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THE EFFECT OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN COOPERATION IN SPACE ON NASA'S FUTURE  
PARTNERSHIPS

**Abstract**

The recent explosion of actors in the space sector has transformed Russia's and United States' near duopoly on space to a collection of more than 80 countries with satellites today. Rather than follow a traditional approach to space, many nations are bypassing the former prerequisite of establishing an indigenous industrial base and instead have pursued global partnerships, collaborations, and contracts for launches, research, and technical knowledge. The rise of new global space powers has revealed that nations have identified alternatives to the United States government as a partner, including the ASEAN members of China and Japan. This paper will consider five Southeast Asian nations (Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Bangladesh, and Laos) and their growing partnerships with China and Japan. While Bangladesh and Laos have increased their coordination with China in the form of satellite construction and launches, the nations of Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand have received support from the Japanese government in building up their space infrastructure and capabilities. Although America's asymmetric control over space is waning, the United States still has the potential to guide the international space agenda for many years. The rise of recent partnerships among Southeast Asian countries has significant political implications for the United States and suggests both opportunities and challenges for NASA. In addition, NASA will respond to these collaborations based on the context of its current relationships with both JAXA and CNSA. Despite experts imploring Congress to consider partnering with China, the two nations have not coordinated on space programs. In contrast, JAXA and NASA have cooperated on the ISS and the recent Japan-U.S. open Platform Partnership Program (JP-US OP3) to advance human space exploration. This paper will explore the relationships among five Southeast Asian countries and the global space powers of China and Japan, and how these partnerships will subsequently influence NASA's activities in the region.