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NEW TRENDS FOR OLD NEEDS: AN INVESTIGATION ON THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
SPACE AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF DUAL-USE SYSTEMS

Abstract

The world's major space agencies have traditionally operated as public institutions with little if any military involvement. The 21st century has seen an increasing trend, however, towards dual-use space systems and programs which involve both civil and military organizations and applications, largely due to efforts to reduce costs for the participating countries. As a result, several questions are being raised on the meaning behind these new relationships and the ethical, political, and public issues that arise. This paper explores the changes in strategies that seem to be occurring in some of the world's largest space agencies and how the changes in their policies are affecting their relationships with their related states and the geopolitical landscape. Particular emphasis is given to the relationship between governments and space agencies regarding the "operational authority" of a dual-use system in a "security crisis" scenario. An analysis is made in order to evaluate the coherence of the new dual-use trend towards real political needs. A special investigation is made for ESA according to its unique multinational nature and its particular relationship with the EU. Further consideration is also given to the impact of these new tendencies on public support for the space agencies and their programs.