

22nd SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE POLICY, REGULATIONS AND ECONOMICS (E3)
New Developments in National Space Policies and Programmes (1)

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SOUTH AFRICA'S SPACE PROGRAMME - PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Abstract

The 62nd IAC will be hosted in Cape Town, South Africa. This makes the focus of this paper topical. Its purpose is to introduce and analyse South Africa's space programme, past, present, and future. The methodology is an analysis of print and digital publications. It also draws on the author's experience while serving on the technical and policy committee of the Space Affairs Council of South Africa (SACSA), a statutory entity within the Department of Trade and Industry.

South Africa's apartheid ancien regime started a secret military space launcher programme aimed at orbiting reconnaissance satellites. This was cancelled before the first democratically-elected government came to power. Under US Government pressure, the facilities for manufacturing solid propellant missiles were destroyed.

But South Africa still maintained a space heritage infrastructure, including a coastal launch range with the usual telemetry capabilities, satellite testing and integration facilities, and modest aerospace and software industrial sectors. South Africa became increasingly active in COPUOS and other international forums.

In recent years South Africa has started to shape a new space policy, this time with public transparency. The National Working Group on Space Science and Technology took the lead. In 2008 the democratic Government took the first steps to establish a national space agency, and in 2009 its Department of Trade and Industry released its first space policy and space strategy documents.

Since developing countries have severe resource constraints (even when there is not a global recession) the reviving future of South Africa's space programme clearly needs to involve bilateral and multilateral partnerships. South Africa has negotiated with Algeria and Nigeria the African Resource Management constellation, to pool imagery and other remote sensing data from all their microsats.

South Africa's IBSA trilateral alliance shows potential to involve two space players with established space agencies, (AEB and ISRO), one of which, India, is starting to emerge as a space power. The paper includes one proposed Indo-South African project, which could also draw in Brazil's aerospace industry.