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INFLUENCE IN SPACE POLICIES AND COOPERATION IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

Abstract

In April 2008, Soyeon Yi became Korea's first astronaut, highlighting Korea's début to the space arena to the world. In August 2009, Korea conducted their first satellite launch at the Naro Space Center, further signifying their commitment as a space faring nation. Since outer space does not have borders, and much of this advanced technology cannot be accomplished alone; Korea has gained the advice and expertise from allies and neighboring countries to aid them through the process. This has been conducted through the Korean Aerospace Research Institute (KARI), which has currently enhanced international collaboration with 34 organizations among 12 advanced countries such as the United States, Russia, UK, France, Germany, Israel, and China. Space technology has helped the country by developing industries and space applications for public, commercial, and scientific use. However, there is also a competitive drive in space, and technological advancement in space did start with the "US-Soviet space race." Thus, while there is cooperation amongst nations, there are also whispers of a space race.

Scholarly literature written about the "Asian space race," often focuses on the larger space faring nations, such as India, China, and Japan. Most have often focused on the China-Japan rivalry, and little research has been conducted on the cooperative regional institutions created, such as the Asia Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO) and the Asia Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF), which are spearheaded by China and Japan, respectively. Out of the two institutions, South Korea is now only participant of the latter, whereas were also involved in APSCO's former body, the Asia Pacific Multilateral Cooperation in Space Technology and Applications (AP-MCSTA). With South Korea's growing intentions in space activities, further exemplified as host of the 2009 International Astronautical Congress (IAC), the largest annual international space conference, it is necessary to find ways for collaboration and foster greater international and regional involvement in the future. South Korea's space program will have an impact on its neighboring Asian countries, which may view Korea as a potential partner in future cooperation in space activities, or another rival in the race to the moon.

The paper will present the findings from a summer research conducted in Korea and share how the emerging space nation's growing space activities cooperate both with the United States and within the region (with the central focus on China and Japan) and analyze if there is a causal effect on Asia Pacific relations.