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AN INTEGRATED POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR A CAPABILITIES-DRIVEN APPROACH TO
HUMAN SPACEFLIGHT

Abstract

Current U.S. national space policy provides neither the direction nor the means to pursue a robust pioneering effort in the human exploration and utilization of space. Commonly articulated goals are “legacy” focused, seeking to recreate the success of an era whose geopolitical and social context is fundamentally different from today’s. We formulate an alternative approach to national space policy that integrates currently developing space exploration technologies, commercial opportunities, legal-political constraints and cultural changes under a cohesive capabilities-driven policy framework. We further identify near and long-term changes that will be required to ensure a pioneering human space exploration program that is resilient to fiscal, political and programmatic changes over time, presenting a series of policy recommendations to resolve long-standing issues in U.S. civil space policy. This approach may be more sustainable than current efforts, and provide the flexibility required for an uncertain funding future. Although focused on the space sector, this study provides recommendations highly adaptable to other elements of high-tech enterprise. This study is a work in progress for a capstone project in International Science and Technology Policy at George Washington University.