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THE MEXICAN SPACE AGENCY AS A CATALYST TO SOLVE NATIONAL PROBLEMS

Abstract

Mexico's modern space history goes back to 1957, being until 1962 that was created the National Commission of Outer Space. The Commission brought advances in space law, medicine, bioengineering, robotics, aeronautics, telecommunications, satellites, rocketry and remote sensing. Apparently, those results were not enough for the ex-president Jose Lopez Portillo, who in 1977 cancelled its budget. Lack of vision destined the country to be left behind to countries like India and Brazil with similar economies that –contrary to Mexico- developed their space programs focused to generate their own technologies and applications resulting with great benefits to their population.

By not having a space agency, the country fell in a dependence of foreign technology almost immediately. In 1982, Mexico bought two satellites (Morelos I and II) for USD 92 Millions and had to pay large amounts of money to foreign space agencies to launch them on to orbit in 1985. As a result of that endeavor the first Mexican citizen flew on to space: Dr. Rodolfo Neri Vela, who tried –without success- to create a space agency. In the Nineties were acquired the satellites "Solidaridad" to replace the old "Morelos" with a cost of USD 300 Million and at the beginning of 2000 the constellation SATMEX was put in orbit paying almost USD 2 Billion for the five satellites.

It was until the year of 2004 that a Mexican engineer who was working for NASA (and who owns an international patent of an engine based on antimatter) decided to take a temporary leave and returned to his native country to start the project of the Mexican Space Agency or AEXA. An unpaved road that would require more than convincing the Mexican people of the importance of creating a space agency since that could only be achieved by changing the paradigm - at a national level- on how science and technology create diverse and direct benefits to the economy, the industry and the Mexican society in general.

In the paper, the authors analyze and present with factual data what would be the benefits of having a space agency for a country that represents the 12th economy in the World. What worked? What did not? This could be an excellent case of study for present or future space leaders interested in starting a space endeavor focused on having a positive impact for society.