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NEW NATIONAL SPACE AGENCIES IN SOUTH AMERICA: NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR
COLLABORATION?

Abstract

Several countries in Latin America have established or created space commissions or space agencies in the last few years, due in part to their increased awareness of the economic benefits of space activities, in particular, of communication or remote sensing / earth observation satellites. In addition to the newcomers (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela), Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay have had space programs, commissions, agencies and / or research institutes for more than two decades.

Further, in the last decade, the continent as a whole has prospered, fueling the aspirations and the country's desire to own and operate its own satellite(s), and participate in other space activities. At the same time, they have become aware of the need to integrate their space activities, which has led to setting up the new national space-related entities.

This paper will focus on some of the new Latin American space agencies, their stated mission and goals, and what they hope to accomplish. It will also provide an overview of existing regional organizations and agreements, (e.g., CAN, CITEC, MERCOSUR, SELPER, UNASUR), and explore whether common goals could serve as underpinnings for closer regional cooperation on specific space-related projects. Further, perhaps the new agencies could "learn" from the older ones that have had close ties with the Latin American countries (ESA, NASA, the Canadian Space Agency, among others). Some of the lessons learned, in turn, could lead to the development of similar policies for their national or regional space activities.

Another possible outcome of national space activities could be greater regional (and global) cooperation and integration. Will these new space agencies seize the opportunity to create and develop new space policies, geared toward the needs and aspirations of "emerging economies"? Could their activities contribute to current international space law and policy, to a reinterpretation and even a reformulation of the principal space treaties? This paper will attempt to answer these questions.