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AFRICAN REGIONAL COOPERATION: A RISK ANALYSIS

Abstract

In response to the global paradigm shift from resource based economies to knowledge based ones, African states have increasingly sought to utilise Space programmes and technologies as a vehicle for economic development via localisation of previously outsourced industrial capabilities and human capital development. Despite the numerous benefits associated with Space, many African states have struggled to establish sustainable satellite programmes within their national space agencies. Local limitations include, inadequate resources when establishing either a satellite specific technical workforce or manufacturing facilities, the absence of the necessary specialties in satellite engineering at local universities, and/or the lack of experience among the indigenous Space industry to name but a few, have all reinforced the necessity of collaboration. Thus, for most states in Africa, some component of global or regional cooperation remains inescapable. However, while these multi-state collaborations and public-private partnerships have allowed an increasing number of African states to engage in the domain of Space, the reality remains that these collaborative programmes have frequently proved problematic.

The Space domain is replete with examples of collaborative programmes that have encountered unforeseen technical, political, regulatory or economic difficulties; the result of which has been sporadic national Space programmes, little human capital development and scarcely any localisation of "high tech" industrialisation. Thus, while Space technologies and services provide a new avenue for development, and multi-state collaboration provides access to this avenue, it has become obvious that the risks surrounding these partnerships need to be addressed. The purpose of this paper will thus be to highlight some of the prevailing risks prevalent within African regional collaborations with regards to the creation of sustainable satellite programmes; while the relevance of this paper hinges on the realisation that it is only through the identification of these negatively impacting risks to African multi-state partnerships that mitigation may be attempted. Salient if sustainable satellite programmes are to be developed within national space agencies allowing for the full benefits of Space to be felt within the wider national economies.