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THE SPACE DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA: ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL SPACE ORGANIZATIONS

Abstract

The outer space environment has undergone significant changes in the last decade. Countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa are driving many of these changes. Space technology has manifold applications in areas as wide-reaching as disaster management, resource management, meteorology, governance, and military and security. Asian countries, recognizing the importance of space technologies, have made investments quite early on. While some of these countries have already established institutions and programmes, others are in the earliest stages of structuring their own.

This paper tracks the space programmes of Asian countries, examining their respective directions in terms of government policies and motivations for investments, collaborations with international players, and technical advancements achieved so far in the sector.

Asia presents a mixed story. While many countries approach space activities in the context of climate change and natural calamities, there are also countries looking at space with an excessive focus on national security. This is not the case in Africa and Latin America, where space programmes almost have a total focus on social and development aspects.

Space programmes in the Asian and Indo-Pacific region are dominated by three established spacefaring states — China, India and Japan — and several emerging players, including Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Malaysia, North Korea, Pakistan, Singapore, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam. Six of the ten countries that have demonstrated independent launch capabilities are in Asia — China, India, Iran, Israel, Japan and North Korea — a fact that demonstrates the increasing proficiency of the space programmes in the region. The key question is whether this increasing Asian proficiency in outer space will lead to more cooperation or competition. Also this paper will be focusing on how the established and emerging spacefaring states in Asia will contribute to the global governance of outer space.

There are currently two regional space cooperation organizations — the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF) promoted by Japan, and the Asia-Pacific Space Cooperation Organization (APSCO) under China's leadership. The very existence of two regional space organizations indicates the sharp divisions at play in the Asian context. At the same time, there is no institutional mechanism to coordinate between these two regional initiatives.

The paper will present the space development in Asia and analysis to current regional space organizations and provide a model on how regional space cooperation can work and benefit the region.