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TRANSPARENCY AND CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES (TCBM) FOR SPACE SECURITY

Abstract

Transparency and Confidence-Building Measures (TCBM) are a set of tools that are designed to display predictability of states' behavior with respect to maintaining the security of space. With the advent of both intentional and unintentional threats to the peaceful use of space on the rise, there is a growing international consensus concerning the need for greater transparency in space-related activities as well as confidence-building measures to reduce the prospects of disruption to the ever-expanding role of space in the day-to-day lives of most of the world's inhabitants. Given the increasing number of space-faring nations, as well as space-aspirants, it is a propitious time to assess current, as well as advance new and creative, TCBMs among the major space actors. This includes providing potential competitors with concrete incentives to protect safe access to, and use of, space.

Terrestrial TCBMs can serve as a guide to understanding better what political arrangements are possible in space, including certain precedents in the areas of non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament. At the same time, the current and emerging challenges in space, including orbital space debris and radio frequency interference, need to be evaluated in the context of ongoing unilateral, multilateral, and private initiatives to increase space situational awareness and security.

Accordingly, this paper describes various prospective TCBMs as well as the most effective ways to strengthen space security. It also addresses whether the EU Draft Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities, designed to gain the commitment of countries to refrain from intentionally harming space assets, can help mitigate the creation of space debris, as well as build towards enhanced international cooperation and consultation on a number of other emerging risks. The paper argues that ESA and the EU are uniquely qualified to negotiate a 21st century TCBM architecture due to their distinguished history of diplomacy and ability to identify common ground among disparate parties.