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FACTOR ANALYSIS OF THE LONG-TERM CONTINUITY OF GOVERNMENTAL SATELLITE REMOTE SENSING PROGRAMS: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY ON THE POLICY PROCESS OF THE LANDSAT AND SPOT PROGRAMS

Abstract

This paper examines the policy-related factors that drive the continuity of civil satellite remote sensing programs operated by government. In order to promote wide utilization of satellite remote sensing that provides various societal benefits, the long-term continuity of the observational program is prerequisite. To ensure the continuation of the program and avoid gaps in the observation period, decisions by government to develop a follow-on satellite need to be made in a planned and timely manner. This can be difficult under conditions of budget constraints and multiple policy priorities. In order to facilitate an effective policy process of satellite remote sensing, this paper aims to identify the key factors that enhance the continuity of a civil governmental satellite remote sensing program with respect to decision making at a governmental level. The author examines the historical policy processes of the long-term U.S. and French civil governmental satellite remote sensing programs, namely Landsat and SPOT, from their beginnings to the present date. Decisions made by government to approve the development of a series of satellites involved in these two satellite remote sensing programs are analyzed. These decisions are examined and compared from the viewpoints of program continuity and six political factors concerning political support and consensus among stakeholders, which have been deduced by the author from a review of pre-existing studies. The paper evaluates how the continuity of each program is related to these political factors and considers policy implications of the findings.