Conference Abstract

TITLE: Space Escalation Ladder – How to Control and Limit Outer Space Conflicts

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ABSTRACT:
As with most military planning, we fight the last wars that we understand well. That is probably the biggest problem outer space warfighters have in conceptualizing how a future conflict might play out. We just have not had that much experience in true space warfare. This makes it very difficult to predict how such combat will actually occur. Much as the concepts of air power were being developed in the 1920's-30's, the true power of space warfare is currently not well understood. To help solve these strategic issues, the author, based on his 41 years' experience in space warfare, has developed a notional Space Escalation Ladder, in order to better understand and manage the severity of conflicts in space. This Space Escalation Ladder is linked to a typical terrestrial escalation ladder, because military actions in either the space or terrestrial domains can escalate conflicts in the other domain. However, it is also true that space provides additional, more subtle "rungs" on the conflict escalation ladder due to the remote and hidden nature of satellite systems. Military actions in space allow an adversary to show determination and resolve in low-level crises, as a direct, but hidden, communication means between governments without their respective populations getting emotionally engaged and demanding more severe military responses. This briefing will discuss this notional Space Escalation Ladder, which can help better define future space operations, strategies, and tactics.