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SPACE FOR CANADIANS – EXPLAINING CANADA’S LOGIC AND MOTIVATION TO BE ACTIVE
IN SPACE

Abstract

This paper examines Canada’s perspectives on the use of space for national needs. It attempts to outline and analyze the factors that led decision making shaping Canada’s space policy and activities. It outlines the history of Canada’s space activity and discusses the motivations behind some of the major Canadian decisions in the field of space activity and exploration. The primary premise is that tangible needs were preliminary but inadequate. In Canada the space program serves as a source of political power, international standing, and an identity booster. The main factors affecting Canada’s space policy are: (A) The proximity to the United States which was and still is an enabler and a motivator. On one hand, Canada’s program is shaped by a desire to take advantage of the geographical and cultural proximity to its giant neighbor. On the other hand, Canada is overwhelmed by this giant and is concerned about becoming over dependent and overshadowed by it. Therefore, Canada plays a calculated political game in which it cooperates with the United States in joint ventures, while stressing its own unique and separate identity and contribution to the alliance. (B) Canada’s ethnic divided and dualistic culture and society has an effect on Canadian interest in forging a Canadian identity to be stronger than the ethnical identities. The Canadian space program and especially its visible elements such as the human spaceflight mission are used to enhance Canadian pride and national-esteem, as well as inspire and encompass all aspects of Canadian society.