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Space Traffic Management: From Space Situational Awareness and Space Surveillance and Tracking to developing Rules of the Road (4)

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ESTABLISHING AN INTERNATIONAL REGIME OF SPACE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT: A CHINESE PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

The outer space environment has become increasingly congested as a result of the proliferation of space activities, the growth of space debris and the diversification of parties entering space. This brought about serious threats to the safety of space activities and operations. Space Traffic Management (STM) is an effective way of monitoring space traffic, protecting the space environment and securing space safety. The establishment of an international STM regime requires sufficient technical capacities, and more importantly, effective regulatory arrangements both at the domestic and international level. This paper aims to examine China's domestic legal and policy arrangements, its efforts and practice at the international level and underlying concerns regarding STM. In general, China has realized the importance of implementing STM, and has made legal and policy arrangements regarding the registration of space objects, the permit of launch project, the remediation of space debris, etc. However, due to the diverse stances and interest of countries, as well as the sensitivity involved with STM, the establishment of an international STM regime would not be possible without effective cooperation and interest coordination among space-faring countries. At the domestic level, China would still need to improve its legislation on space activities, ensure the effective implementation of relevant rules and policies; at the international level, China would continue to promote international cooperation, in particular space data sharing, participate in related international space legislation and facilitate the establishment of an international regime of STM.