

EDITORS' PREFACE

Outer space is not only congested but increasingly contested. A substantial proportion of the approximately 16,000 satellites orbiting the Earth are utilised for military purposes. Primarily, they are engineered to safeguard systems deployed in outer space that provide critical capabilities, and secondly, they facilitate ground-based defensive and offensive capabilities. In accordance with the principle of international law that has become customary law, the utilisation of outer space is permitted exclusively for peaceful purposes, without excluding non-aggressive military use in Earth orbits.

The war in Ukraine has brought to the fore the pivotal function of satellites in contemporary warfare, encompassing communication capabilities, Earth observation, navigation, and even the control of weapon systems. This series of events gives rise to a number of legal issues that must be addressed. This objective guided the joint research initiative undertaken by the Budapest-based Institute of Aerospace and Telecommunications Law (Ludovika University of Public Service) and the Paris-based Institute of Space and Telecommunications Law (Université Paris-Saclay) on the legal and political issues arising from the utilisation of satellites during armed conflicts. This collaborative endeavour was facilitated by the Hubert Curien – Balaton grant, which was awarded to the two institutes. Our profound gratitude is extended to both the Hungarian and French funding bodies for their invaluable support.

The research commenced in early 2025 with the delineation of research topics, which, it must be acknowledged, could not be exhaustive. Nevertheless, it is asserted that the most salient topics are addressed in the book. In December 2025, the researchers convened in Budapest, where the completed manuscripts were discussed with numerous internationally recognised

experts. Therefore, the finalised studies were subjected to two cycles of peer review, in addition to a public manuscript discussion.

The project was conducted by a team of twelve researchers, half of whom were doctoral students specialising in space law and policy. This aspect of the project is particularly noteworthy. The volume's eleven studies have been divided into three major thematic areas. The initial five studies concentrate on the legal foundations and governance of the military utilisation of outer space. The second section of the publication contains two articles that analyse the legal implications of the involvement of private sector space companies. The third section of the publication presents a series of articles that analyse the strategic considerations facing the federal system, NATO and the EU.

The present volume has not sought to address every relevant aspect of this extensive topic, nor could it have done so comprehensively. Nevertheless, it is believed that the reader holds in their hands a work that is both comprehensive and valuable, and which may contribute to the academic debate.

In conclusion, gratitude is extended to Ludovika University of Public Service, Université Paris-Saclay, and the French Institute in Budapest for their substantial financial contributions, which have been instrumental in bringing this volume to fruition.