

29th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE POLICY, REGULATIONS AND ECONOMICS (E3)
International Space Exploration Policies and Programmes (2)

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PLANETARY DEFENSE AS A GATEWAY TO SPACE FOR COMMERCIAL AND DEEP SPACE
EXPLORATION

Abstract

Various interests lay behind the call for planetary defense (PD) against asteroids and comets. PD certainly falls into the field of security studies, because its principal problem is the ability to assess the threat; however, PD lacks convincing statistics that can be used by politicians whether they should or should not address it. When any threat cannot be realistically placed on a reasonable timescale, then the securitization process can be used to justify its credibility. At this point, interests of the involved actors might be various: national prestige, commercial boost multiplier, advancement of scientific research or simply the demand for a more responsible global governance. In the first half, this paper assesses perspectives of these four stakeholders arguing that the fourth one is the least plausible, but the most desirable. First, yearn for the national prestige can be visible when a particular nation develops its own PD office to organize other relevant governments in this global endeavor, which can be called the strategy of the shining city on the hill that others want to emulate. Second, when it comes to particular technology usage, specific business might rise up to provide its services, knowledge and products without any regard to rationale or effect on global cooperation. Third, the vision of future ability to deflect big asteroids or comets certainly drives scientific research and technology development, but without a working policy it is much more isolated in laboratories rather than tested in space and with limited prospects on PD sustainability. Fourth, a handover of decision making powers to a cosmopolitan authority concerning PD is certainly the most desirable goal; it gives the new decision making body enough power to act in the preparation and development phases while the trigger can stay in hands of a wider world authority. In the second half, this paper provides perspectives on possible policy architecture of such a cosmopolitan body including a roadmap for reaching it. It focuses on a normative perspective through a proposition of a new uniting norm of Responsibility to Defend Earth based on the experience with Responsibility to Protect. I argue that the cosmopolitan policy for PD can unite commercial and scientific goals in a sustainable manner. The resulting Moon base on the far side with a PD capability can serve commerce, science and national prestige at once while representing a giant leap to space and an unprecedented advance to human collective behavior.