbs, 2000, p. 1). This case underscores the difficulty of distinguishing between legitimate support for democratic processes and interference that undermines national sovereignty, highlighting the need for clearer international norms governing external electoral assistance.

Allegations of foreign electoral influence have also emerged in Western Europe, emphasizing that even established democracies are vulnerable to covert interference. Claims that former French President Nicolas Sarkozy received campaign financing from Libya during his 2007 presidential campaign drew attention to the challenges of detecting and regulating illicit foreign funding in electoral systems. Such cases demonstrate the continued relevance of covert financial support as a method of foreign electoral interference and underscore the necessity for stronger transparency requirements, international cooperation, and accountability mechanisms to prevent undue external influence (Palmer and Wilner, 2024, p. 2).

3.4. Further and Regional Framework

3.4.1. Europe

The Strategic Compass, a plan of action for the EU's security and defence, identified foreign information manipulation and interference as a fast-expanding threat. The EU has increased its effort over the past few years; the East StratCom Task Force, established in 2015, has as its goal to expose attacks on the EU by spreading awareness of information manipulation and interference. A key component to combat disinformation is the Rapid Alert System, which makes it easier for EU institutions and Member States to exchange information about disinformation and to plan countermeasures. Further, an EU anti-disinformation network, which has been established as part of the European Digital Media Observatory, works to combat disinformation. In 2022, the Digital Services Act (DSA) came into effect, imposing requirements on online search engines and social media platforms. Following that, in 2024, the Commission launched a public consultation on DSA guidelines for election integrity (EPRS, 2024).

To enhance transparency of European political parties and European political foundations, the Commission adopted the 'European Elections' Democracy and Integrity Package. This included a legislative proposal on the transparency and target of political advertising, which was already adopted by the Council in March 2024. The revised regulations require European political parties and European political foundations (EUPPF) to submit a written declaration on their compliance and their members' compliance with EU values. To limit the risk of foreign interference, limitations for the newly created categories of 'associated member parties' and 'associated member organizations' are now applied. It also prohibits membership fees or contributions to EUPPFs from parties or organizations outside the EU (European Council, 2024). The EU has also dispatched over 180 election observation missions since 2000. The UK passed a bill similar to the EU's DSA, including provisions to tackle disinformation, and also passed legislation to introduce a foreign interference offence in 2023 (EPRS, 2024).

3.4.2. North America

Bridging the Atlantic, the United States considers foreign information manipulation and interference a national security threat. Consequently, in 2024, the Framework to Counter Foreign State Information Manipulation was introduced to address this problem. It seeks to develop a common understanding of this threat and tries to establish a common set of action areas from which the U.S. can develop coordinated responses to instances of foreign information manipulation. The framework aims to deepen cooperation between like-minded partners and allies and is based on five Key Action Areas. Those include national strategies and policies, governance structures and institutions, human and technical capacity, civil society: independent media and academia, and multilateral engagement (Department of State, 2024).

The Canadian government introduced legislation to counter foreign interference in 2024. It proposes to update existing laws to better equip the government to detect and protect against instances of foreign interference. The proposal includes changes to the Security of Information Act, the modernization of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, and the sabotage offence in the Criminal Code. Additionally, it proposes an amendment to the Canada Evidence Act (Canadian Government, 2024).

3.4.3. South America

Overarching Electoral Observation Missions are carried out by the Organization of American States (OAS). In 2025, seven Electoral Observation Missions were dispatched, covering elections in Belize, Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, and Suriname. Those missions reduce foreign interference, or at the very least document any instances of such (OAS, 2025).
Additionally, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) was founded, consisting of 33 countries.
It was created not just to build regional unity and promote cooperation in the region, but also to reduce the influence of foreign actors in the region (UIA, 2025; NTI 2025).
Brazil, for example, faces a diverse set of challenges when it comes to foreign interference in national elections. In 2025, Brazil's Supreme Court ruled that social media companies can be held accountable for select types of content published on their platforms by users. The types of content considered illegal were not clarified (Control Risks 2025).

3.4.4. Asia

One of the core foundations of ASEAN is the principle of non-interference in members' internal affairs, which is a controversial aspect of the Association's proceedings. This includes non-interference in conflicts of its member states but also the lack of dispatch of election observers, like in the 2025 Myanmar election (AFP, 2025). The situation in Myanmar, with its human rights and humanitarian crisis under the repression of a junta, has intensified, but elections are to take place in December 2025. United Nations officials, international election monitoring groups, and foreign governments have issued warnings about the elections (HRW, 2025), but still no ASEAN election observers have been deployed.

In South Korea, the South Korean Police and Prosecution Services announced plans to launch consultations among investigative bodies, with the aim of identifying election-related activities. Those include, among others, spreading of disinformation and accepting election-related bribes (Lim, 2024).

Similarly, Japan plans to enhance its surveillance and regulatory measures to prevent foreign interference in national elections. The Cabinet Secretariat and the Foreign and Defense ministries are currently tasked with gathering and analyzing information, but a National Cybersecurity Office was established in July 2025 to oversee cyberdefense policy. A consistent legal framework does not exist in Japan (Japan Times, 2025).

3.4.5. Africa

A framework to combat foreign interference in African countries can be found in the AU's Agenda 2063, but with its adherence to the principle of non-interference in Member States, difficulties in effectively combating the problem persist (Agenda 2063, 2015). The AU still reaffirms African unity and solidarity in the face of continued external interference, including by multinational corporations. Further, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) focuses on early-warning systems, such as its Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) and the Panel of the Wise (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014).

Both instruments involve the promotion of democratic principles, including the protection of election integrity, whilst the principle of non-interference by member states of the AU is still a foundational principle (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2014).

The AU reaffirmed its objective to prioritize individual sovereignty and national ownership to avoid foreign interference in the AU Data Policy Framework (AU, 2022).

In Senegal, the first national consultation held under the project 'Combatting election-related Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference' was held. This emphasized Senegal's Status as West Africa's most resilient country against it and elaborated on how the combination of data collection with local expertise could empower national actors to propose responses to this issue of FIMI (IDEA, 2025).

3.4.6. Case Studies

Chechelashvili et al. have found that the use of influence or interference by one state to change the course of elections by another state is increasingly observed, mainly caused by technological developments. They further found that most cases of illegal actions to interfere in the democratic and electoral process of other states were carried out by the PRC and the Russian Federation.

The study concludes with the finding that exposing information about foreign interference in democratic processes is in direct causality with a decline in the authority of democracy.

States with a low Democracy Index interfere most actively in electoral processes in general. Targets are mainly states with a high level of the Democracy Development Index (Chechelashvili, 2023).

To effectively prevent electoral interference, mitigation measures will be critical. Mohan and Wall recommend achieving an independent and competent election management body, a strong and effective legal framework that addresses foreign interference in elections through laws requiring transparency in all parts of the election process, as well as voter education efforts (Mohan/Wall, 2019).

4. Theoretical Perspectives and Consequences of Foreign Electoral Interference

4.1 Academic Perspectives on Effectiveness and Incentives

Beyond individual case studies, a growing body of academic research examines the conditions under which foreign election interference occurs, its effectiveness, and its broader political consequences (Levin, 2016, p. 191). These studies provide insight into why foreign electoral interventions persist despite international norms against such practices.

When external actors believe that their intervention is likely to succeed, the anticipated risk of punishment or retaliation diminishes, weakening deterrence and encouraging continued interference (Levin, 2016, p. 191). Empirical research further suggests that candidates and political parties with greater financial and informational resources are more likely to succeed electorally. As a result, external support, whether financial, technological, or informational, can be particularly influential in close and competitive elections (Sudulich and Wall, 2010; Benoit and Marsh, 2008).

A further challenge arises when governments come to power with the assistance of foreign actors. Such governments often lack incentives to confront or punish their external benefactors, contributing to recurring cycles of interference and undermining long-term democratic accountability (Levin, 2020).

4.2 Domestic Perceptions and Political Polarization

Research has also examined domestic reactions to foreign electoral interference. Corstange and Marinov (2012, pp. 664–669), drawing on a field experiment in Lebanon following the 2009 parliamentary elections, found that overt foreign interventions tend to polarize electorates. Voters aligned with the favored side often view the intervening power more positively, while opposing voters react negatively.

Similarly, Shulman and Bloom (2012, pp. 460–464), studying public opinion in Ukraine after the 2004 presidential election, found that foreign electoral interventions are broadly perceived as illegitimate. Notably, interventions attributed to Western actors were often judged more harshly than those attributed to Russia.

Taken together, this body of research underscores that foreign interference in national elections represents a persistent and evolving challenge. While the methods of intervention have changed over time, particularly with the rise of digital technologies, the underlying incentives driving such behavior, as well as the risks posed to democratic legitimacy, political stability, and public trust, remain largely consistent (Lauth, 2004; Levin, 2016; Palmer and Wilner, 2024).

5 Methods of Foreign Election Interference

FEI involves a range of strategies and actors, often combining external influence with domestic collaboration. Non-foreign actors, such as political parties, candidates, or influential individuals within the target country, are frequently complicit, either by actively seeking external support or passively accepting it.

5.1 Domestic Collaboration and Conditions for Intervention

Levin (2016a, p. 189) emphasizes that successful foreign electoral interventions by a great power require two key conditions. First, the foreign actor must perceive its interests as being threatened by a specific candidate or party within the target democracy. Second, a significant domestic actor must consent to and actively cooperate with the intervention. If domestic actors can be persuaded not to seek or accept foreign assistance, external actors often refrain from intervention. Great powers may "sit out" elections, even in the presence of interference by an unfriendly power, if no willing domestic partner exists. Assistance is more commonly accepted in closely contested elections where small shifts in support could determine the outcome (Levin, 2016a, p. 189).

5.2 Categories of Intervention Methods

Intervention methods can be broadly categorized as interference or influence, as outlined by the US National Intelligence Council and other intelligence organizations (Baines and Jones, 2018). Interference methods clearly violate the domestic laws of the target state. They involve direct actions aimed at disrupting the technical or organizational aspects of an election or providing illicit financial or logistical support to a favored candidate or party. Common forms of interference include cyber operations, such as distributed denial-of-service attacks that overwhelm electoral systems, and hack-and-release operations in which sensitive information is exfiltrated and publicly released to damage a candidate's reputation (Sanger and Edmondson, 2019).

Influence	Interference
Public threats, promises, endorsements, and inducements	Assassination; threats of harm
Print, radio, televisual, and social media-based efforts to persuade voters to vote in a particular way	Hacking
	Doxing
Extension or severance of economic aid	Campaign funding
Offer of preferential trade terms	Illegal non-monetary campaign assistance (which incur expenses)
Revealing legally held but damaging information about a party or candidate	Assistance in the "traditional" methods of electoral fraud (ballot box stuffing, gerrymandering, voter suppression, etc.)
Legal campaign non-monetary assistance (which does not incur expenses)	

Table 1: Two methods of FEI Influence methods, by contrast, do not unambiguously breach domestic laws. These approaches seek to shape public perception and voter behavior through media campaigns, public statements, or legal but strategically timed disclosures of information. Modern interventions increasingly blur the line between covert and overt operations, focusing less on hiding involvement and more on controlling how the public interprets the intervention. For instance, digital manipulation of voter registration rolls or targeted disinformation campaigns can occur openly while still significantly affecting election outcomes (Sanger and Edmondson, 2019).

Source: Levin, 2016

5.3 Technological Evolution and Strategic Adaptation

The evolution of FEI reflects both technological change and strategic adaptation. The widespread availability of internet-based communication has reduced the frequency of Cold War-style covert operations, as the risk of exposure has risen. Today, FEI often leverages information technology to exert influence efficiently, combining cyber tools, financial resources, and messaging strategies to sway elections without always resorting to illegal or overtly aggressive tactics (Joseph and Poznansky, 2017, p. 321). In practice, FEI operates through a combination of domestic collaboration, strategic calculation, and both legal and illegal tools.

6 Past International Responses

FEI has long posed challenges to democratic governance, yet the international community has only partially developed mechanisms to respond. While no single United Nations resolution directly addresses FEI as a standalone issue, several UN resolutions and foundational principles are relevant. These emphasize state sovereignty, non-interference in domestic affairs, and the integrity of political and electoral processes.

6.1 United Nations Resolutions and Normative Principles

The United Nations General Assembly has consistently reaffirmed the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states, including their electoral systems. Resolution A/RES/46/130, adopted in 1991, emphasizes that the right to self-determination includes the free development of national electoral processes without external interference. It further affirms that attempts to influence or manipulate electoral outcomes are inconsistent with the principles of the UN Charter and international law. Similarly, Resolution A/RES/36/103, adopted in 1981, declares that any direct or indirect interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign states, including their political processes, is inadmissible. The resolution highlights that such actions undermine political independence and pose risks to international peace and stability.

Despite these clear normative commitments, international enforcement mechanisms specifically targeting foreign election interference remain limited. Responsibility for addressing and mitigating interference has largely fallen on individual states rather than multilateral institutions. This reliance on domestic responses reflects both the importance attached to electoral sovereignty and the difficulties associated with achieving international consensus on binding regulatory frameworks.

6.2 Strategic Concepts in International Responses

Many proposed responses to foreign election interference are informed by the strategic concepts of deterrence, compellence, and denial (Wilner and Wegner, 2021). These approaches seek to influence the behavior of potential interveners by altering their cost–benefit calculations. Deterrence aims to discourage interference by threatening consequences, compellence seeks to pressure actors into changing their behavior, and denial focuses on reducing the likelihood that interference efforts will succeed. The effectiveness of each approach depends on whether adversaries perceive credible risks, constraints, or a high probability of failure.

6.3 Practical Approaches and Policy Measures

In practice, responses to foreign electoral interference often combine multiple strategies. Punishment involves imposing legal, diplomatic, or economic consequences on foreign or domestic actors involved in interference. Denial emphasizes institutional, legal, and technical safeguards designed to make interference more difficult or costly. Resilience focuses on strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing public awareness to reduce vulnerability to manipulation and disinformation. Delegitimization seeks to reinforce international norms and conventions that frame electoral interference as unacceptable behavior under international law (Baines and Jones, 2018, p. 17).

Policy proposals aimed at mitigating foreign election interference commonly include increasing legal penalties for collusion with foreign actors, expanding public education on electoral integrity and disinformation, restricting or banning electronic voting or counting systems vulnerable to cyber manipulation, and prohibiting the use of cryptocurrencies in political campaign financing.

7.Conclusion and Remaining Challenges

Foreign interference in national elections continues to pose a serious and evolving challenge to democratic governance. As shown throughout this guide, such interference is not new and is not confined to a few countries. It has occurred across different historical periods, regions, and political systems, adapting to new technologies and shifts in global power. While digital tools have expanded the reach and speed of interference, the underlying motivations, strategic influence, ideological alignment, and geopolitical competition remain largely unchanged.

Despite clear principles in the United Nations framework emphasizing sovereignty, non-interference, and the right to political self-determination, international responses remain fragmented. General Assembly resolutions reaffirm these norms but are not legally binding and rely heavily on voluntary compliance.

This limits the UN's ability to respond effectively, especially when major powers are involved or when interference occurs in legally grey areas, such as online information spaces. Several challenges complicate efforts to prevent foreign electoral interference. Distinguishing between legitimate political influence and unlawful interference is often difficult. Differences in state capacity make some countries more vulnerable, particularly regarding cybersecurity, media regulation, and election administration. Measures to counter disinformation and digital manipulation must also be carefully balanced to avoid undermining freedom of expression and political pluralism.

For the General Assembly, these issues highlight the importance of promoting norms, facilitating information-sharing, and supporting states in strengthening their electoral systems. While the GA cannot impose binding measures, it can play a meaningful role in guiding international standards and supporting multilateral cooperation. Addressing foreign interference requires sustained collaboration, shared guidelines, and a commitment to preserving the legitimacy of democratic processes worldwide.

7.1 Further Reading and Guiding Questions

Preventing foreign interference in elections is a key challenge for both national governments and the international community. Interference can take many forms, including cyberattacks on electoral infrastructure, disinformation campaigns targeting voters, and covert financial support for political actors (Nye, 2017; Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2021). Such interference threatens electoral integrity, public trust, and political stability. National governments, in cooperation with international organizations like the UN, must balance sovereignty, security, and civil liberties while defending their electoral systems (United Nations, 2019). Delegates are encouraged to consider a mix of technical, legal, and political measures when preparing resolutions, such as cybersecurity safeguards, regulations on foreign campaign financing, and international cooperation agreements.

Guiding Questions for Delegates:

- What concrete steps can countries take to prevent cyber and digital attacks on elections?
- How can states collaborate internationally to counter disinformation campaigns without restricting freedom of expression?
- What role can the UNGA play in setting global standards or recommendations for protecting elections?
- How can accountability for foreign interference be strengthened at national and international levels?

- Which lessons from past cases could be adapted to different national contexts?

8. Topic Two: Satellite Governance and the Protection of Global Connectivity

In the past decades, the importance of humanity's access to information, both through satellite information and the global era of connectivity introduced by the internet, has grown immensely. At the same time, the driving factors behind these changes are likely to further accelerate in the decades to come.

Satellites play a central role in the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as nearly 40% of the SDG-targets are leveraging Earth Observation and global navigation satellite systems. Satellite information informs us of weather patterns, events in ecologically protected areas, and contributes to the prevention of natural disasters (UNOOSA, 2020).

The changes in technological developments and their speed present the member states with both opportunities and risks. Further governance is needed so that we can safely and steadily accelerate and safeguard technological advancements in the field of satellite governance and global connectivity.

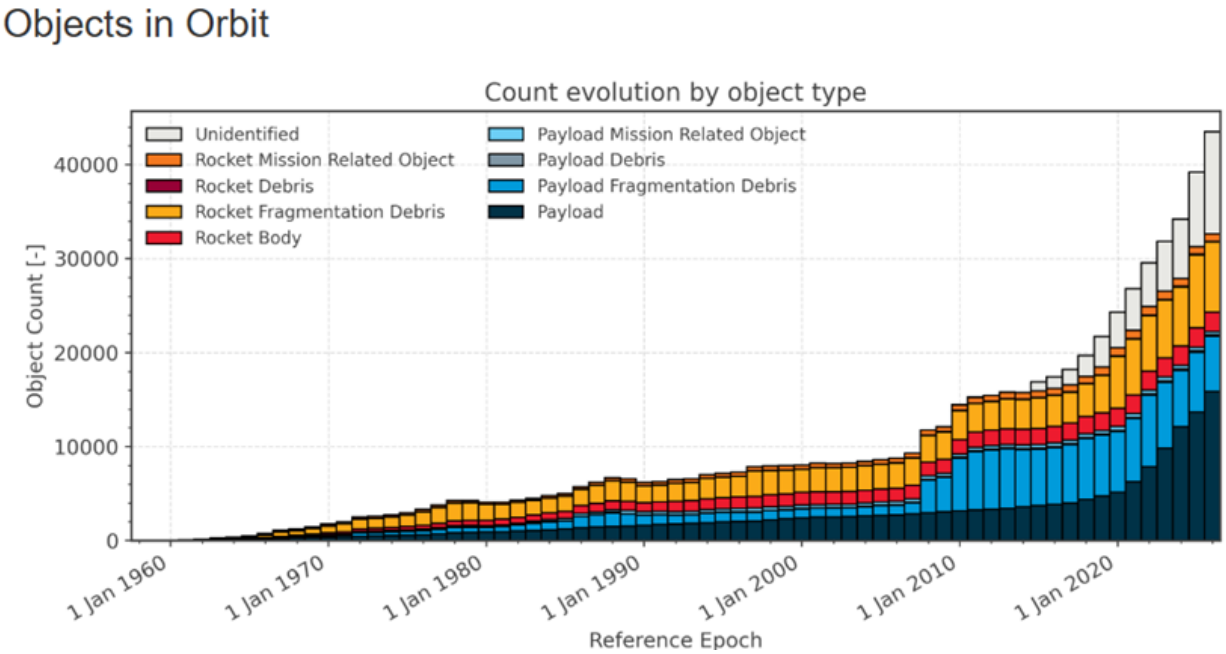

Fig. 1: Space Environment Statistics · Space Debris User Portal, accessed on 10. 12. 2025

Faced with this increase in number from private sector actors, the question of satellite governance is one in need of being negotiated. To better fulfill this new need of including external experts in Member State discussions, the high-level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism recommends increased usage of the Arria formula. This recommendation speaks to the difficult nature of governance in Outer Space, including satellites (HLAB, 2023).

The changes and speed in technological developments present the member states with both opportunities and risks. Communication networks in the 21st century increasingly rely on information provided by space-based assets, as they are more resilient than land-based hardware and connectivity (Weiwei, 2023).

Connectivity is one of the central infrastructures of our time. It encompasses digital networks and underlines where and how information flows. But connecting the final 2.7 billion people and achieving universal Internet connectivity is the final step to global connectivity (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2023). And as connectivity remains decisive in harnessing the opportunities it comes with, it must extend but always include this basic access to the Internet. When the SDGs were adopted in 2015, there were already 3.2 billion people using the internet, but the first instances of a digital divide were already taking root. While 80% of households in developed countries had internet access, only 34% of households in developing countries were connected to the internet. Least developed

countries (LDG's) were trailing behind with only 7% of households connected. In 2023, 5.3 billion people were using the internet, and there was a tremendous jump in the number of people in least developed countries with internet connectivity. Now, 36% of the population in LDC's, 92% of the population in high-income countries, and 79% of the population in upper-middle-income countries have internet access (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2023).

Reliable, affordable, and secure networks will play an important role in the development of an inclusive and responsible digital world. If this does not include all member states, the benefits of technological progress will be limited to only a few, which would deepen socioeconomic divides. Studies show that the connection of villages to the Internet can increase wages, business profits, and skill development (Hjort & Sacchetto, 2022). One of the goals in Our Common Agenda and the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation will require the leveraging of both terrestrial and space-based networks to achieve the commitment to connect all people to the Internet. As part of the implementation of the roadmap, a multi-stakeholder working group, led by ITU and UNICEF, was tasked with proposing targets for digital connectivity. They developed the concept of universal and meaningful connectivity (UMC), which is built around six key dimensions. Those include the aspects of quality, availability, affordability, security, devices, and skills. Quality refers to the speed and reliability of the connection, availability to its ubiquity and permanence, while affordability focuses on the low costs of an internet connection. The three further dimensions primarily focus on a safe and secure internet connection, which is accessed through appropriate devices and further enhanced by adequate skills (ITU, 2025). The 2024 Global Digital Compact acknowledges the pivotal role of UMC in unlocking the full potential of technologies (ITU, 2025). Findings of the Global Connectivity Report 2025 point toward a sustained momentum, expansion of Internet usage, and narrowing of divides between socio-economic groups (ITU, 2025). The progress towards UMC is therefore now found to be at a critical junction; future policy will now decide if this momentum is being kept up or slowed down. Recent developments in the technological field have made internet connectivity from low-Earth orbits increasingly viable and its extended usage more probable (Zhao, 2019).

Another aspect connecting both satellite governance and digital connectivity is critical security situations, in which decisive information can be gained by satellites and transmitted by the internet. There is an increase in instances where shutting off internet access led to deteriorating security situations. It is for this reason that online access is viewed as a critical weapon in a 21st-century war (Bergengruen, 2022).

Digital connectivity, increasingly provided by objects in orbit, leverages information, and humanity finds itself in the middle of the age of information, strongly emphasizing its importance.

8.1. Background, Data, and Facts

The increased rate of objects in orbit has been mainly driven by the launch of smaller satellite networks by actors of the private sector. Especially in the United States of America and Europe, private industry has long had close ties with the development of outer space capabilities, as it has launched government projects for decades. China has also seen an emergence of many new commercial space companies, similar to Japan and India (Yan, 2025).

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8.2. Current State

Another aspect connecting both satellite governance and digital connectivity is critical security situations, in which decisive information can be gained by satellites and transmitted by the internet. There is an increase in instances where shutting off internet access led to deteriorating security situations. It is for this reason that online access is viewed as a critical weapon in a 21st-century war (Bergengruen, 2022).

Digital connectivity, increasingly provided by objects in orbit, leverages information, and humanity finds itself in the middle of the age of information, strongly emphasizing its importance.

8.3. Analysis: Global Connectivity Report 2025

The ITU's *Global Connectivity Report 2025* highlights both the progress made and the remaining gaps in achieving Universal and Meaningful Connectivity (UMC). The report shows that women and girls remain less connected than men, revealing a clear digital gender gap that limits access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Progress is uneven across regions and sectors: infrastructure often relies on stable governance and sustained investment, while high costs for information and communication technologies (ICT) prevent low-income populations from fully participating. Limited digital skills further restrict the ability of many people to benefit from online opportunities.

Targeted initiatives, such as Digital Transformation Centres (DTCs), demonstrate the potential impact of focused programs. These centres provide digital training, entrepreneurship support, and access to technology, particularly for youth and women, showing that well-designed interventions can make a tangible difference.

Connectivity is not only a technical issue but also a development and policy challenge. Achieving UMC requires coordinated investment, inclusive regulations, affordable services, skills development, and robust national data systems to monitor progress. At the same time, connectivity must be reliable, secure, and sustainable to address challenges such as misinformation, unequal access, and environmental impact.

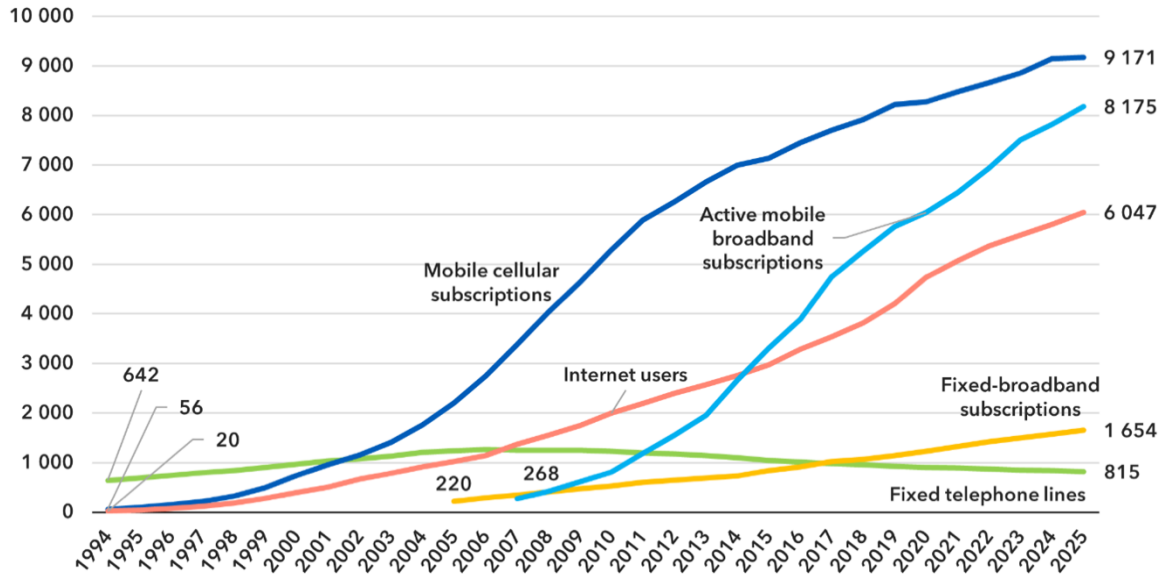

Figure 2, *Evolution in selected connectivity indicators*, illustrates that global internet usage continues to grow, while socio-economic gaps in access are gradually narrowing. The findings of the report underline that meaningful connectivity has the potential to empower communities, foster innovation, and reduce inequalities – but only if policies, investments, and education work together to reach those who need support the most (ITU, 2025; UN DESA, 2025; Africa Renewal, 2025).

Public-Private Relations in the Space Sector

Until the 1980s, space was exclusive to state actors, but since then, various space activities have been undertaken by commercial actors. This began with broadcasting and communications satellites and has now developed to remote sensing and launch services, as well as space tourism (Freeland, 2025). Now, commercial satellites are essential for international financial transactions, disaster relief, and, in many places, access to the internet. But while commercial actors now play a bigger role, the space sector is still associated with high-risk and capital-intensive activities, resulting in a key role of the government in space technology development (OECD, 2021). Additionally, the strong strategic interests in space activities for governments further their involvement; still, government-centric space development is now moving to more decentralized approaches (OECD, 2021).

In that context, three roles emerge for public agencies: Government as the lead developer, government as a customer, and government as a partner to co-fund projects with private actors. Governments try to reduce the costs of space programmes and increase returns on investment, leading to a shift in roles. Whilst private sector participation is consistently growing, government programmes still account for the majority share of investments and represent a considerable market for private firms in OECD countries (OECD, 2021).

The whole space sector has seen record levels of involvement, both public and private, over the last decade. More than eighty countries have registered at least one satellite in orbit. As the private sector further diversifies and takes on a bigger role, giving government agencies a wider set of tools to interact with private actors will be a key step to provide safety and security in space and on land (OECD, 2021).

8.4. General Assembly Framework: Satellite Governance and the Protection of Global Connectivity

4.4 General Assembly Framework: Satellite Governance and the Protection of Global Connectivity

The United Nations has developed a multi-layered governance framework to address the increasing challenges related to satellite sustainability and the protection of global connectivity. In response to the rapid growth in the number of satellites and the expansion of space-based services, the UN plays a central role in establishing international norms, promoting cooperation among states. It also ensures that the benefits of satellite technologies are accessible to all member states. Within this framework, particular emphasis is placed on managing technological risks, preventing security-related incidents, and fostering responsible behavior in outer space.

A key institutional pillar of this framework is the **United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)**. COPUOS serves as the primary multilateral forum for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space. It provides a platform for member states to identify and address technological and security risks associated with satellite operations, including orbital congestion, space debris, and the increasing complexity of satellite constellations. In addition, COPUOS develops guidelines, model regulations, and best practices intended to support member states in regulating national space activities and aligning domestic policies with internationally agreed principles (UNOOSA, 2023).

Works through two subcommittees:

- COPUOS carries out its mandate through two permanent subcommittees, each addressing distinct but complementary aspects of space governance. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee (STSC) focuses on operational and technical issues related to satellite activities. Its work includes the assessment of space traffic management practices, the mitigation of space debris, and the development of technical measures aimed at ensuring the safety and sustainability of satellite operations. By addressing these practical challenges, the STSC contributes to reducing risks arising from orbital congestion and the increasing complexity of space activities.

- The Legal Subcommittee (LSC), in contrast, addresses the legal dimensions of space activities. It serves as a forum for discussing the interpretation and application of international space law, including the Outer Space Treaty and related legal instruments. Through its deliberations, the LSC supports the clarification of legal responsibilities of states and contributes to the progressive development of norms governing satellite activities and the peaceful use of outer space.

- One of the most significant outcomes of COPUOS's work is the adoption of the Guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities (LTS Guidelines) in 2018. These guidelines were developed to promote responsible satellite operations and to ensure the long-term usability of outer space. They establish key principles aimed at minimizing risks to space infrastructure, including collision avoidance, the responsible disposal of satellites at the end of their operational life, and increased transparency in orbital behavior through information-sharing and data standards. In addition, the LTS Guidelines emphasize capacity-building measures to enable developing countries to participate effectively in space activities and governance processes.

- Although the LTS Guidelines are non-binding in nature, they exert considerable influence on national legislation and private-sector practices. Many states increasingly reference the guidelines when developing domestic regulatory frameworks for commercial satellite operations, and private actors often align operational standards with the principles set out in the guidelines. As such, the LTS Guidelines constitute a central element of the UN's soft-law approach to satellite governance and the protection of global connectivity (UNOOSA; 2023).

Other UN Platforms

- In addition to COPUOS, other United Nations platforms contribute to the governance of satellite activities and the protection of global connectivity. Among these are the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), which addresses security-related aspects of outer space. The GGE provides a forum for negotiating norms related to space militarization, the management of dual-use technologies, and emerging cyber vulnerabilities affecting satellite infrastructure. Through its deliberations, the GGE seeks to reduce the risk of miscalculation and escalation in an increasingly contested space environment.

- Complementing this work, the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Reducing Space Threats offers an inclusive platform open to all UN member states. The OEWG focuses on transparency and confidence-building measures, as well as on the identification of practical steps for risk mitigation in outer space. By facilitating dialogue among a broad range of actors, the OEWG aims to enhance mutual understanding and promote cooperative approaches to space security challenges.

- Together, the GGE and the OEWG contribute to the development of a soft-law framework within the UN system. While their outcomes are not legally binding, they play an important role in encouraging responsible behavior, strengthening multi-state coordination, and complementing existing institutional and normative arrangements for satellite governance.

The UN's Role in Policy Recommendations

- Within the framework of the General Assembly, the United Nations plays an important role in providing policy guidance aimed at safeguarding global connectivity through responsible satellite governance. Although the UN does not possess enforcement powers in this area, it shapes normative expectations and facilitates coordination among member states and other stakeholders. Through resolutions, reports, and subsidiary bodies, the UN encourages the integration of space sustainability principles into domestic legal and regulatory frameworks. This includes the promotion of debris mitigation measures, licensing regimes for commercial satellite operators, and transparency standards intended to enhance the safety and predictability of satellite operations.

- In addition to norm-setting and legal guidance, the UN actively promotes a **multi-stakeholder approach** to satellite governance. Recognizing the growing role of private companies and non-state actors in the space sector, the UN facilitates cooperation between governments, industry representatives, civil society organizations, and academic institutions. Within this context, policy recommendations increasingly emphasize the development of interoperable space situational awareness systems, early-warning mechanisms, and standards aimed at strengthening the cyber resilience of satellite infrastructure. These efforts seek to reduce risks to critical space-based services while promoting shared responsibility among all actors involved.

- A central objective of UN policy recommendations is the prevention of disruptions to critical satellite services that underpin global connectivity. This includes satellite-based internet access, navigation and positioning systems, and Earth observation capabilities used for climate monitoring and disaster response. By promoting coordination and transparency, the UN framework seeks to enhance the resilience of satellite infrastructure and to mitigate the cascading effects that disruptions could have on economic activity, public safety, and sustainable development.

- Equity and capacity-building constitute further core elements of the UN's policy approach. The UN emphasizes that satellite services should be accessible to all countries, including those that do not possess independent space capabilities. To this end, it supports developing countries through technical training programs, financial assistance, and infrastructure development initiatives. Inclusive participation in space governance processes is promoted as a means of ensuring that satellite-based connectivity contributes to broader developmental benefits and does not exacerbate existing global inequalities (COPUOS 2018; UNGA 2023)

Key NGOs and Multi-Stakeholder Actors

Non-governmental organizations play a crucial role in supporting UN processes and enhancing transparency:

- Non-governmental organizations and other multi-stakeholder actors play a crucial role in supporting United Nations processes and enhancing transparency in satellite governance. By providing expertise, data, and platforms for dialogue, these actors complement intergovernmental efforts and contribute to the development and implementation of norms related to the sustainable and secure use of outer space.

- The Secure World Foundation (SWF) is a key contributor to international discussions on space sustainability and security. It conducts policy-oriented research and technical analysis on issues such as space traffic management and space debris mitigation and supports the implementation of the Guidelines for the Long-Term Sustainability of Outer Space Activities. Through its engagement with COPUOS and other UN processes, the foundation facilitates informed decision-making and capacity-building in the field of satellite governance.

- The Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC) represents students and young professionals within the UN system and provides a platform for emerging voices in space governance. SGAC contributes policy input on topics such as debris mitigation, responsible satellite operations, and equitable access to space-based services. By engaging younger generations, the organization supports the long-term inclusiveness and legitimacy of global space governance frameworks.

- The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) contributes to transparency and accountability through the maintenance of satellite databases and the monitoring of satellite launches and space debris. Its data-driven analysis is frequently used to inform policy discussions and to assess trends related to orbital congestion and sustainability, thereby supporting evidence-based decision-making within UN fora.

- The International Astronautical Federation (IAF) fosters dialogue between academia, industry, and policymakers by providing a global platform for the exchange of knowledge and best practices. Through conferences, publications, and collaborative initiatives, the IAF supports efforts toward international standard-setting and the responsible development of space technologies.

- Within the UN system, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) plays a particularly central role in satellite governance by coordinating the allocation of radiofrequency spectrum and orbital slots. Through its regulatory functions, the ITU helps ensure the stability, interoperability, and reliability of global satellite communications, which are essential for protecting global connectivity (SWF 2024, UCS 2023, IAF 2023, ITU 2025).

SDG Relevance

Satellite governance and global connectivity are linked to multiple Sustainable Development Goals:

- SDG 4 – Quality Education
- Satellite-based connectivity enables remote and digital learning in underserved regions [ITU, 2025].
- Digital Transformation Centers leverage satellite networks for skills development and education [ITU, 2025].
- SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Satellites are critical for modern infrastructure and industrial development [UNOOSA, 2023].
- Support innovation in space technology and resilient communication networks [UNOOSA, 2023].
- SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities
- Expands access to global information and connectivity for developing countries [SWF, 2024].
- Reduces the digital divide through capacity-building and multi-stakeholder cooperation [SWF, 2024].
- SDG 13 – Climate Action
- Earth observation satellites provide data for climate research, monitoring, and early warning systems [UNOOSA, 2023].
- SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**.** Satellite monitoring promotes transparency, accountability, and peaceful use of outer space [UNGA, 2023].
- SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

Multi-stakeholder cooperation ensures the effective use of space resources [SGAC, 2023; ITU, 2025].

Policy Implications and Future Directions

- Implementation of LTS Guidelines in national legislation to regulate commercial satellite operations [COPUOS, 2018].

- Capacity-building for developing countries to enable meaningful participation and equitable access [SWF, 2024].

- Enhanced multi-stakeholder cooperation to address space traffic management, cyber threats, and spectrum congestion [SGAC, 2023; SWF, 2024].

8.5. Further and Regional Framework

8.5.1. Europe

The European Union (EU) has reiterated its commitment to secure connectivity by the Regulation (EU) 2023/588, which established the European Union's (EU) secure connectivity programme for the 2023–2027 period. This regulation aims to ensure worldwide access to secure governmental satellite communication services for the protection of critical infrastructures, crisis management, and military applications. Its key points consist of the deployment of an EU satellite constellation called IRIS^2, which is aiming to provide ultra-fast (low-latency) and highly secure communication services by 2027. IRIS^2 is supposed to provide EU Member States with dependable access to highly secure, sovereign, and global connectivity services to match their operational needs. The satellite constellation will also be part of the EU's digital transition and Global Gateway strategy.

Programme objectives include the development, building, and operation of a multi-orbital space-based connectivity system, while including existing and possible future capacities of the European Union Governmental Satellite Communications (GOVSATCOM), the European quantum communication structure, and improving and expanding the capabilities and services of other components of the EU space programme (European Parliament and Council, 2023).

The EU further strives to implement standardized rules for connectivity services, fostering a regulatory environment that incentivizes investment in telecommunication markets. This objective has been pursued by modernizing and consolidating the EU telecommunication regulations into a unified framework by introducing the European electronic communications code. Additionally, they are supporting harmonized technical conditions for EU-wide interoperability of wireless through the radio spectrum policy programme and the push for a Digital Networks Acts (planned for adoption by end of 2025) (European Commission, 2025).

During the EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in 2022, the EU announced the mobilization of 10 billion Euro as part of a Global Gateway approach to accelerate infrastructure investments in ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nation) countries (European Commission, 2022).

It focuses on green transition and sustainable connectivity in South-East Asia. Prior to that, the 2018 EU Strategy on Connecting Europe and Asia, worked to enhance connectivity in a rules-based and sustainable manner, supported by the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) (German Federal Ministry of Transport, 2024).

8.5.2 Asia

In Asia two main frameworks for cooperation have merged, the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF) and the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO). The APRSAF offers a platform for inter-state cooperation under the leadership of Japan. In the 2000s it became a key platform for dialogue and cooperation among regional space agencies. China established the APSCO in 2008, confirming the People's Republic of China (PRC) as a promoter of space cooperation in the region.

The PRC further influences space and connectivity infrastructure in all countries that are part of the Belt and Road initiative, spanning 151 countries. In 1992, China, Pakistan and Thailand signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Asia-Pacific Multilateral Cooperation in Space Technology and its Applications (AP-MCSTA). The APSCO is an intergovernmental organization and unites 8 member states (Boneitin, 2025).

The ASEAN states are demonstrating a growing amount of domestic space legislation and guidelines, with Singapore's Guidelines for Singapore-Related Space Activities, the Philippines Space Act, and Malaysia's Space Board Act 2022 (Conneely, 2025). Even on the ASEAN level, there have been three ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Track I workshops on space security to date, and the establishment of a Sub-Committee on Space Technology and Applications (SCOSCA) in 1999.

The Asia Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum and the Asia Pacific Space Cooperation Organization also regularly organize activities for the broader Asia-Pacific region (Conneely, 2025).

8.5.3. North America

U.S. national space policy highlights the need to expand the country's space alliances, in Asia the U.S. relies on its partnership with Japan, South Korea, and India, using the Artemis Accords as a diplomatic tool, strengthening its presence in the region (Armagno et al., 2025). This need for expansion is highlighted in the U.S. 2020 National Space Policy, the 2021 U.S. Space Priorities Framework, and the 2022 National Security Strategy, especially focusing on the diversification of strategic partnerships with emerging and middle space powers. The U.S. has satellites in geosynchronous orbit that provide warning and assessments of a strategic nuclear attack on its territory, as well as space assets in low Earth orbit that are critical to military operations, but the U.S. economy is increasingly dependent on networks of commercial satellites launched by private companies, such as Starlink. Starlink is a subsidiary of SpaceX and a satellite internet company, providing broadband internet access in over 100 countries. It does so with over 6000 satellites, which represent the majority of active satellites orbiting Earth (Armagno et al., 2025).

The Canadian outer space program consists of civilian and military components; authority in both aspects is unified in the Canadian Space Agency, established under the Canadian Space Agency Act.

The country launched its first military satellite in 2013, and a fleet of three remote-sensing satellites in the 2018 RADARSAT Constellation Mission, monitoring all of Canada's land and ocean territories (Canadian Government, 2024). Canada's Connectivity Strategy focuses on two main objectives: that all Canadians have access to broadband at speeds of at least 50 Megabits per second, and mobile wireless coverage is available where Canadians live and work (Canadian Government, 2019).

The Mexican Digital Transformation and Telecommunications Agency (ATDT) established the Mexican Space Program to enhance space infrastructure, national security, and digital inclusion, connecting both space infrastructure with digital infrastructure (STIP Compass, 2025). Mexico launched the Mexican Climate and Atmospheric Composition Observatory (OMECCA) in 2022 and the AzTechSat1-1, launched in cooperation with NASA (Vanoli, 2023).

8.5.4. South America

In Latin America, satellite governance and digital connectivity are closely tied together and increasingly spreading to the nongovernmental realm. US private sector company Starlink proposed to provide satellite-based internet to Bolivia, which was rejected, as it would have been too extensive a sovereignty transfer. Simultaneously, the Bolivian government held talks with the Chinese company SpaceSail to replace its aging satellites. This Bolivian example is transferable to other Latin American countries, as the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative already includes more than twenty countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, influencing all aspects of infrastructure (Torres, 2025).

Specific developments in satellite governance and digital connectivity include the Chilean company Andesat signing a deal with a private company, Astranis, to launch the first satellite dedicated to connecting around three million Peruvians in rural areas. In Colombia, Colombian engineering and telecommunication firm INRED cooperated with Luxembourg-based SES under an initiative by the Colombian Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, also with the target of providing connection services to unconnected areas through broadband satellites.

The Argentinian telecommunications company Orbith also partnered with Astranis to buy a small geostationary broadband satellite to serve domestic telecoms demand (Torres, 2025).

As space development remains relatively unknown due to the circumstance that the PRC is responsible for the launch of over a dozen satellites on behalf of Latin American countries (CSIS, 2024). Extensive Chinese-Brazilian cooperation to develop and operate the China-Brazil Earth Resources (CBERS) program did not prevent Brazil from making contributions to the United States Artemis program. Brazil does so even whilst Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva proposed a Brazil-China partnership for the launch of low-orbit satellites for increased connectivity in Brazil's remote areas (López, 2024).

In 2021, the Latin American and Caribbean Space Agency (ALCE) was launched in Mexico City at a session of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), but ratification problems delayed the start of formal operations (López, 2024).

8.5.5. Africa

The African continent is slowly shifting away from national efforts to continental coordination. This is centered around the emerging African Space Agency (AfSA), which was established in 2018 as an organ of the African Union (AU). Decisive players include the South African SANSA agency with its satellite communication strategy initiative, Nigeria, Egypt, and Kenya, all with their own national space agencies (Department of Science, Technology & Innovation, 2025). Focus is the harmonization of national strategies to better tackle the problem of satellite governance. AfSA has a governance and management framework comprising the African Space Council, its Advisory Committee, and the Director General. AfSA also continues to implement the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) and Africa Phase II, which is a joint EU and AU program, providing Earth observation data and services to support environmental protection and security (AfSA, 2025).

As a framework, the AU sets out to transform digital connectivity in Africa, and the African Digital Compact (ADC) has emerged as the unified voice to do so. Adopted in 2024, it aims to bring together governments, businesses, and civil society to bridge digital divides and create a secure and equitable digital environment for all. The AU followed that up with the Continental Artificial Strategy to keep up with global technological developments. Problematic is Africa's fragmented licensing environment, which makes it more difficult for providers of satellite internet to offer low-cost internet access. This, though, is incredibly important to increase the number of people connected to the internet. Non-terrestrial network (NTN) approvals can take months, fees differ, and requirements vary, resulting in a patchwork of rules. The AU, through the ATU, has designed a model NTN licensing framework that other African nations can domesticate (Onyemenam, 2025). Morocco takes the lead with the initiative Digital Morocco 2030, supporting start-up companies, laying the foundation for public-private partnerships (IOA, 2025).

An example is the Nigeria IPP project, which extended the reach of basic medical services in off-grid communities, doing so using Inmarsat BGAN satellite technology. In Ghana, the SAT4farming programme is helping to leverage satellite information to smallholder cocoa farmers to increase their yields, visibly illustrating the connection between satellites and information-transfer (Onyemenam, 2025). The European Union is also partnering with Africa in the Africa-EU Space Partnership Programme to support development priorities across the continent (European Commission, 2025).

8.5.6. Case Studies

New satellite constellations to provide high-speed Internet are a concrete issue for a number of companies. They plan to use thousands of satellites in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) to enable quick data connections and the transfer of large quantities of data. Starlink is the first company to do so, with the stationing of the first satellites for a planned network of tens of thousands, a so-called "mega constellation" (Voelsen, 2021). Competition from China comes through state-owned companies that have also announced that they too will be building their own satellite constellations. While these plans accurately reflect the increasing demand on the global Internet infrastructure, they also reflect the awareness of the political significance of Internet access (Voelsen, 2021). States want to expand their own communication possibilities, while simultaneously wanting to exert influence on the conditions under which information is exchanged worldwide (Voelsen, 2021).

Burgess points to the significant disruption from the exponential growth of LEO constellations. This change is influencing our usage of the available spectrum and, with the shift to ever higher and faster data services, also the dynamics of who owns and manages it. The growth of new in-orbit regenerative processing and associated optical

technologies is therefore becoming more likely, which would further support the emergence of new services (Burgess, 2024). Those include Direct-to-Device and quantum communications, which would complement existing terrestrial networks. She further elaborates that the convergence between terrestrial and non-terrestrial networks is going to increase through greater standardization. Higher levels of standardization are presenting new opportunities in the evolution of lunar communications, secure quantum communication, and of course, mobility services (Burgess, 2024).

9. Conclusion and remaining challenges

Satellite governance and the protection of global connectivity stand at the intersection of technological progress, sustainable development, and international security. As satellites increasingly underpin essential services, from disaster response and climate monitoring to digital communication and economic participation, their governance can no longer be treated as a niche or purely technical concern. Instead, it constitutes a central issue of global public interest, requiring coordinated, inclusive, and forward-looking multilateral action. The rapid growth of satellite constellations, particularly driven by private sector actors, has outpaced existing regulatory frameworks, creating governance gaps related to orbital congestion, spectrum allocation, security risks, and equitable access.

At the same time, satellite-enabled connectivity has emerged as a critical tool for bridging the digital divide and advancing universal and meaningful connectivity. While significant progress has been made in expanding internet access globally, disparities persist, especially in least developed countries and rural or remote regions. Space-based connectivity offers unprecedented opportunities to reach these populations, but without harmonized governance, affordability safeguards, and capacity-building measures, its benefits risk remaining unevenly distributed. The concept of universal and meaningful connectivity, as reflected in recent UN initiatives and the Global Digital Compact, provides a valuable framework for aligning satellite governance with broader development objectives.

Regional approaches demonstrate both the diversity of governance models and the growing recognition of satellites as strategic infrastructure. From the European Union's secure connectivity initiatives to Africa's continental coordination through the African Space Agency, and from Asia-Pacific cooperation frameworks to Latin America's balancing of sovereignty and foreign investment, these case studies highlight the importance of context-sensitive yet interoperable solutions. Ultimately, the General Assembly is uniquely positioned to foster dialogue among states, private actors, and international organizations, strengthen existing norms, and promote responsible behavior in outer space. Decisions taken now will shape whether satellite governance becomes a catalyst for inclusive global connectivity, or a source of fragmentation and inequality in the decades to come.

10. Further Reading and Guiding Questions

To deepen their understanding of the legal, security, and governance challenges surrounding satellite infrastructure and global connectivity, delegates are encouraged to consult the following sources:

- **Housen-Couriel, Deborah.** *Cybersecurity and Anti-Satellite Capabilities (ASAT): New Threats and New Legal Responses.* This article examines emerging cyber and kinetic threats to space assets, with a focus on anti-satellite weapons and the adequacy of existing international legal frameworks to address these risks.

- **Huang, Kenny.** *Security Governance of Sea Cable.* While centered on submarine cable infrastructure, this reading provides valuable insights into the governance of critical connectivity infrastructure, highlighting parallels between terrestrial, maritime, and space-based communication systems.

- **West, Jessica, and Jordan Miller.** *Grey Zones in Space Governance.* This publication explores ambiguity in space activities that fall below the threshold of armed conflict, addressing challenges related to attribution, regulation, and norm-setting in an increasingly contested orbital environment.

- **Falco, Gregory, et al.** *Nation-State Ground Station Interests in the Arctic.* This study focuses on the strategic importance of satellite ground stations, particularly in geopolitically sensitive regions, and illustrates how dual-use infrastructure complicates governance, security, and cooperation in space.

Together, these readings provide delegates with legal, strategic, and governance-oriented perspectives that complement the broader discussion on satellite governance and global connectivity. To structure debate and support the development of comprehensive policy proposals, delegates may consider the following questions:

1. To what extent do current international legal frameworks effectively manage new risks to satellite infrastructure, such as cyber operations and anti-satellite capabilities?

2. How are the governance issues in satellite governance similar to or different from those in other types of vital infrastructure, including submarine cables?

3. How can satellite governance frameworks promote universal and meaningful connectivity while respecting national sovereignty and security concerns?

4. What role should the United Nations General Assembly play in coordinating norms, confidence-building measures, and multi-stakeholder engagement in satellite governance?

5. How can cooperation on ground infrastructure, including satellite ground stations, be enhanced in strategically sensitive regions without exacerbating geopolitical tensions?

These questions are intended to guide delegates in balancing security, development, and governance considerations when formulating positions and drafting resolutions on satellite governance and the protection of global connectivity.

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