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Author: Dr. Xueying Han
Science and Technology Policy Institute, United States, xhan@ida.org

Dr. Bhavya Lal
IDA Science and Technology Policy Institute, United States, blal@ida.org

A STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS OF
CHINA'S COMMERCIAL SPACE SECTOR

Abstract

Over the past decade, China has made many advances in space including being the first country to land on the far side of the moon. Most of these technological advances in space have been made by state-owned enterprises. China's central government decided to expand the country's space industry by formally allowing private enterprises to enter the space sector in 2014. China's commercial space sector has grown steadily over these past five years, and there are now more than 10 launch and 30 satellite companies that have some level of private funding. As the commercial space sector remains relatively young, the future of these companies is anything but certain. Through a series of interviews with launch, satellite, and downstream application companies in China, we perform a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of China's commercial space sector. Preliminary analyses indicate that Chinese commercial space companies enjoy access to a big talent pool of STEM graduates as well as an existing space workforce to build upon. One of the biggest challenges facing China's commercial space sector is that companies do not have a clear idea of what market needs are or who their customers are. As China's state-owned enterprises increase their presence in developing countries, they potentially pave the way for commercial space companies to enter those markets. Lastly, one of the biggest threats facing Chinese companies in general is that they suffer from a brand image problem that they are working for or can be manipulated by the Chinese central government, which could hinder their expansion abroad. We conclude with some thoughts on what China's commercial space sector might look like 10 or 20 years into the future.