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FIVE KEY TURNING POINTS IN THE AMERICAN SPACE INDUSTRY IN THE PAST 20 YEARS:
ANALYZING MOMENTS THAT MOLDED SUPPLY, DEMAND, AND REGULATION TO PLAN
AHEAD

Abstract

Like the general international “spacescape,” the American space industry in the past 20 years has seen dramatic shifts and sits at a watershed point. The 1990’s and the early 2000’s were marked by noteworthy changes in the demand in the space market, the competition in the space market as well as the rules and regulations of the space market. These changes were by no means preemptive but rather reactions to key events that have shaped the American space industry significantly. This paper will examine five events since the early 1990s which have irreversibly affected the development of the American space industry.

These five events will include:

- 1) the consolidation of the aerospace industry in the early 1990’s and its effect on the market’s supply;
- 2) the charging of Space Systems/Loral with the violation of the Arms Export Control Act and the International Traffic in Arms Regulation following the failed 1996 launch of the Intelsat 708 satellite and its effect on America’s ability to compete in the international space market;
- 3) the creation of entrepreneur, Elon Musk’s, SpaceX Corporation in 2002 and its effect on the image and new players in the space industry;
- 4) the collision of the Iridium 33 and Kosmos-2251 satellites in 2009 and its effect on industry’s role in international space policy and space situational awareness; and
- 5) the cancellation of NASA’s Constellation program in 2010 and its effect on the role of industry in the American civil space program.

The paper’s analysis will also use the fallout from each event to help analyze how the American industry could adjust to the recent, significant changes to the American space program’s agenda. With a shift towards international interaction, the US space industry will need to determine a strategy to be effective domestically and competitive abroad.