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CHINA'S SPACE PROGRAMME - HARE OR TORTOISE?

Abstract

The 21st century is believed to become the Asian century. In the last few years China has introduced several economic and political initiatives which promote its rise as a global power. Embedded in its development and rise is the national space programme. This allows the country to follow a very smart concept for the space programme. The basic principle is to develop "key systems" such as launch sites, launchers or TTC systems which can be used across the different field of space exploration: from Earth observation to the manned space programme, lunar exploration or other programmes. It is maybe a little bit like a Lego system or the menu of a Chinese restaurant. Western observers tend to look at China's space programme as being small, slow, technologically less advanced and not significant enough. Is this a correct reflection? Is China's space programme a hare or a tortoise? Is it possible to predict China's near term future in space? The authors provide an in-depth analysis to find qualified answers to these questions through the consultation of open sources.