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NATIONAL SPACE POLICIES AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN ENSURING THE LONG-TERM  
SUSTAINABLE USE OF SPACE

**Abstract**

A common recommendation emerging as the international community grapples with how to spell out best practices and norms of behavior for ensuring the long-term sustainable use of space is for space stakeholders to have national space policies. This allows for national governments to demonstrate their priorities and budget lines for their space activities, which in turn increases transparency and decreases the chances of misunderstanding or misperception. As well, it forces political leaders to examine their national goals for space and attempt to elucidate what they hope to achieve with their activities on orbit and beyond. Finally, the space domain has changed so much with the entrance of new actors, the blurring of lines that historically have been drawn between military and non-military assets, and the increasing role of commercial and non-state actors, this is a good time for governments to reexamine their goals and determine whether they still make sense and are financially feasible.

Yet these national space policies are difficult to come by and not every major space power has one. The United States creates a new one with the change of each presidential administration, but often it is pushed back well into the end of the first term or even the second term. Canada, in January 2014, just announced its first one; Australia did the same in spring 2013. But China, one of the preeminent actors in space, has only five-year plans; Russian space policy is opaque at best; and India apparently is keeping its options open for what it hopes to achieve in space.

This paper will examine national space policies that exist to determine what they cover, which part of the government put them out, how often they are updated, how they are budgeted, and other factors that shape a national space policy. It also will look at countries that are major space powers that do not have explicit space policies and attempt to determine how their national guidance is created for their space activities.

A clearly defined national space policy can help demonstrate national priorities and intentions for space. Clarity of intent is an extremely important part of determining how stable the space environment is, as it will affect how others view one's space efforts and shape their confidence in their ability to access and utilize space over the long-term.