

THE ETHICS OF SPACE: Rethinking Governance Beyond

AYUSH BARUAH | B.A. (H) POLITICAL SCIENCE (II YEAR) JDESHBANDHU COLLEGE

Email ID: ayushbaruah007@gmail.com

Introduction

Humanity has another goal to be achieved, which is the mighty space. With countries and companies rushing into the race towards space exploration, colonization, and many more. But with that many questions coming along, like, who does space belong to? Will AI rule the extra-terrestrial colonies? And more importantly, how do we avoid conflict in space, as ironically, we often face fiascos in maintaining peace and harmony among us, humanity, and the extraterrestrial world? If we fail to build a robust ethical framework now, space may become a sphere of exploitation and conflict, like the history of our home planet. How we behave in space will determine the legacy of humanity—will we treat it with prudence and conscience, or double the errors of the past?

The Ethics of Space Resource Extraction

Resource ownership is one of the most acute moral challenges, as we still see the geopolitics regarding resource allocation in the contemporary world.

Asteroids and the Moon harbor precious minerals, and corporations wish to stake them out.

Yet does the maxim “first come, first served” legitimize free mining?

To answer that question, the 1967 Outer Space Treaty comes into existence – which asserts that no country is allowed to exercise sovereignty over heavenly bodies, but private companies are pushing ahead with proposals to mine resources. Unless controlled, space will become another front for

economic disparity where only rich nations and corporations stand to gain by wearing the veil of “for the humanities’ sake/evolution” and not really meaning any of it and making it just an excuse for the hidden market/self-profit underneath. So, what can we do to resolve that in a Geopolitical context? A just and moral solution calls for an international regulatory agency—maybe a United Nations of Space—to monitor resource distribution. Space must be regarded as a global common, with its bounty enriching all of humanity, and not merely the privileged few. If it’s happening, then it should be for all and not for some! In the present context, the role of AI is continuously increasing in various professional and personal domains of human life, and because of this various questions arise in terms of AI’s role in important decision-making processes, as many of us consider AI’s take as more logical and well-researched, but is AI worthy in terms of governing the people due to its logical and research specialization? And should it be the one heading the charge of governance in either the intraterrestrial or extraterrestrial world? As of now, let’s see it in the extraterrestrial context—that is, in the domain of space governance.

AI in Space Governance: A Clever Solution or a Moral Conundrum

With the difficulties of ruling far-flung colonies, others suggest AI as a substitute for human rule. AI-led governance might maximize resources, make decisions quickly, and oversee intricate space operations without bias.

But should AI be Given Governing Powers?

As the famous saying goes, “*Each coin has two sides*” Algorithms lack moral reasoning, empathy, and accountability—vital for leadership. AI might prefer efficiency over human rights, producing a world in which ethical questions come second to logic. As we all know, some of the things that make us human beings different from other living creatures are the concepts of empathy and morality, which also stop us from acting like mechanical objects. The answer is human-AI cooperation. AI can aid in decision-making, but ultimate authority must be with human representatives who are committed to democratic principles and ethical considerations. A space colony must be governed by and for the people, not controlled by cold calculations. This was about human-AI cooperation, but before this crucial partnership, cooperation among human beings was even more important. Throughout history, we have faced numerous challenges due to failures in human cooperation, often leading to civil and international unrest and various crises. So, what must we do to overcome these challenges in space?

Preventing Space Wars: Learning from Earth’s Mistakes

As countries compete to gain supremacy in space, militarization looms as an increasing threat. Territorial conflicts over resource-laden celestial bodies may turn into the first wars off Earth. History has taught us that competition leads to conflict if not governed. A global treaty prohibiting the weaponization of space is essential. As we have treaties on nuclear disarmament, we need binding space treaties that value cooperation over conflict. Furthermore, a Space Governance Council led by the UN or international institutions may resolve conflicts and impose ethical space laws to ensure that space exploration is peaceful and good for everyone with everyone enjoying

their part of sharing with harmony.

Conclusion: How Should We Behave in Space?

Learning from mistakes is one of the best things to accept in life, which helps in improving our lives and even leads us many steps closer to our goals, and therefore we all should do the same thing in this context where we don’t repeat the mistakes that led us to many destructions, sorrows, and conflicts that mainly occurred due to egocentric and greedy aspects. The space should be governed with everything we learned about how to do it rightly and not make it another great fiasco of humanity; it should be based on ethical principles, logical reasoning, and inventions, and most of all, Collaborative Peace among all— “*should be for everyone and not for some*”. A global space governance system needs to be developed to:

- Provide equitable allocation of resources.
- Maintain AI as a helper, not a master.
- Avoid militarization and war.

It will all be based on the choices we will be making constantly to reach our common goal. The space should become an example of achieving a common goal together while not forgetting it is for the benefit of humanity, and we all want to live a life of peace and harmony while coexisting together. It doesn’t matter if it is in the intraterrestrial world or the extraterrestrial world, but peace, harmony, and collaborative actions to achieve positive things should be the cornerstone of humanity.