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THE PROCESS OF SPACE POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

Abstract

The National Space Policy of the United States, over the last several decades, has traditionally functioned as a major player in the setting of international space policy and agendas. As such, it is important to understand by what processes these policies are set. This article examines how political communication within and external to the United States contributes to this process. Through an analysis of communication among the public, the legislature, and the scientific and defense communities in the U.S., I intend to illustrate a comprehensive picture of the policy process by which national space policy is set. There are many players within our space industry, from civil and commercial players to the Department of Defense. These diverse entities contribute to competing priorities in the setting of space policy, as well as in the competition for funding. In addition to this, the national policies change from administration to administration. As it is, space policy is a highly complex but low saliency issue for the public, but despite this, space potentially has an impact on every citizen. It is incumbent upon us to produce a holistic picture of the policy process so we can answer key questions about how policies are formed and whose priorities will shape the future of space exploration in the United States.