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PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL SPACE COOPERATION UNDER THE SILK ROAD ECONOMIC
BELT SCHEME: A CONSTRAINT-CHOICE ANALYSIS

Abstract

Space activities are typically high-tech, expensive, and sensitive. International space cooperation thus requires a considerably high degree of mutual trust and mutual benefits. Space cooperation in Asia is in particular under-institutionalized due to cultural diversity, geopolitical concerns and tensions among major regional players. However, the Silk Road Economic Belt scheme recently proposed by China signifies its focus on Asian area in stretching its New Diplomacy to constructively participate in international affairs, and therefore is of the potentiality of promoting space cooperation in Asia. Against this background, this paper seeks to explore the prospects of China's international space cooperation under the scheme.

Part I, "Logics of Cooperation in Space", provides a typological survey of cooperation in space, identifies the economic and technological constraints on space cooperation, and proposes a constraint-choice analytical framework. This part identifies the cooperation-contributing effect of economic hurdles and competition-contributing effect of technologic hurdles, and analyzes the intertwined relations and possible tradeoffs between cooperation logic and competition logic to explain different space cooperation choices of States under various country-specific and project-specific scenarios.

Part II, "China's New Diplomacy and its Implications for Space Cooperation", summaries China's recent New Diplomacy shift toward grand strategy in terms of the Silk Road Economic Belt scheme and analyzes its impact on the demand and supply of space cooperation institutions in Asian Area. This part submits that the Silk Road Economic Belt scheme as a form of non-alliance partnership implies that China will become more active in supplying regional public goods and stands for an opportunity for more institutionalized space cooperation in Asia.

Part III, "Prospects of China's Regional Space Cooperation in Silk Road Economic Belt", compares the comparative advantages of various existing institutions in Asia, including Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization and Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum, and explores China's potential options to enhance regional space cooperation. This part seeks to explore the priority States, key areas, and institutional structure of China-initiated regional space cooperation framework as well as its relations to other forms of space cooperation both within and beyond Asia.