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JAPANESE SPACE POLICY DURING THE 1970S: A ROAD TO AUTONOMY BY MODIFYING THE  
JAPAN-U.S. SPACE COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

**Abstract**

Japan has maintained the balance between autonomy and international cooperation in its space activities since it decided not only to invest in the totally domestic H-II rocket but also to participate in the U.S. Space Station program in the mid-1980s. But, it was never easy for Japan to pursue simultaneously autonomy and international cooperation in its space activities.

Since the first launch of the “Pencil” rocket in 1955, Japan had tried to launch its own satellites by its own rockets without the help of foreign countries. In 1969, however, Japan concluded the Exchange of Notes to receive the first space technology transfer from the United States. Subsequently, the 1969 Exchange of Notes was modified twice, in 1976 and 1980, to continue the space technology transfer. The Japanese N-I, N-II, and H-I rockets were developed on the basis of the U.S. Delta rocket technology transferred through these agreements. But, the development of Japanese space technology was not only accelerated but also restricted by the agreements. To achieve autonomy in its space activities, Japan tried to gradually get free of U.S. space technology by modifying the agreements. On the other hand, Japan began to participate in the U.S. Skylab and Space Shuttle programs as a user. Furthermore, the 1970s was a time when the international status of the United States was in relative decline and Japan was on its way to achieving the status of a major economic power. Therefore, it was rather complicated for both countries to modify the Japan-U.S. space cooperation agreements.

This paper reexamines how Japan modified the 1969 Exchange of Notes with the United States during the 1970s to achieve autonomy in its space activities, from the perspective of Japan-U.S. diplomatic history. In particular, this paper analyzes the Japanese space policy-making process and also the Japan-U.S. negotiating process, by making the most of the important related documents, which have recently been declassified in the United States as well as discovered in Japan. Finally, this paper would be able to give some suggestions to pursue simultaneously autonomy and international cooperation in space activities.