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INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN LAUNCH SERVICES UNDER THE WTO REGIME

Abstract

With ever increasing global reliance on space-based services and applications for development, access to space has become a crucial ‘enabler’. Consequently, the commercial space transportation market has expanded and transitioned from an insular, government-controlled sector to a competitive arena with rapidly emerging technologies and new entrepreneurial private actors. There were 23 commercial launches conducted in 2014 out of an aggregate of 92 worldwide orbital launches (higher than the previous five-year average), which generated an estimated revenue of 2.36 billion. *The forecasts project an average annual demand of 30 commercial*

This paper will review the governance mechanism of international space transportation services from the perspective of the WTO/GATS regulatory framework. It will compare and contrast the international trade practices in launch services, particularly those prevalent in the United States and Europe. Following a brief overview of the GATS rules on government procurement and restrictive trade practices, this paper will attempt to address the disputes arising from the question of unfair subsidies to the industry. Due to the dual-use capability of space technologies, the methods adopted by governments to balance conflicting national security interests and international trade principles will also be discussed.