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Author: Mr. Walter Faulconer

Strategic Space Solutions, LLC, United States, wfaulconer@strategicspacesolutions.com

Mr. James Rendleman

United States, napatarheel@hotmail.com

IMPROVING INTERNATIONAL SPACE COOPERATION

Abstract

Reflecting on the growing spirit of collaboration, United States (U.S.) President Barack Obama and Indian Prime Minister Mammohan Singh agreed November 24, 2009 to expand cooperation to civil space, less than a week after Obama returned from Beijing, where he and Chinese President Hu Jintao pledged to expand dialogue between U.S. and Chinese space agencies. But does the United States need to cooperate as a fundamental part of its space strategy? The United States accurately proclaims in its National Space Policy that for five decades it “has led the world in space exploration and use and has developed a solid civil, commercial, and national security space foundation. Space activities have improved life in the United States and around the world, enhancing security, protecting lives and the environment, speeding information flow, serving as an engine for economic growth, and revolutionizing the way people view their place in the world and the cosmos.” The National Space Policy also declares that the conduct of U.S. space programs is guided by the following principle: The United States will seek to cooperate with other nations in the peaceful use of outer space to extend the benefits of space, enhance space exploration, and to protect and promote freedom around the world. . .

There is a strong and powerful case to be made for the United States to conduct international space cooperation activities. Cooperation allows for leveraging resource and reducing risk, improving global engagement, enhancing diplomatic prestige of engaged states, political sustainability and workforce stability. Although the case for international space cooperation is powerful, its success is often achieved from a U.S. perspective only at great expense as demonstrated by the International Space Station and James Webb Space Telescope program problems. The obstacles and impediments to cooperation are substantial, and are manifested through various anti-collaborative behaviors. To achieve success, these obstacles and impediments must be understood, and we will examine the International Trafficking in Arms Regulations (ITAR) and other technology transfer constraints, volatility in international and domestic politics; and exceptionalism perspectives as substantial problems. Given the imperative to cooperate, and the challenges, four frameworks (cooperation, augmentation, interdependence, and integration) can be employed to overcome these problems and achieve success. This paper will detail each of these issues.